

Leadership for Peace

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An introduction to 'leadership' and 'followership'

This is one in a series of working papers on 'leadership for peace'. While there is a vast literature on 'leadership' and a growing literature on conflict transformation and peacebuilding, with few exceptions 'leadership' has not figured prominently as an important factor in building sustainable peace.¹ Even if the topic did get our interest, its importance cannot be researched unless we clarify our understanding of 'peacebuilding', and of 'leadership'.

This paper provides a summary introduction to some key concepts and perspectives on 'leadership', largely drawn from a small set of sources in leadership literature. It being a working paper, comments and observations are warmly welcomed.

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this working paper is to provide a basic introduction to some key concepts and key perspectives on leadership. These are concepts and perspectives from the very Western-dominated 'leadership industry'. They are often developed with a private sector audience in mind, although there is also a significant research base and target audience in the public sector. They also draw on analysis of political leadership but very little on leadership in the context of social movements. There is some modest research and analysis on leadership in 'development' contexts, but so far very little in relation to conflict transformation and peace work (peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding).

PART 1. THE HEROIC INDIVIDUAL

The prevailing image of 'leaders' is one that has been called the '**heroic**' individual. The 'heroic' individual is typically male and located at the top of a hierarchy. He accomplishes exceptional things because of his exceptional abilities and skills.

Given the emphasis on the individual and her/his exceptional abilities, it is not surprising that there are many, similar, lists of **key characteristics or 'traits'** that, when encountered together in one individual, tend to make that person quite exceptional. Some of the important talents are not only intelligence but also creativity; emotional intelligence and strong interpersonal skills which includes strong communication skills; self-confidence and courage; self-knowledge and authenticity; and a great capacity to adapt.

Core things that such exceptional individuals do and **do very well** are: grasping the broader picture (a holistic perspective or 'systems sensitivity') and making sense of it; building broad networks of relationships within and across institutions; creating a compelling vision of the future, and managing the various tasks to achieve that vision, often in inventive ways.

The leadership literature also contains many reflections on **leadership styles**. The critical domain where these show themselves is in the **decision-making**. Styles get situated on a spectrum ranging from autocratic to highly participatory decision-making.

It has been pointed out that 'leadership' largely takes place in '**small group**' situations, be it of a team of close advisors, a Cabinet, or an informal or formal setting with 'key people' from other institutions. Yet political leadership also involves the ability to connect to and communicate directly with **large crowds and audiences**. In both situations, verbal and non-verbal communication skills are very important.

A distinction tends to get made between '**transformational**' and '**transactional**' leadership. 'Transformational' leaders are those that seek to go beyond the status quo and business-as-usual, and appeal to the higher motivations of their followers i.e. their ability to see beyond their immediate

self-interest and mobilize for a greater common good. It is sometimes argued that 'transformational' leaders largely use '**soft power**' i.e. the art of persuasion. 'Transactional' leaders by contrast stay within the confines of the current situation, tend to appeal to more baser motivations such as greed, fear and even hatred, and largely use '**hard power**' i.e. the (threat of) rewards and punishment.

A distinction has sometimes been made between '**managers**' and '**leaders**'. Managers can then be portrayed as functional operators, using the rules and formal authority to keep institutions going. They can get contrasted with 'leaders' who aspire to often more radical change, and who rely on vision, values and trust more than the rule book.

It is important to note that not all leadership experts agree with the above dichotomies between 'managers' and 'leaders' and between 'transformational' and 'transactional' leaders'. In recent years there is a greater recognition that 'leaders' also need to have serious 'management' skills: ultimately their credibility and appeal will depend on their ability to implement and deliver. Secondly, significant confusion has arisen around 'transformational' and 'transactional', because the labels can be associated with the 'objectives' of the leader (status quo, incremental or more radically transformational); with the 'style' of the leader (the relative use of hard or soft / inspirational power), and with the motives in followers that leaders appeal to (higher motives or more basic self-interest). It has been argued that there are no necessary links between 'objectives', 'style' and 'appeal': some leaders have been transformational in their objectives but largely used hard power, while others have largely used the soft power of persuasion to achieve at best incremental objectives.

It has then be argued that the most impressive 'leaders' master a broad repertoire of options, and will choose an approach that is the most contextually appropriate. Sometimes they will appeal to higher motives of followers, other times (also) to self-interest. They will use both soft and hard power, in a contextually appropriate manner that turns it into '**smart power**'. The key skill then is **contextual intelligence**: being able to accurately assess the broader context but also every particular situation, and find the most appropriate approach to it.

Three final points:

- Not all leadership is for the greater good. Leaders often mobilize followers for visions and objectives that not only exclude many others but are even detrimental to their interests and wellbeing. Such approach often leads to tensions and potentially to violence. There are ample examples of very effective '**leaders**' that '**mislead**'.
- Power need not be understood as a zero-sum game, i.e. in terms of '**power over**'. There is also the '**power within**' (a healthy sense of identity and self-confidence), '**power to**' (the capacity to act, to exercise independent agency), and '**power with**' (the greater power acquired through collaborative or collective action).

- There is a strong **gender bias** in the prevailing image of 'leaders' – it is largely associated with men.

PART 2. THE INCOMPLETE LEADER

There undoubtedly are some exceptional individuals that are widely recognized as influential 'leaders'. There are undoubtedly also many others who have most of the required characteristics but whom circumstances have not propelled into publicly visible leadership roles. The large majority of us however do not have the full complement of skills and the full mastery of all possible approaches, at least not at all stages in life. So we need a less idealized perspective on leadership.

The first cautionary tale comes from the observation that there are leaders with great skills and impressive achievements, but also with big egos. We can call them the '**narcissist**' leader'. In the end this starts working against them because they stubbornly refuse to hear alternative and critical views, share and convey only the information that supports their message and image, and no longer pay sufficient attention to the challenges and details of implementation. They take all the space and do not allow others to develop or demonstrate their leadership abilities.

