



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

# ENACTING COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN A SHARED-POWER WORLD

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The idea of collective leadership is starting to take hold. Under many guises—*shared, distributed, constructed, and relational* leadership are just a few of the terms in use—a quiet revolution is challenging the traditional notion of a single, heroic individual. Instead, the lens has gradually widened from leaders, to leaders and followers, to a complex of shifting and interconnected relationships that more or less successfully drive toward a shared vision and tangible outcomes.

Applying this broader lens of leadership means that we shift from considering only the individual attributes and behaviors of leaders, like their courage or their capacity to shape followers' visions, to also considering the processes and conditions that help members of a group or organization—a collective—work together to achieve their common vision. This is a shift of attention from the individual to the collective dimensions of leadership.

This shift is gaining significant traction in public and nonprofit management. We now accept that multiple actors participate in the social sector to address intractable problems embedded in a shared-power world (Crosby & Bryson, 2005). Successful public service leaders today manage effectively two contradictory forces. On the one hand are the demands of vertical command-and-control relationships embedded in hierarchical agencies and driven by traditional forms of accountability and authority associated with a constitutional framework. On the other hand, we see emergent, horizontal, collaborative, and often peer-to-peer relationships

of accountability and mutuality taking place across organizations, sectors, and network structures of information sharing, service delivery, and problem resolution.

The new forms do not replace the traditional ones but coexist and interact with them (Heinrich, Hill, & Lynn, 2004). The imperatives of vertical authority and accountability that require rule setting, role clarification, and value preservation work in tandem with the imperatives of horizontal connectivity and boundary crossing that require risk taking, flexibility, adaptation, and collaboration. These requirements must be placed in the service of fundamental commitments of leadership in the public sector: "preserving democratic values, cultivating public trust and enhancing public service motivation" (Getha-Taylor, Holmes, Jacobson, Morse, & Sowa 2011, p. i88).

In this chapter we show the benefits of expanding our understanding of leadership and describe in some detail how various forms of collective leadership—what Denis, Langley, and Sergi call "leadership in the plural" (2012)—can be enacted or practiced. We draw on key research from public management but also consider research in business contexts that has pertinent insights for public leadership. We highlight what research tells us about effective collective leadership practice, offering first a brief justification for why collective leadership is crucial in the context of public service. We next offer key insights according to the level of action where leadership is enacted, turning to implications for public administration. We summarize the convergences and cornerstones of collective leadership and offer some practical guidance to enact effective collective leadership.

### Collective Leadership and Democratic Governance: What We Know

Bill Georges, the author of *True North: Discover your Authentic Leadership* (2007), argues that while there is no shortage of people with the capacity for leadership, there seems to be a leadership crisis in business, politics, government, education, religion, and nonprofit organizations. The reason, he argues, is that we have a "wrongheaded notion of what constitutes a leader": we are obsessed with leaders at the top of hierarchies as the standard from which to measure leadership. This keeps us hostage to old mental models that do not correspond to the qualitatively new demands of a postindustrial society. These demands have turned public service—government and civil society—upside down as well. Scholars describe a profound shift in governance in how social actors distribute the

responsibility to solve collective problems (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012). This shift has significant implications for leadership.

### Collective Leadership in a Shared-Power World

New mental models and practices are reflected in the shift from the new public management to the new public service movement (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Thomson & Perry, 2006). A new way of thinking of public service encourages us to see the role of government as serving rather than steering. The idea of public managers working within their bureaucracies to solve wicked problems and deliver services has given way to that of public leaders acting as stewards of the public interest. This requires more responsiveness to citizen needs and greater networking with other actors, both corporate and nonprofit, concerned with the same issues.

These shifts from pyramids to webs and from production to coproduction have substantially changed the requirements of public leadership. Under conditions of asymmetric power and weak incentives to collaborate in a shared-power world, the myth of the heroic leader loses currency (Pearce & Manz, 2005). Instead, collaborative leadership emerges within all branches of government, from elected and appointed leaders down to street-level bureaucrats and citizens (O'Leary, Gerard & Bingham, 2006). The reemergence of citizenship in these new models also requires attention to leadership within civil society and across sectors (Van Slyke & Alexander, 2006).