Leaders with a healthy self-awareness will know that they are intrinsically incomplete. They are better at certain things than others, and recognize there may be important perspectives they can't spontaneously identify. Therefore they surround themselves with a capable team. Critical here is **not to choose a team of like-minded individuals**, but to bring in diversity, complementary skills and alternative, even critical, voices.

'**Servant leadership**' may seem a contradictory concept unless one can understand and accept that there are many ways to serve, and leading is one of them. A servant-leader is a servant at heart, i.e. a person whose nature is to be focused on the needs of others. Servant leadership therefore is a leadership style but also at a deeper level a certain personality disposition. A key reflex of the 'servant leader' is listening. They respond to any problem first by listening to a variety of colleagues but also wider stakeholders. In their approach they are also very much oriented towards enabling the energy and intelligence of others, and hence towards coaching and not controlling.

The challenges in today's organizations and in the wider context, are typically such that no single institution, however competent and well resourced, can deal with them alone. Most of the time progress or success will be dependent on the cooperation of people over whom we have no formal authority. So a command-and-control approach will not work. Instead what is required is **collaborative or lateral leadership**. This requires active investment in networking and relationship building, including with individuals and organizations that may not be 'like-minded' but whose constructive engagement and cooperation is likely to be required at some point or other. Collaborative leaders are consummate networkers, they consult extensively, they know how to approach others as 'peers' and not as

'targets', and they deliberately seek to build coalitions.

PART 3. DISPERSED POWER, DISPERSED LEADERSHIP

If the above considerations about the 'incomplete leader' still put certain individuals very center-stage, albeit no longer alone, then now we encounter perspectives that more radically takes the spotlight away from that allegedly exceptional individual.

The notion of '**distributed leadership**' does away with the idea that leadership resides with people 'at the top'. 'Distributed leadership' fits better with a framing of leadership in terms of function, rather than in terms of position. It concentrates on where and how leadership occurs, rather than who does the leading. Different people then can contribute in different ways: some will be champions of the 'idea', others may provide substantive contributions to a task, yet others provide process and procedural contributions such as e.g. group work facilitation, still others create environments for relationships to be established and grow etc. Central in this may be the 'connector' or 'coordinator', who not only connects the multiple leaders to each other, but also tries to ensure that they can make their functional contributions in the most optimal way.

Earlier on, our attention was drawn to the importance of contextual intelligence, that would enable 'leaders' to choose the contextually most appropriate leadership style and the most appropriate form of 'smart power'. But a 'distributed leadership perspective' goes further and suggests that in different situations different people will contribute through exercising some form of functional leadership. In other words, in this perspective, 'leadership' itself is fluid and will change over time and with different situations. Any major achievements or successes therefore will be the result of the leadership of a large number of individuals, not just of one.

The focus on 'leaders' tends to obscure the fact that 'leaders' don't exist without 'followers'. It **is more accurate to talk about 'leadership' than about 'leaders'**. The term 'leadership' signals that we are talking here about relational dynamics and not about intrinsic characteristics of individuals. It is not the case that 'leadership' emanates from 'leaders', rather the reverse: 'leaders' derive from the exercise of 'leadership'.

Follower behaviour can be more influenced by other followers than by leaders. The pressure to conform and the desire to be seen as 'part of' the larger group means that followers may be shaped far more by peer pressure and group psychology, than by their 'leaders'

Focusing on '**followership**' rather than 'followers' also highlights that 'followers' have a choice, have agency – and need to exercise that choice. They may be lower ranked but have options in how they respond to that ranking. Loyalty to a leader should be in exchange of the leader demonstrating the responsibility to lead wisely.

If followers can exercise choice, then whether one is a 'good' or a 'bad' follower is not related to whether one follows the rules and orders, but whether the 'follower' is actively engaged, and exercises her or his professional and moral consciousness.

One author has argued that

- To do nothing – to be in no way involved- is to be a bad follower;
- To support a leader who is good – effective and ethical – is to be a good follower;
- To support a leader who is bad – ineffective and/or unethical- is to be a bad follower;
- To oppose a leader who is good – effective and ethical- is to be a bad follower;
- To oppose a leader who is bad- ineffective and/or ethical – is to be a good follower.

'Followers' may have less authority, power and influence than 'leaders' but they are not without. By exposing, then opposing and ultimately challenging an existing leadership, they may themselves become 'leaders'. Followers can be agents of change. In other words, '**responsible followership**' is as if not more important than 'responsible leadership'

Few people are and have always been 'leaders'. Overwhelmingly, even when apparently at the top of an organizational pyramid, individuals have 'subordinates' but also 'peers' and others they may be accountable to. They are **simultaneously 'leaders' and 'followers'**. The experience of the dual role should actually encourage us to create an enabling environment for those under our 'command', because we can experience ourselves the benefits if our 'superiors' create an enabling environment for us. Effective performance then derives from the ability to be simultaneously a leader of subordinates, a responsible follower of someone else as leader (the formal vertical relationships) and a great networker and coalition builder also among peers (the horizontal relationship)

PART 4. THE SPACE TO LEAD

The ability to exercise effective leadership is not only a factor of our individual talents and skills, our surrounding ourselves with complementary others, our readiness to encourage others to take initiative and to also lead contextually, our encouragement of our followers to set and uphold high professional and moral standards, and our skill in developing collaborative relationships and coalitions.

Even if we had all that, we can still be faced with constraining factors in our environment.

A critical one are the **socio-cultural expectations about 'leaders' and 'leadership'** in a given environment. Very often people have a certain idea about 'how leaders behave', and not meeting that stereotyped expectation can prevent one from becoming or remaining an effective leader, irrespective of the appropriateness of how one actually goes about trying to achieve important results. If the expectation is that a leaders shows himself (sic) 'strong', then failing to exercise 'hard power' may undermine one's credibility as leader.