And yet this transformation comes with challenges. Morse and Buss (2007) identify several critical dilemmas. First, demands for high levels of coordination and collaboration come in a context where structures, systems, and conventional approaches to leadership are largely hierarchical. The big issue therefore is "how to lead collaboratively, across organizations, within a hierarchical context" (p. 16). Second, leaders must both conserve the values of democracy while adapting organizations to ensure innovation. Finally, higher degrees of politicization in this new environment require developing collaborative relationships between politicians and public managers without stepping outside the boundaries of their legally authorized roles. We would add that collaboration with civil society must be added to this mix as well.

Morse and Buss's (2007) classification of leadership helps clarify the scope of our discussion. We are not concerned here with political leaders (the policy elite) but with organizational leaders (formal leaders engaged in administrative and supervisory work on the ground) and what they call public leaders (individuals concerned with public value, inside

and outside government, with or without formal authority, at all levels of the organization and community, working in interorganizational and networked arrangements). In this chapter we draw on researchers who have explored organizational and public leadership using a collective lens, that is, they focus on the collective dimensions of leadership in organizational and interorganizational contexts. These offer insights for leaders interested in developing a practice of leadership that is more collective, in accord with today's demands, independent of where they are located (public or nonprofit, organization or network).

In sum, the coexistence of bureaucracies and networks produces a leadership paradox for public managers: new leadership models are essential but occur in a context where the theory of bureaucracy, with its conventional understandings of leadership, continues to drive administrative practice. The new environment demands both directive forms of influence and distributed forms of leadership. We know much more about how to enact the former than the latter. We know even less about how to foster simultaneously the positive results for democracy that both types of demands—for hierarchy and for open organizational forms—can offer.

### Collective Leadership in Leadership Studies

Collective leadership is an umbrella concept that includes studies within an emerging strand of leadership studies applying the core insight of relationality to the key problems in the field, at a time of critical need for new ways of thinking and practicing leadership. *Relationality* reveals the individual as a node where multiple relationships intersect: people are relational beings. Collective leadership shifts attention from formal leaders and their influence on followers to the relational processes that produce leadership in a group, organization, or system. Relationality motivates attention to the embeddedness of the leader-follower relationship in a broader system of relationships and to the meaning-making, communicative, and organizing processes that help to define and constitute these relationships (Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012).

Table 27.1 contrasts traditional and collective views of leadership. Applying a collective lens means shifting from a leader-centric view to a postheroic view of leadership (Fletcher, 2004)—one that moves beyond the idea of the leader as a hero—and from the individual dimensions of leadership to its collective dimensions. The shift becomes clear when considering how each view answers the question of the source of leadership, that is, where leadership resides when it comes into existence (Drath, 2001). This question is crucial: how it is answered influences what

TABLE 27.1. CONTRASTING TRADITIONAL AND COLLECTIVE VIEWS OF LEADERSHIP

	Traditional Views: Heroic Leadership	Collective Views: Postheroic Leadership
Key focus	Individual dimensions of leadership	Collective dimensions of leadership
Examples of leadership theories	Transformational leadership Servant leadership Charismatic leadership Leader-member exchange theory	Complexity leadership Relational leadership Shared or distributed leadership Collective leadership
Source of leadership	The leader (formal or informal)	The leader, the group, systemic networks of relationships and processes
Object of leadership	The follower	The work to create an environment that is full of leadership
Results of leadership	Influence that yields follower motivation and engagement	Capacity to collaborate and produce collective achievements

the focus of attention is when trying to produce outcomes (the object of leadership) and what is desired, the end result, when we invoke or want to use leadership to produce these outcomes.

How the dominant theory of leadership answers these questions illustrates the leader-centric approach. Transformational leadership theory argues that influence flows from leader to follower and in most cases emerges from leaders in positions of authority. The theory is grounded in the vertical relationship of accountability between the leader who has authority and the follower who plays a subordinate role. The leader's job is to influence and capture followers' imagination by connecting collective values to organizational outcomes. To do this effectively, leaders enact four types of behaviors: inspiring and motivating followers, serving as role models, assigning intellectually stimulating work, and paying individualized attention to followers (Antonakis, 2012).

According to this theory, the source of leadership is the leader, and the object of leadership is the follower. When the leader acts on the followers, leadership happens. While both sides of the dyad are transformed through their relationship in the process, the result of leadership is that followers buy into the leaders' vision and join them in a common enterprise so that motivation and efficacy contribute to produce the desired organizational outcomes.

These answers contrast with the postheroic view of theories of collective leadership. (As illustrated in table 27.1, there are several strands of collective leadership, but for the purpose of our argument, we treat them together here.) The key argument is that recurrent influence efforts from a single heroic leader fall short of nurturing the required horizontal relationships of accountability to others in the team or in other organizations (Schneider, 2002; Fletcher, 2004) needed in today's work environments. Scholars document shared forms of leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003), whereby members in groups lead one another in reciprocal influence processes to advance shared goals. In distributed forms, leadership roles are spread among various individuals rather than under a centralized leader in a superior role (Gronn, 2002). In these situations, performance expectations may include lateral influence, and group members must provide leadership and accept it from their peers, with group members learning to be both leaders and followers (Drath et al., 2008).

Other collective leadership approaches go even further to explicitly decouple the role of the leader from the work of leadership and the processes it generates. Here leadership is a property of a group or network of interacting individuals, not something that belongs to a single individual defined as the leader. This view most radically shifts attention from formal leaders and their influence on followers or from members of empowered groups sharing leadership roles, to the relational, emergent, and contextual processes that produce leadership in a group, organization, or system (Ospina & Sorenson, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Leadership is a process of meaning making among members of a community of practice, and it produces shared direction, commitment, and alignment to achieve agreed-on purposes (Drath & Palus, 1994; Drath, 2001).

All strands of collective leadership theories acknowledge that the visible leader is a manifestation of leadership, but it represents only the tip of the leadership iceberg (Drath, 2001). They also recognize the sequential or recurrent emergence of formal and informal leaders and assume that all members of a group or an organization have the capacity to exercise leadership given the right conditions and contexts (Pearce & Mantz, 2005). Finally, some scholars stress sources of leadership different from the formal or visible leader, perhaps in other people or in structures and processes facilitating meaning-making exchanges that help the group engage in successful joint action. Leadership is thus also found in the outcomes of the group's work, not only in its participating individuals.

Collective leadership turns upside down the basic assumptions about the source, object, and end result of leadership. The source of leadership is not exclusively the leader; it may also be the group or the structures and

- processes devised to advance the shared goal. The object of leadership is not the follower or the group but the work to create an environment that is full of leadership (an environment where everyone can contribute in a joint effort so that the desired results are collectively produced). The end result of leadership is an ongoing community with capacity to collaborate on and jointly produce collective achievements. Collective leadership thus offers an excellent lens to understand and practice leadership in today's shifting governance arrangements.

## Enacting Collective Leadership: What Research Tells Us

In the past few decades many scholars have attempted to capture collective leadership in action, understanding how it is brought to life through the enactments of groups and individuals. Terms vary. Some write of leadership practices, others of skills, still others of activities or capabilities. Although there are differences among these concepts, for our purposes they are all attempts to portray the performance of collective leadership.

Here we describe insights on effective enactments of collective leadership in practice. We draw from selected scholars who have focused on public and nonprofit, for-profit, and cross-sector and network contexts. Three broad groups of scholars demonstrate these enactments in different contexts according to the level of action. We begin with scholars who have focused on internal organizational leadership; move on to those who focus more on the leadership required to appropriately steer organizations in complex, shared-power environments; and conclude with organizations working in long-term formal networks to attain a single purpose.

## Enacting Collective Leadership inside Organizations

Research on collective leadership practices within organizations comes largely from the business management literature. We provide two examples of such work.

### The Relational Practice of Leadership

- Fletcher (2004, 2012) draws from previous work on relational practice found in feminist psychology to explore the relational practice of leadership itself. While leader-follower relations have always been the core of leadership, Fletcher (2012) argues that more recently, "the practice

of good leadership is increasingly conceptualized as the ability to work in and through relationships" (p. 85). This is one of the fundamental underpinnings of collective leadership. She identifies particular skills necessary for such leadership: self-awareness, humility and empathy, and openness to learning from others.

Self-awareness is fundamental to emotional and interpersonal intelligence. Being able to see yourself as others see you means that you are not captive to your own internal perceptions and assumptions. Shouldering a shared harness requires us to dovetail with others, which is impossible without self-reflection. Humility and empathy are also linked. Humility is critical to conceptions of collective leadership because it acknowledges that one has shortcomings and still needs to learn and that one leader is not enough. Empathy is the other side of the coin: our own capacity to be humble and vulnerable allows us to feel as others feel. Both enable the delicate sensing and sense making that allow a group to move as one.