Historically and globally 'leaders' have largely been '**elder men**'. This creates an impediment to the effective leadership of women and youth, at least beyond leading other women or other youth (networks, movements, NGOs...). This association of 'leaders' with a male gerontocracy is only slowly eroding, at variable speed in different parts of the world. By and large it remains intrinsically more difficult for women and for younger people to exercise significant leadership, including over men and others that are older.

The **nature and strength of legal frameworks** is another factor that will shape the exercise of leadership. Two countries may have a Presidential system for example, but in one the President will have strong executive powers and in the other 'hard power' will largely reside with the Prime Minister. In the latter case, the Presidential function is more 'symbolic' than executive, and the incumbent will have to rely much more on 'soft power' to influence.

Most leadership is exercised within institutions (formal or informal, traditional or modern) and institutions are made up, among other things, of norms, rules and regulations. The potential influence of individual personalities and individual agencies – be it for self interest or for the public good- is greater in **weak institutions**. That can also create an incentive for self-absorbed leaders to keep institutions weak.

Finally, some have coined the concept of '**change space**' to signal that not all environments are open to leadership-led change. The 'environment' here can be understood as within an institution, but also the configuration of a set of institutions (and influential individuals) in a given context. A strong 'change space' is then seen as the combination of three enabling factors: there is a broad *acceptance* that change is needed; those who might be driving the change have the required (formal or informal) *authority* (and accountability), and the *required abilities or capacities* are in place. Each of these three factors is a variable. The 'change space' is the result of the intersection of the three variables. If there is high acceptance, high authority and high capacity, then the environment is very conducive to leadership-led change. If there is low acceptance, low authority and low capacity, then it is very unlikely that leaders will be able to effect meaningful change. In such circumstance, potential change agents do best to work on the conditions (variables) that influence the change space, rather than try to achieve change against the odds.

PART 1. THE HEROIC INDIVIDUAL

1. The Conventional Image of 'Leaders'

The conventional idea about 'leaders' is one of exceptional individuals. They are exceptional in that they manage to mobilize significant numbers of people to achieve or try to achieve exceptional –and positive– things. We believe they can do this because they have exceptional skills.

Great 'business' leaders build very successful businesses more or less from scratch, or are applauded because they manage to turn around a failing company. Bill Gates for Microsoft, Steve Jobs for Apple, Jack Welch for General Electric and Lee Iacocca, who revived the Chrysler company in the 1980s, are examples. Nandan Nilekani, CEO of Infosys Technologies Ltd. and Mo Ibrahim, founder of Celtel and creator of the Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership, are other outstanding names.

'Political leaders' are individuals that achieve a great political transformation or try to do so. Aung San Suu Kyi would be an iconic example.ⁱⁱ Or rather Nelson Mandela or Martin Luther King, because most of us still tend to think about 'men' when we think about 'leaders'. All three of them exhibit some characteristics that many of us admire in great political leaders: each of them has stood up to much more powerful forces, at a high personal price but strengthened by unshakable moral and political principles. Each stands for a 'positive cause' i.e. an inclusive democratic society where every individual is respected equally. Each is an inspiration to millions of people. Each is or has been made into a 'charismatic' individual, a quality that exhibits itself also in their personal demeanour and their public speeches. Yet each of them remained modest.

The examples also illustrate that we see 'great leaders' at 'the top', be it of a political party, a social movement, or a business enterprise. Their vision and creativity allow them to see with great clarity the destination and how to navigate the path to get there – however long it may take. That allows them to be the 'trail blazers' and our 'guides'. They also have an exceptional ability to communicate and persuade. So we have confidence in the abilities of such individuals, and are therefore prepared to follow where they take us (see Rothberg 2012).

Other 'big names' can come to mind when we think about 'great leaders'. Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Kwamé Nkrumah in Ghana, Kemal Ataturk in Turkey and Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore have all been crucial 'nation builders' of their respective new states. The 'Founding Fathers' of the US (the expression was coined by Warren Harding in 1916) remain an active source of inspiration as individuals who helped shape the fate of millions by giving them (the aspiration of) greater freedoms, a sense of identity and dignity.

If a hallmark of 'leadership' is the ability of an individual to inspire large numbers of people and take them on a path that will lead them to greater 'freedom', then of course many spiritual and religious

individuals will also qualify. Some of these have felt themselves to be the messengers of the word of God (e.g. Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Bahá'u'lláhⁱⁱⁱ), while others sought to enlighten humankind about the essential nature of existence and the sources of suffering (e.g. Buddha).

Socio-Political Leadership and Violence: Many great leaders have been involved in 'struggles' against oppression and aggression, be it from a colonizing power, a neighbouring country, or a brutal elite in their own. Some retained a non-violent struggle (Aung San Suu Kyi and Mohandas Gandhi), others had to or choose to fight to achieve their vision for a better world. Simon Bolivar fought for independence from colonial Spain, George Washington for independence from Britain and Winston Churchill against the Nazi aggression. Abraham Lincoln did not shy away from the American Civil War, and the African National Congress used non-violent and violent means in its struggle against Apartheid. (Nelson Mandela was not taken off a US terrorist list until 2008!) From that perspective, Ho Chi Ming would be a greater leader than Lyndon B. Johnson, as he too sought to liberate his people from colonial overlords and their dependent regimes.

"If there is some corner of the world which has remained peaceful, but with a peace based on injustices the peace of a swamp with rotten matter fermenting in its depths - we may be sure that that peace is false. Violence attracts violence. Let us repeat fearlessly and ceaselessly: injustices bring revolt, either from the oppressed or from the young, determined to fight for a more just and more human world"

- Hélder Câmara

Leadership and mobilization: If the ability to inspire and mobilise a large number of people in a certain direction, is a hallmark of 'leadership', then surely Adolf Hitler or Slobodan Milosevic were great leaders? Surely they inspired 'the masses' – Hitler and Milosevic got voted into power by their large

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."

- Desmond Tutu

followership. And they had a compelling vision – of a Thousand Year Reich or a Greater Serbia for example. In the end, Hitler and Milosevic got military defeated, and it can be argued that they led their people to misery. But suppose they had won? Given that 'history' is typically made up of the victor's narrative, would we then see them now differently? There are also religious figures that had or have a strong following, but who are controversial in the eyes of many others: Chandra Mohan Jain, who later became known as Baghwan Shree Rajneesh and subsequently as Osho, continues to inspire many. Sun Myung

Moon founded the Unification Church in 1954 as a new religious movement, and remains vibrant even if some see it as a sect. Various televangelists in the US have acquired audiences of millions and can certainly be considered 'opinion-leaders'.

In short, 'leadership' qualities, understood as the ability to attract and inspire large numbers of people with a compelling vision, cannot by itself be considered a 'positive' phenomenon. The vision of some

leaders is very exclusive; it promises a better present and future to their followers but not for all the others. This typically increases division and strife and may result in violence. Leaders can 'mislead'. We need to differentiate between 'good leadership' and 'leadership for good'. But even those with a more inclusive and ultimately peaceful vision have had to confront the realities of the world, with its structural and overt violence, and find answers to the questions about personal struggle and collective struggle, non-violence and violent resistance.

2. Leadership Characteristics and Competencies

If 'leaders' are exceptional individuals because they have exceptional talents and skills, then it becomes relevant to try and identify the latter. In the sea of writings on 'leadership' we therefore can find regular lists and descriptions of those. Different authors express this in different ways, but there is quite a lot of convergence on key characteristics of effective leaders. One author, studying leadership in the UN (Hochschild 2010:18-22) offered the following list:

- Authenticity and integrity
- Self-knowledge and emotional intelligence
- Intelligence, intuition and creativity
- Courage
- An understanding of power and influencing
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Strong verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Self-confidence and optimism
- Adaptive capacity and the ability to perform different roles
- Engagement while also able to remain personally somewhat detached

There are multiple variations and expansion on this that either repeat or add to the above list (see e.g. Ancona et alii 2007:3, Bolden 2004:17-18). Some other key competencies that tend to be highlighted are:

- Strategic thinking: which refer to the ability to broadly scan the environment in a holistic and forward looking manner, to have a 'systems sensitivity'iv;
- Sense-making: highlighting those aspects in the wider environment that are believed to be relevant and even critical for the institution, and why they are;
- Visioning: creating a compelling picture of a desired future.

When considered in the abstract, each of these characteristics seems very laudable and positive. Yet in real world contexts, any characteristics can also be overplayed until it backfires. This was underscored for example in a study on leadership in the relief industry (Buchanan-Smith & Kriven 2011:6):

“The ‘magic’ that can transform a list of skills from ‘competence’ to ‘excellence’ is often to do with the essence of the individual and how that person engages with the context in which they find themselves, the people with whom they are working, and with themselves. In fact, the study found that when a particular leadership strength is overplayed it can become a weakness: a leader’s tenacity and energy can, for example, result in pushing colleagues too hard, with negative effects for the team and the programme. This can lead to burnout.”

Similarly, leaders can possess a vision, but also become possessed by a vision, failing to pay attention to the challenges of implementation or no longer able to adjust or attune it to reality. The ability to ‘stay the course’ can be an expression of the extraordinary conviction and determination that leadership sometimes requires, and yet in certain circumstances be an extraordinarily foolish thing to do. The exercise of leadership ultimately is determined by psychological factors and drives, as much if not sometimes more as by rational considerations (Wood & Petriglieri 2009).

3. Leadership Styles

The leadership literature contains also many reflections on leadership styles. Leadership styles can be distinguished on the basis of the attitude with which leaders approach potential followers and in particular how they approach decision-making in relation to followers. Note that ‘decision-making’ by itself is not automatically related to ‘leadership’. The judges of a constitutional court for example make decisions that have significant legal, social and political impacts, but they would be considered as ‘arbitrators’ rather than as ‘leaders’. In other words, all ‘leaders’ take decisions but not all decision-makers are ‘leaders’.

The styles move on a continuum from autocratic decision-making to encouraging followers to make decisions. One classification of possible styles is the following (From McCauley, cited in Hochschild 2010:23)

- Directive: gives clear instructions and demands compliance. This is the classical command-and-control style;
- Achievement oriented: sets ambitious goals and high standards and expects followers to meet them. Some would call this ‘instrumental leadership’, that is very functional and task oriented;
- Supportive: expresses concerns for followers and creates a conducive environment
- Participative: involves subordinates in decisions and takes their views and suggestions into account.

Any of these styles can be matched with the exercise of leadership, but sticking to one style –because it fits best with one’s personality and preferences– would be a form of ‘poor leadership’. Indeed, the advice to potential or actual leaders however is not to opt consistently for a certain style, but to

develop a broader repertoire of styles and to use the one that is most appropriate to the situation.

The classical example of this is of course that of 'crisis situations', when the tendency is to expect leaders to 'take command' and be 'decisive' – and not continue with slower consultative approaches that may be most appropriate in more 'normal' circumstances. A word of caution however is needed here. There may be a presumption that consultative and participatory approaches to leadership result in lack of focus and speed, and hence are a 'costly' way of working that groups and institutions cannot always afford. Yet some experts have pointed out that what really slows things down is parochial interests and group- or institutional politicking among senior players, not collegial ways of working as such (Ibarra & Hansen 2011). Efficiency in decision-making does not automatically guarantee effective decisions. Moreover, leaders who go into 'command-and-control' mode because of a crisis may lose credibility and the loyalty of their followers if their leadership is seen as a major contributing factor to the situation having become a crisis in the first place.

4. Leadership, Small Groups and Large Audiences

It has been pointed out that 'collective decision-making' takes place mostly in small groups. (Wood 2000:1). This can be a small group of advisors and allies, but also a small group of individuals from different institutions and with very different, even opposing, histories and interests. Political peace agreements are an example. If that is the case, then the ability to communicate one-on-one or in small groups is more critical than and can even compensate for weaker public communication skills. Yet individuals have also risen to and maintained positions of power through their skill in appealing to the masses.