Learning is another linchpin of relational leadership practice. It is based on openness and curiosity. Truly learning from others can mean letting go of cherished beliefs and permitting oneself to be transformed by others. Collective or relational leaders go beyond their own change to creating the conditions for connection and learning in a group setting. Ultimately Fletcher (2004) argues that the relational practice of leadership is linked to "images and wisdom about how to 'grow people'" (p. 651). It is about creating the conditions for mutual learning and high-quality connections.

#### D-Leadership Capabilities

Ancona, Backman, and Parrot (2012) describe "D-leadership" as decentralized, distributed, and decoupled from formal positions of authority. This means leadership can be found in people throughout an organization and draws on the collective intelligence of an organizational system.

Ancona and her colleagues start with the idea of the "incomplete leader"—a leader who understands that he or she cannot possibly have flawless vision, charisma, and operational capacity. Instead, incomplete leaders know what they don't know. And they also know "leadership exists throughout the organizational hierarchy—wherever expertise, vision, commitment and new ideas are found" (Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski, & Senge, 2007, p. 2).

These scholars identify four capabilities as the hallmark of distributed leadership: sense making, relating, visioning, and inventing. Sense making is the process of actively seeking out data and information in a variety of

forms—experience, research, others' knowledge—and then mapping the territory of what is known and unknown. It is more than descriptive: "In the very process of mapping the new terrain, you are creating it" (Ancona, 2005, p. 2).

Developing and sustaining relationships is at the heart of the capacity of relating. Relating is based on communication, especially on three key skills. The first is *inquiry*, or asking others about their opinions and their reasoning. Inquiry is founded on the assumption that the best path forward is based on collective wisdom. But clarifying what we do know is also primary. When we engage in the second skill, *advocacy*, we state our opinion, make a proposal, and take a stand. *Connecting* is what comes of balancing inquiry and advocacy: the capacity to learn from differences, even through spirited debate and conflict.

D-leadership also requires visioning, or creating an aspirational future. The authors suggest that stories, images, and metaphors can draw in others while enabling them to contribute to the picture. Finally, inventing "is what moves a business from the abstract world of ideas to the concrete world of implementation" (Ancona et al., 2007, p. 6). It is more than implementation since execution often involves revision and even re-creation.

### Enacting Collective Leadership in Complex, Shared-Power Environments

The research exploring collective leadership in complex shared-power environments is more often found in the public and nonprofit management literature. This work tends to incorporate extraorganizational phenomena in its understanding of leadership, considering interorganizational dynamics in contrast to merely intraorganizational dynamics.

#### Leadership Practices for Social Change

Ospina and colleagues (2012) use a collective understanding of leadership in their research on nonprofit organizations seeking to change the circumstances of marginalized communities. They focus on the work of leadership rather than individual leaders to explore how the groups were able to set direction, adapt to changing circumstances, and mobilize allies to joint action. Ultimately they identify three types of leadership practices that can marshal the leadership capital necessary to reach stated goals: reframing discourse, bridging difference, and unleashing human energies.

Practices that aim at reframing discourse recognize the importance of leadership as a sense-giving process, one that can give us some clarity

and comprehension. By its very nature, social change leadership must break through taken-for-granted assumptions and encourage strikingly new ones to take hold. In their research, Foldy, Goldman, and Ospina (2008) found that social change leadership encourages cognitive shifts in how various audiences saw the issue on which the organizations worked, as well as how these audiences saw the constituencies on behalf of those they were working for.

Perhaps no practices are more central to collective efforts for social change than those aiming at bridging difference—among individuals, organizations, identity groups, communities, and stakeholders who come with their own perspectives and positions. Ospina and Foldy (2010) identified naming and shaping identity (or encouraging communities to see themselves in ways that connected them with others rather than dividing them), engaging dialogue about differences, creating equitable governance mechanisms, and weaving together multiple worlds through interpersonal relationships.

Unleashing human energies refers to practices that draw from stakeholders' strengths to develop their capacity to enact leadership. This developmental work encourages "learning as a way of leading" (Preskill & Brooksfield, 2009). Identified practices included promoting information exchange as an empowerment tool, drawing on lived experience to distill common knowledge, and supporting public opportunities for learning by doing (El Hadidy, Ospina, & Hoffman-Pinilla, 2010).

### Leadership Capabilities for the Common Good

Crosby and Bryson (2005, 2010, 2012) explore leadership in the context of the collective processes of negotiation and deliberation required for tackling intransigent policy conundrums. They speak to the role of integrative leaders as "bringing diverse groups and organizations together in semi-permanent ways, and typically across sector boundaries, to remedy complex public problems and achieve the common good" (Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p. 211). Integrative leaders develop the needed relationships and resource flows across boundaries to advance their goals, because no one single leader (or organization, or sector) owns the power to fix the problem at hand on their own.

They identify eight leadership capabilities from which policy entrepreneurs must draw to be effective leaders:

- *Leadership in context*, about understanding the social, political, economic, and technological factors that influence the problem at hand

- *Personal leadership*, about knowing the self well enough to be able to deploy one's assets for the benefits of the change process
- *Team leadership*, the capability to build and manage effective work groups
- *Organizational leadership*, about constructing organizational purpose, design, and humane conditions to ensure effective outcomes
- *Visionary leadership*, about shaping shared meaning about public problems and inspiring commitment to proposed solutions in forums
- *Political leadership*, about being able to make decisions and incorporate solutions through policies, programs, and projects in the right arenas
- *Ethical leadership*, about the ability to help settle conflicts over these solutions and their implementation and sanctioning the appropriate conduct to do so
- *Policy entrepreneurship*, the capability to coordinate leadership tasks over the policy change cycle

The eight capabilities span all possible levels of action and are deployed over time. Leadership work is needed at each level to achieve a "regime of mutual gain," that is, a system yielding "widespread benefits at reasonable costs" and tapping "people's deepest interest in their own well-being and that of others" (Crosby & Bryson, 2005, p. 360). This regime reflects shared agreements at each level of action. Clarifying the appropriate type of leadership requires considering how intrapersonal, interpersonal, intraorganizational, and interorganizational dynamics interact. For example, Crosby and Bryson (2012) argue that personal leadership, that is, specific individuals performing the leadership role, is most helpful at the beginning of a cross-sector collaboration when the group must identify windows of opportunity, stakeholders, their views, and their connections, and at the end, when assessing outcomes and accountabilities. In contrast, visionary leadership, which includes collective dynamics like coconstructing meaning, is key to devising integrative processes once the collaboration is ongoing, with attention shifting to participation in wisely designed forums where stakeholders frame and reframe the problem, solutions, and shared vision of a desired future.

### Enacting Collective Leadership in Large Collaborative Networks

Research in organizational networks sheds new light into effective leadership in contexts different from bureaucracies. This organizational form, (characterized by nodes of relationships that facilitate information sharing and joint work toward attaining a shared goal), epitomizes the idea of a



shared-power world. Networks represent the perfect context for collective leadership to emerge, and traditional leader-centric notions may in fact put at risk a network's ability to succeed (Mandell & Keast, 2009).

### Distributed Leadership Roles

Ansell and Gash (2012) highlight facilitation as the distinctive leadership quality in collaborative governance arrangements: leaders create the conditions for stakeholders to contribute to and effectively interact in the collaborative process. They identify three facilitative roles: the steward role, which protects the integrity of collaborative process itself; the mediator role, which arbitrates and nurtures relationships between stakeholders; and the catalyst role, which helps participants identify and realize value-creating opportunities. These roles may or may not be played by the same individual, and each of them may be more or less salient at different times, depending on the conditions, context, and goals of the collaboration.

Each role requires different styles and deploys different strategies. The steward role manages the image and identity of the collaborative and uses reputation and social capital to convene and ensure its inclusive, transparent, neutral, and civic character. The mediator role facilitates the construction of shared meaning, builds trust among stakeholders, acts as a broker when conflict arises, and restores the process to positive interaction. Finally, the catalyst role uses systemic thinking, frames or reframes problems, creates mutuality, and connects collaboration to innovation. The fluidity of these roles, their enactment by several persons, and the variety of possible iterations in their enactment point to the shared nature of leadership.

### Leadership Activities

Huxham and Vangen (2000) pioneered studies in network contexts that focused on a variety of sources of leadership. Drawing from the networks of service delivery they studied, they argued that leadership happens through three different media: people, as we would expect, but also through processes and structures. In this way, they illustrate that leadership is not only collective but not necessarily embodied exclusively within individuals.