5. Transformational and Transactional Leadership

James Burns first introduced the concept of 'transforming leadership' in 1978. Bernard Bass in 1985 expanded the work of Burns and changed 'transforming' into 'transformational'. Some see this as two fundamentally different types of 'leadership', based on three core characteristics:

- 'Transformational' leaders are those that seek to go beyond the status quo and business-as-usual, while 'transactional' leaders stay within the confines of the current situation;
- 'Transformational leaders' appeal to the higher motivations of their followers i.e. their ability to see beyond their immediate self-interest and to mobilize for a greater common good. 'Transactional' leaders by contrast tend to appeal to more baser motivations such as greed, fear and even hatred;
- 'Transformational leaders' largely use 'soft power' i.e. the art of persuasion. Transactional leaders by contrast largely use 'hard power' i.e. the (threat of) rewards and punishment (see e.g. Nye 2008:62).

Not everybody agrees with this radical dichotomy. Nye (2008:64-65) has recommended that we

clearly distinguish between the 'objectives' (status quo, incremental or more radical and transformational), the 'style' (the use of hard or soft/inspirational power) and the 'follower appeal' (baser motives of self-interest, or higher moral and public interest motives – the transformational leader also seeks to 'transform the follower'). He then provides examples to show how there is no necessary link between objectives, style and follower appeal. There have been leaders that were transformational in their objectives but used mostly hard power, and inspirational leaders that only sought incremental objectives. (idem: 66). Others take the same perspective as Nye in considering transformational and transactional leadership not radically different but complementary styles that the same person(s) can use in different contexts (e.g. Antonakis & Hooijberg 2008).

6. Leaders and Managers

A distinction tends to be made between 'leaders' and 'managers'. The 'manager' label acquired connotations of 'technocrat', 'administrator', people who implement in accordance with the rule book. But such 'managers' were seen as not providing 'leadership' i.e. the ability to vision something inspiring beyond the current situation, and to inspire others to work together to achieve such higher goal. They get associated with 'transactional' leadership.

A quote from a report on UN leadership illustrates the point:

"The manager's focus is mainly within the organization. The leadership task relates more to the big picture, the external environment, the future and organizational change. The leader is less the promoter of rules than of values, less of an administrator than an innovator. The role of the manager is to conserve and maintain the status quo; the leader's is to challenge it.

A manager always forms part of an organizational structure and has an explicit supervisory role. A leader often is, but need not be part of an organizational structure. A manager is usually appointed, whereas to be a leader an appointment or an election to a leadership position is not sufficient: A leader has to be recognized as such by others. The manager relies on control and direct supervision to influence others. The leader influences by inspiring trust, through vision and through upholding values." (Hochschild 2010: 15)

Leadership in this view tends to be seen as ultimately superior, because it is 'leadership' that brings about change, not 'management'. It are leaders that will recognize that new challenges may require new ways of doing things, and that will push and pull others to learn them.

In recent years, the thinking about the relationship between 'leaders' and 'managers' has changed to an appreciation that both are needed. Although not all 'managers' are also 'leaders', 'leaders' need to be 'managers'. Someone who is strong on visioning but unable to implement anything will ultimately be seen as failing to deliver. The most effective leaders therefore are also good managers of the

institutional environment (which can be an organization, but also a political party, or a less well organized 'movement', or even a set of relevant but competing institutions) in which they find themselves, and through which they have to work to achieve the vision. Vision without implementation is ineffective.

"Good leadership is not merely inspiring people with a noble vision, but involves creating and maintaining the systems and institutions that allow effective and moral implementation." (Nye 2008:129)

7. Leadership and Power

Power is the ability to affect the behaviour of others to get the outcomes that you want. In essence there are three ways of doing so:

- You can coerce them with threats;
- You can induce them with the offer of benefits; and
- You can attract and co-opt them.

Nye (2008) has written extensively on 'hard' and 'soft power', and introduced the notion of 'smart power'. Hard power uses threats and inducements or carrots and sticks. Soft power relies on attracting people to you and/or your values and vision and to persuade them to support/follow you. Soft and hard powers are related, because both are means to try to achieve your purpose by affecting the behaviour of others. Sometimes soft and hard power will reinforce each other; sometimes they send contradictory messages and will interfere with each other. Although there is a growing appreciation for 'soft power' in leadership theory and in international politics theory, like hard power it can be used for constructive or for destructive purposes, i.e. soft power can be used to manipulate for private benefit rather than the common good.

Importantly, 'soft power' is not always better than 'hard power'. Ultimately much will depend on the context. The most effective leaders use what Nye has called 'smart power', i.e. a mix of soft and hard power that is appropriate to the specific situation and the nature of the players involved.

Once again we see that one of the most critical skills of effective leaders is the ability to choose the approach (or mix of approaches) that is most appropriate to a particular situation. This has been called 'contextual intelligence'.

This refers to the intuitive diagnostic skill to understand an evolving environment and to capitalize on trends, while also understanding the distribution of different power resources and the positions and strengths, needs and interests, of various stakeholders, and moving with rather than against the flow of events to implement a strategy. Effective leaders will adjust their style to the situation and to their followers' needs (see Nye 2008 ch. 4).

More specifically 'contextual intelligence' implies the ability:

- To correctly assess the 'political' culture of the leader's group; this, as well as the formal structures and rules of groups or organizations will determine what power resources are available to leaders in any particular situation, and how that relates to their preferred choice of style;
- To understand the changing needs of potential followers: how much do people want change, what types of change do they want, what sort of resistance to change and where is likely to crop up; how can coalitions be created to overcome resistance; will hard power commands be accepted or turn out counterproductive; and
- To know which decision to make, and which to leave to others. The latter works best when people have been well prepared and trained in advance.

'Hard power' tends to see power as a limited resource and hence the exercise of power as a zero-sum game: the more power you have, the less I have. Inevitably such perspective generates power-contests and a reluctance to share power. A more thoughtful reflection and reframing of power come from John Gaventa and others who have developed the 'power cube'.