They describe three categories of leadership activities that individuals use to "shape agendas and move them forward" (Huxham & Vangen, 2000, p. 1169): managing power and controlling the agenda, representing and mobilizing member organizations, and enthusing and empowering those

who can deliver collaboration aims. Individuals who initiate these activities may or may not have been positional leaders, which highlights the potential distribution of leadership in different parts of the network.

Managing power and controlling the agenda was either a medium for individual manipulation or a way to develop process through which to ensure multiple voices. The product of this activity, an inclusive agenda, would create or support the conditions for joint work among otherwise disjointed participants. In the latter case, leaders cultivated directive forms of leadership to ensure the inclusiveness needed to attain whole network goals. This work documents the simultaneous use of directive and facilitative work in networks.

Leadership activities to ensure representation and mobilization of members comprise creating the governance structure itself, including what organizations will be represented in the governing body and who those representatives will be. This early activity of formal leaders puts in place a process to foster recurrent commitment and collaboration without the leader's sustained future engagement, so that the structure becomes a potential source of leadership. Other activities to mobilize action included identifying particular capacities that each group can bring to the effort and creating the conditions for the group to contribute. Finally, getting buy-in to the collaboration goals was also critical, done by enthusing and empowering members, through traditional motivational techniques but also through processes such as seminars and workshops.

### Leadership Processes and Structures

Morse (2010) further unpacks how processes and structures become ways to enact collective leadership in collaborative networks. Participation of network members with different perspectives in organizations such as councils and prior networks not only generates shared meaning but shapes the work. For example, grant-making organizations played a convening role and fostered group agreement and mobilization by setting deadlines, clarifying expected roles, and accountability mechanisms. While not formal network leaders, individuals in these organizations replaced formal leaders in moving these leadership tasks.

Morse describes how processes like the coconstruction of common goals to which everyone is committed became a source of distributed leadership "with individuals exercising leadership in a way that develops and sustains the common purpose" (p. 241). Other processes included stakeholder meetings, committee meetings, public meetings, and large conferences where participants bring different ways of knowing and develop common ground for action. Morse points to their

boundary-spanning function: by making the boundaries of their prior identities less rigid, they break down barriers among diverse groups.

### Implications: Convergences and Cornerstones of Collective Leadership

Leadership scholars argue that considering collective dimensions of leadership raises important implications for practice, as well as for how we think about an effective postheroic leadership approach. Yet collective leadership theories are emerging, and there are no recipes or fixed set of skills that can be identified as the right formula. It is instead a time for experimentation and reflection. Hence we offer some conceptual handles that enable leaders to engage in "reflective action" (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 41) around their own leadership and aspirations to nurture other sources of leadership. We explore implications by identifying convergences across the research on collective leadership and distilling some fundamental properties, or cornerstones of collective leadership.

#### Convergences

The reviewed research on collective leadership enactments suggests that although the approaches differ in important ways, they converge around the relevance of certain metapractices that help transform individual efforts into collective achievements. We offer these metapractices as insights and guides for reflective leaders:

- *Connection.* Collective leadership requires connecting and coordinating with others in the midst of diversity. This is true whether such leadership happens within organizations, within informal working relationships among organizations, or in formal networks with institutionalized governance structures. This metapractice is well represented among the work we have reviewed, including the practices of "relating" from Ancona (2005), "representing and mobilizing member organizations" from Huxham and Vangen (2000), the "mediator" role from Ansell and Gash (2012), "creating conditions for group learning" from Fletcher (2012), and the "boundary-spanning" activities emphasized by Crosby and Bryson (2010), as well as Morse (2010).
- *Cognition.* A critical collective leadership metapractice is shaping the way audiences see things, from how they view their work and how they perceive themselves to how they view others and even how they

understand leadership itself. "Reframing discourse" from Ospina, Foldy et al. (2012), "visionary leadership" from Crosby and Bryson (2012), the "catalyst" role from Ansell and Gash (2012), and "sense making" and "visioning" from Ancona (2005) are examples of how some authors have included the importance of influencing cognition.