*"Often power is thought of as a form of control of one person or group over others. In this sense **power "over"** refers to the ability of relatively powerful actors action to affect the actions and thought of relatively powerless. But power can also be used in a more positive sense, referring to the power to bring about desired change in ones' lives or those of others. In this sense **power "to"** refers to the capacity to act; to exercise agency and to realize the potential of rights, citizenship or voice.*

***Power "within"** refers to gaining the sense of self-identity, confidence and awareness that is a pre-condition for action. **Power "with"** refers to the synergy which can emerge through partnerships and collaboration with others, or through processes of collective action and alliance building (Gaventa 2009:6).*

'Power with' often generates greater 'power to', and is often best generated through 'softer' approaches that develop networks of trust and encourage collaborative approaches that generate benefits for wider circles than only oneself and a narrow group of followers.

PART 2. THE INCOMPLETE LEADER

There undoubtedly are some exceptional individuals that are widely recognized as influential 'leaders'. There are undoubtedly also many others who have most of the required characteristics but whom circumstances have not propelled into publicly visible leadership roles. The large majority of us

however do not have the full complement of skills and the full mastery of all possible approaches, at least not at all stages in life. So we need a less idealized perspective on leadership.

1. Narcissism and Greed

Leaders need a lot of self-confidence. Steve Jobs was one exceptional business leader whose belief in his own vision and intuition has become quite legendary.

“Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice.”
– Steve Jobs

Great leaders sometimes have or develop big egos. They may be very skilled and great achievers, but they risk losing touch with reality because they

- stubbornly refuse to consider alternative and competing approaches, acknowledging only information that supports his or her vision;
- start to select the information they convey and hence to distort the picture they paint, selecting only the aspects that support their message – deluding even themselves in the end; and
- eventually sour relationships with colleagues and subordinates, limit the development of future leaders, and encourage an action-oriented culture that fails to take sufficient account of the detail of administration and implementation (Bolden 2004:25-26).

“... larger-than-life leaders are almost invariably driven by a need for recognition, power and self-promotion that is key to their success, and occasionally their downfall. Such leaders tend to express a clear vision and are capable of inspiring followers through their charisma and communication abilities. On the negative side however, they are often sensitive to criticism, lack empathy, have a distaste for mentoring and development, and are intensely competitive.”
(idem:26)

We may add to this that they can also become very greedy and obsessed with amassing wealth. In the end such individuals, however talented and driven, do more harm than good. Both leaders and followers therefore need to be very attentive to and cautious about the ‘pathological element’ in leadership (Wood & Petriglieri 2009:4).

“It marks a big step in a man’s development when he comes to realize that others can be called in to help him do a better job than he can do alone.”
– Andrew Carnegie

2. Complementary Teams

Virtually nobody can combine the essential characteristics of good leadership all the time and in all situations. Most people are not equally good at everything, even if through training and experience they can get better at a skill that didn’t come naturally. Neither do even the most talented individuals make the best possible judgment all the time.

Great leaders recognize their intrinsic incompleteness, and therefore surround themselves with a capable and carefully chosen team. Here the quality of leadership can show: The temptation to surround yourself with like-minded people or even worse, with sycophants who will praise whatever you choose to do, is great. This is a mistake, and an indicator of vanity and/or weakness. The art is to create a team of multi-skilled advisors and deputies that have skills complementary to your own, and that bring perspectives that will be different and at times even contradictory. You want to avoid the trap of 'group think'.

"It is well documented that we tend to recruit people who are like us. You have to resist this. You are not forming a club of friends, you have to bring in people who you may not like, but who are complementary." (K. Annan, quoted in Hochschild 2010:104)

"Some bosses hire only those of like mind. A leader has to surround himself with a complementary staff. (...) being objective about one's own personality, including flaws, is critical. I know my desire to keep initiatives moving sometimes exposes me to acting hastily. One of the reasons I worked successfully with Denny for about twenty years now is that he takes precisely the opposite course, always considering every contingency before pulling the trigger on an initiative. If I were more like Denny I'd probably do well to hire someone more like me." (Giuliani 2002:111)

Building such a complementary but also diverse and sometimes divergent team is a major leadership skill.^v

3. Servant Leadership

The notion of 'servant leadership' was developed by Robert Greenleaf in his 1970 essay 'The Servant as Leader' (revised in 1973). He acknowledged that 'servant leadership' may seem a contradictory concept unless one can understand and accept that there are many ways to serve, and leading is one of them. A servant-leader is a servant at heart, i.e. a person whose nature is to be focused on the needs of others. Servant leadership therefore is a leadership style but also at a deeper level a certain personality disposition. A key reflex of the servant leader is listening. They respond to any problem first by listening to a variety of colleagues but also wider stakeholders.

Keith (2010) has summarized the seven key characteristics of 'servant leaders':

- Self-awareness: If we want to be effective servant-leaders, we need to be aware of who we are and how we impact others. Other people are watching and reacting to our personalities, our strengths and weaknesses, our biases, our skills and experiences, and the way we talk and move and act. We need to take the time to think about how we behave, and why, and when, and consider whether there are other, better, more appropriate, more effective, more

thoughtful ways to behave.

- **Listening:** Servant-leaders listen in as many ways as possible. (...) By listening, servant-leaders are able to identify the needs of their colleagues and customers. That puts them in a good position to meet those needs.
- **Changing the Pyramid:** One of the obstacles to listening is the traditional organizational hierarchy—the pyramid. Often, members of the organization look up toward the top of the pyramid, and focus on pleasing their “bosses”. But if everyone is looking up to please his or her boss, who is looking out, and paying attention to the needs of the customers? That’s why servant-leaders talk about inverting the pyramid, or laying it on its side, so that everyone in the organization is focused on the people whom the organization is designed to serve.
- **Developing Your Colleagues:** Work should provide people with opportunities to learn and grow and fulfill their potential. When your colleagues grow, the capacity of your organization grows. Developing colleagues includes a commitment to extensive on-the-job training, as well as formal education, new assignments, and internal promotions.
- **Coaching, not Controlling:** Coaching and mentoring is a good way to develop people. Organizations need rules and regulations, but trying to control people doesn’t bring out their best. Servant-leaders bring out the best in their colleagues by engaging, inspiring, coaching, and mentoring.
- **Unleashing the Energy and Intelligence of Others:** After developing and coaching their colleagues, servant-leaders unleash the energy and potential of their colleagues. People need experience making their own decisions, because occasions may arise when they need to be the leaders, or make a decision that they normally don’t make. Servant-leaders unleash everyone and encourage them to make the maximum contribution they can make to the organization and the people it serves.
- **Foresight:** Robert Greenleaf believed that foresight is the central ethic of leadership. He said that “prescience, or foresight, is a better than average guess about what is going to happen when in the future.” In his view, foresight is the “lead” that the leader has. If you aren’t out in front, you really aren’t leading – you are just reacting. And if you are just reacting, you may run out of options, and get boxed in, and start making bad decisions – including unethical ones.

These are the essential practices of servant leadership. They are about paying attention to people, developing people, and looking ahead so that the servant-leader and his colleagues will be able to continue serving others.

4. Collaborative or Lateral Leadership

“A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a moulder of consensus.”
– Martin Luther King, Jr.

More often than not we find ourselves confronted with complex challenges wherein progress or success is dependent on the cooperation of people over whom we have no formal authority. The command-and-control approach of ‘I lead and you follow’ simply doesn’t work here. This is typically the case where we try to manage conflict and build peace. We will usually not have the resources (financial but also quantity and quality of people) to do it alone; we will not have perceived legitimacy in all territories and at all levels (from the local to the national) and in all circles (e.g. among governmental authorities, civil society, among international actors). And if we don’t manage to get certain actors to engage constructively, we may find that the absence of their support or their active obstruction may prevent us from achieving our objectives.

So we need to develop lateral or collaborative leadership styles and skills, and invest purposefully in building internal and external relationships and networks that eventually can persuade others ‘who matter’ to work together with you to achieve a certain objective. And where we can’t get constructive engagement from all those ‘who matter’, then we must build coalitions or movements for greater cumulative impact (see also Andrews et alii 2010:4). This requires collaborative or lateral leadership. How can you be a collaborative leader?

- *Consummate Networker*: Look beyond your functional silo to identify people that matter i.e. that exercise formal but also informal influence. Organigrams do not necessarily provide the most accurate picture of this. Look for a personalized contact, develop the relationships. The people ‘that matter’ are not necessarily those whom you find ‘like-minded’. Often you need to reach out particularly to the ‘unlike-minded’;
- *Consult Extensively*: You can be clear about the outcome you want to achieve, but go and see those whose buy-in you need to get not only their reactions to your ideas but also their own ideas – and their views on the process to achieve the desired outcome;
- *Constructive Persuasion and Negotiation*: Deal with others as ‘peers’ and not as ‘targets’. Don’t use persuasion and negotiation as tools for manipulation, but genuinely seek mutual benefits.
- *Build Coalitions*: A collective effort to achieve a certain objective, particularly involving key people and those who will be most affected by what you seek to achieve, has much more chance of being successful than if you try to go it alone (Harvard Management Update Dec. 2003).

“A leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him... But of a good leader who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: We did it ourselves.”
– Lao Tse

Establishing and nurturing these relationships requires an investment of time, and a personal engagement in order to generate some positive ‘human chemistry’, that may seem impossible when we have so many urgent and shorter term things to accomplish. But having invested in developing such social and political capital may turn out vital for you to accomplish the more challenging but also more important changes.

PART 3. DISPERSED POWER, DISPERSED LEADERSHIP

1. Distributed Leadership

The notion of ‘distributed leadership’ does away with the idea that leadership resides with people ‘at the top’. It asserts that in the multitude of smaller and bigger challenges that exist every day in different locations and at different levels, a multitude of people will exercise shorter or longer, smaller or more significant forms of ‘leadership’.

“We also believe there is sense to the idea that leadership generally involves multiple parties rather than lone individuals. This sense emerges in the simple idea that multiple functions are required to effect change through multiple stages, requiring multiple parties to provide leadership.” (Andrews et alii 2010:11)

“Leadership is more about groups than individuals, given that there are likely to be multiple people exercising leadership in any successful change event.” (idem:50)

‘Distributed leadership’ looks at ‘leadership’ in terms of function, rather than in terms of position. It concentrates on where and how leadership occurs. Different people will contribute in different ways:

“A good leader can’t get too far ahead of his followers.”
– Franklin D. Roosevelt

some will be champions of the ‘idea’, others may provide substantive contributions to a task, yet others provide process and procedural contributions such as e.g. group work facilitation, still others create environments for relationships to be established and grow etc. Central in this may be the ‘connector’ or ‘coordinator’, who not only connects the multiple leaders to each other, but also

tries to ensure that they can make their functional contributions in the most optimal way. Someone can formally be nominated the coordinator but the critical issue is who actually fulfills the function rather than who occupies the position.

Earlier on, our attention was drawn to the importance of contextual intelligence, that would enable ‘leaders’ to choose the contextually most appropriate leadership style and the most appropriate form of ‘smart power’. But a ‘distributed leadership perspective’ goes further and suggests that in different situations different people will contribute through exercising some form of functional leadership. In

other words, in this perspective, 'leadership' itself is fluid and will change over time and with different situations.

"A group often has a different leader for each aspect of the group project. A sports team may have different leaders on and off the field. A work group may have a different leader for each part of a project.

Leadership is not personal. You can probably belong to many groups and may provide leadership in some and not in others.