- *Capacity.* A hallmark of collective leadership is its commitment to the broad take-up of leadership by people at all levels, from all backgrounds, and with varying perspectives and expertise. That is why the metapractice of capacity—the process of enabling and empowering—is found among several of the researchers reviewed, including "continuous learning" from Fletcher (2012), "unleashing human energies" from Ospina, Foldy et al. (2012), and "enthusing and empowering" from Huxham and Vangen (2000).
- *Consciousness.* Consciousness or self-awareness and self-reflection include caring about one's own footprint in the world and being conscientious about how we interact with others. Fletcher (2012) calls this "self-awareness," while Crosby and Bryson (2012) call it "personal leadership."

These conceptual buckets refer to the quality of the practices that allow people to participate fully and collaborate actively so that the result is collective capacity at the team, organization, and system levels (Drath et al., 2008). This is what Raelin (2005) calls a *leaderful* environment—an organization or a system of organizations that is full of leadership. The bottom line is that in today's public environs, characterized by the complex combination of organizational forms (from bureaucracies to networks) and by new configurations that combine formal and informal authority, the purpose of leadership is to ensure that other stakeholders join, not follow, the leader.

#### Cornerstones of Collective Leadership

We also identified what appear to be fundamental attributes or cornerstones of collective leadership. This list is not exhaustive; more may well come to light. They have implications for leaders with formal authority who may be interested in enacting collective leadership in their work.

***A Wholesale Change In Thinking, Not Simply a Change in Behaviors.*** Practicing collective leadership requires that effective leaders confront their own assumptions of leadership as a relationship between a heroic leader who channels motivation toward a passive or reluctant follower. It means



recognizing other sources from which leadership can emerge and striving to create the conditions to nurture them. This includes supporting other participants to take up leadership, as well as designing processes and structures that distribute leadership roles more broadly.

For leaders promoting democratic governance, this also means accepting that engaging others in making human life more livable is public leadership work. This new conception of leadership is less about an individual leader using the right skills to offer solutions that help orchestrate change and more about facilitating joint work to "build a new whole" where new ways of framing the situation and unforeseen alternative actions (qualitatively different from the original proposed options) emerge (Innes & Booher, 1999, p. 12). When the group jointly owns these alternative frames and solutions, we can say that collective leadership is happening. Collective leadership helps establish "a new way of working" (Mandell & Keast, 2009) and, we argue, a new way of being in relation to the work.

**Directive and Collaborative Approaches.** Empirical research suggests that collective leadership can include directive behaviors that are similar to what we see in descriptions of traditional leadership, as illustrated in Huxham and Vangen's work (2000). Studies of education settings and health networks (Currie, Lockett & Suhomlinova, 2009; Martin, Currie, & Finn, 2009) also find that while network structures and processes may generate more distributed forms of leadership, formal leaders also engage in more direct complementary action inside and beyond the network boundaries to ensure change. In another case, dual-leadership structures allowed two visible leaders to share authority and develop complementary roles for the network, one more collaborative and one more directive (Ysa, Alabareda, Ramon, & Sierra, 2013). Crosby and Bryson (2012) also point to the organizational leadership capability of "structural ambidexterity" in collaborative arrangements, that is, "finding workable blends of hierarchical and participatory network structures that typically vary over time" (p. 321).

Collective leadership is not just about using the two styles. It means weaving a facilitative function that attends to relationality and a driving function that attends to outcomes (Mandell & Keast, 2009). The formal leader adapts, interprets, and differentiates in meaningful ways the unique quality of each dyadic "leader-stakeholder relationship," drawing from the most appropriate types of authority (formal, informal) to engage each relationship accordingly (Schneider, 2002, p. 216).

**Boundary Crossing.** Collective leadership by definition transgresses boundaries that we often take for granted. It opens up leadership to those

outside the boundary of positions that grant authority, like the CEO or commissioner. By doing so, it obliterates the boundary between leaders and followers.

Collective leadership also suggests practices, such as humility and vulnerability, outside the bounds of conventional leadership behaviors (Fletcher, 2012). It values capabilities traditionally considered out of bounds in bureaucratic contexts, like a process and contextual orientation, comfort with ambiguity and paradox, and commitment to continuous learning (Blandin, 2007).

But collective leadership also involves the creation of "boundary experiences," that is, "shared or joint activities *that create a sense of community and an ability to transcend boundaries among participants*" (Feldman, Khademian, Ingram, & Schneider, 2006, p. 94, cited in Morse, 2010). Their tangible manifestations (or "boundary objects"), such as an initial feasibility study, a brochure, a website, or a memorandum of agreement, help participants from "different worlds" work together to develop joint outcomes. For example, in Morse's study, a conservation network developed a river inventory study that helped to bridge scientific and local knowledge. The emergent, shared picture of the river also helped to create a consensus vision of preservation. The group process of developing the inventory became itself a source of leadership. Part of the formal leader's work is to steward the design of these boundary experiences and boundary objects.

**Emergence within Particular Contexts.** Previous research on traditional forms of leadership often abstracted actions or behaviors from their contexts, noting the importance of, for example, creating inspirational visions or acting as a role model for others regardless of the environment. Much of the work on collective leadership sees context as a fundamental characteristic of the story. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) note that context is "not external to leadership activity but one of its core constituting elements . . . Situation or context does not simply 'affect' what school leaders do as some sort of independent or interdependent variable(s); it is constitutive of leadership practice" (pp. 20–21).

Collective leadership demands a contextual orientation that views key factors surrounding the leaders' relationships with other stakeholders as endemic and implicated in the relationship. Context both frames the perceptions and activities of leaders and followers and is generated and shaped by leaders and followers. As Wallace and Tomlinson (2010) argue, leaders are "context-creating and context-dependent as they proactively negotiate the more structural aspect of their contexts" (p. 24).

Collective leadership scholars have treated context in quite varied ways. For example, in their work on organizational networks, Huxham and Vangen (2000) point to the critical role of structures in influencing leadership activity. Structures are "the organizations and individuals associated with [a collaboration] and the structural collaborations between them... Structure is a key driver of the way agendas are shaped and implemented," an essential leadership activity according to the authors (p. 1166). For Huxham and Vangen, then, contexts are local and specific—the immediate environment in which leadership happens.

Others have used a context orientation to surface invisible social dynamics that affect relationships and structures. Using a feminist lens, Fletcher (2004, 2012) argues that the traits of heroic leadership—"individualism, control, assertiveness... domination"—are traditionally associated with masculinity. On the other hand, what she calls "postheroic" leadership traits—"empathy, community, vulnerability and... collaboration"—are often seen as idealized notions of femininity (p. 650). These images are so embedded that it is impossible to disassociate collective leadership from its gendered implications.

That is why, she argues, postheroic (more relational) approaches are so widely talked up but rarely achieved. People of both sexes may genuinely hope to implement a more collective style. But it can be risky in male-dominated contexts to champion an approach that is widely seen as "womanly." A contextual orientation demands attention to the ingrained assumptions influencing workplace interactions that reproduce leader-centric practices when the environment calls for more collective approaches to leadership. Once these are visible, it is easier to counteract them directly.

## Summary

In their book *The New Public Leadership Challenge* (2010), Stephen Brookes and Keith Grint describe public leadership as a form of collective leadership that improves life in communities through the effort of public, private, and voluntary leaders. This description is particularly helpful when we consider the big changes in public administration toward more collaborative forms of governance: the creation of networks for knowledge and information sharing or for service delivery where various government agencies work together; multistakeholder networks where citizens and public employees join efforts to coproduce services; social alliances in which public agencies partner with corporations and civil society to

address collective challenges in particular policy areas or in integrated social interventions.

In this chapter we justify and describe the growing attention to collective leadership in the leadership and public management literatures and offer illustrations of how it is enacted in various contexts. We draw insights from three levels of action: as an internal organizational practice, in the context of organizational efforts to influence other actors in the external environment, and in the context of managing large, permanent networks. We identify convergences around the themes of connection, cognition, capacity, and consciousness. We distilled four cornerstones of collective leadership: it requires a wholesale change in thinking, it can include both directive and collaborative approaches, it crosses boundaries, and it grows out of particular contexts.

But even if we are not willing to define all public leadership as collective leadership, it is time to attend to the collective dimensions of leadership. Public leaders work with bureaucracy's discernible organizational boundaries, hierarchical arrangements, and formal authority on one side and networks characterized by fuzzy boundaries, flatter hierarchies, and noncontractual work relationships on the other (Schneider, 2002). The realities of the ongoing shifts in governance require incorporating more collective forms of leadership. In this context, the work of the formal leader is to broaden the sources of leadership beyond his or her own authority in a given context. This means creating the conditions for others to take up leadership and developing processes and structures that bring leadership into being without the need for a recurrent effort from the formal leader.