A leader can only lead with the consent (spoken or unspoken) of group members. If a leader has consent from some group members but not others, you will have a divided group or a faction. If the consent of the group has not been given or has been given and then withdrawn, a person is not the group leader." (Hunter et alii 1995: 8)

2. Followers and Followership

An emphasis on 'leadership' rather than on 'leaders' draws attention to the fact that we are talking here about relational dynamics and not about intrinsic characteristics of individuals. It is about individuals (or teams) in relation to other human agents. The focus on 'leaders' tends to obscure the fact that 'leaders' don't exist without 'followers'. A belief that 'leadership' emanates from 'leaders' is mistaken. 'Leaders' emanate from 'leadership' i.e. 'leaders' only exist in the eyes of 'followers'.

A number of 'leadership' specialists have deliberately been highlighting the critical role of 'followers' and analyzing the role of 'followership'. Kellerman differentiates 'followers' into five different types, according to their level of engagement and along a spectrum that ranges from feeling and doing absolutely nothing to being deeply involved and passionately committed. The five types are called: isolates, bystanders, participants, activists and diehards. In her own words (Kellerman 2008:85-92):

"Isolates are completely detached. They do not care about their leaders, or know anything about them, or respond to them in any way. Their alienation is nevertheless of consequence. By default – by knowing nothing and doing nothing – Isolates strengthen still further leaders who already have the upper hand."

"Bystanders observe but do not participate. They make a deliberate decision to stand aside, to disengage from their leaders and from whatever is the group dynamic. This withdrawal is,

"He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it."
"History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamour of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people."
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

in effect, a declaration of neutrality that amounts to tacit support for whoever and whatever constitutes the status quo.”

“Participants are in some way engaged. They clearly favour their leaders and the groups and organizations of which they are members – or they are clearly opposed. In either case, they care enough to put their money where their mouths are – that is, to invest some of what they have (time for example) to try and have an impact.”

“Activists feel strongly about their leaders and they act accordingly. They are eager, energetic, and engaged. Because they are heavily invested in people and process, they work hard either on behalf of their leaders or to undermine and even unseat them.”

“Diehards are as their name implies – prepared to die if necessary for their cause, whether an individual, or an idea, or both. Diehards are deeply devoted to their leaders; or, in contrast, they are ready to remove them from positions of power, authority, and influence by any means necessary. In either case, Diehards are defined by their dedication, including their willingness to risk life and limb. Being a Diehard is all-consuming. It is who you are. It determines what you do.”

So ‘isolates’ are indifferent or disbelievers in politics, they are disengaged. The four other types are engaged with their leaders, but also with other followers and with the institution (formal or informal) that they are part of. ‘Bystanders’ do nothing and say nothing even when faced with practices that are morally indefensible. ‘Participants’ can be supporters but also opponents. They will take a position and undertake some action. The difference between ‘activists’ and ‘participants’ is one of degree, just as the one between an ‘isolate’ and a ‘bystander’. ‘Diehards’ don’t question – they are fully dedicated to a cause and will either support or oppose with total conviction. There is no intrinsic value in being a ‘diehard’ – the valuation comes from the cause they stand for.

Kellerman is not a ‘bystander’ and takes a position on ‘good’ and ‘bad followership’:

- To do nothing – to be in no way involved – is to be a bad follower;
- To support a leader who is good – effective and ethical – is to be a good follower;
- To support a leader who is bad – ineffective and/or unethical – is to be a bad follower;
- To oppose a leader who is good – effective and ethical – is to be a bad follower;
- To oppose a leader who is bad – ineffective and/or unethical – is to be a good follower (2008:230).

In other words, ‘good’ or ‘bad followership’ is not a matter of ‘obedience’ but of one’s level of engagement and of the integrity of the leader and her/his purpose. In organizational, social and political life, we are often under obligation to ‘follow orders’ yet we cannot give up our own moral and professional consciousness; then we would ultimately end up with Eichmann’s justification: “Befehl ist

Befehl.”

Followers’ may have initially less authority, power and influence than ‘leaders’ but they are not without. By exposing, then opposing and ultimately challenging an existing leadership, they may themselves become ‘leaders’. Followers can be agents of change. ‘Responsible followership’ is as if not more important than ‘responsible leadership’.

The previous reviews of ‘leadership’, particularly understood through the lens of ‘leaders’ at the top of a hierarchy, share a strong assumption that ‘leaders’ can influence ‘followers’. Kellerman points out that follower behavior can be more influenced by other followers than by leaders. The pressure to conform and the desire to be seen as ‘part of’ the larger group means that followers may be shaped far more by peer pressure and group psychology, than by their ‘leaders’ (2008:242-3).

3. Simultaneous Leaders and Followers

Few people are and have always been ‘leaders’. Overwhelmingly, even when apparently at the top of an organizational pyramid, individuals have ‘subordinates’ but also ‘peers’ and others they may be accountable to. The CEO of a company is accountable to the board (although there are CEOs that manage to manipulate passive board members into de facto ‘followership’, sometimes to the point of becoming ‘bystanders’). The Secretary-General of the UN is answerable to the member states, the leader of a political party may be answerable to a ‘party congress’. Most of us are simultaneously ‘leaders’ (e.g. head of a department in a government administration or another big organization) and ‘followers’ (answerable to higher ‘authorities’). The real skill is then to ably combine active and responsible leadership with active and responsible followership.

The experience of the dual role should actually encourage us to create an enabling environment for those under our ‘command’, because we can experience ourselves the benefits if our ‘superiors’ create an enabling environment for us. The reverse holds also true: in an environment where the dominant culture is one of unquestioning loyalty and pleasing one’s boss, the temptation will be to replicate that culture and demand from our subordinates also unquestioning loyalty and words and deeds that please us.

And of course there are ‘peers’, other people with significant authority, power and influence relatively equal to yours and that you may have to deal with: Other Heads of State, other ‘Directors’ of organizations or CEO’s of companies, the owners of independent media-enterprises (influential opinion-makers) etc.

Effective performance then derives from the ability to be simultaneously a leader of subordinates, a responsible follower of someone else as leader (the formal vertical relationships) and a great networker and coalition builder also among peers (the horizontal relationship).

PART 4. THE SPACE TO LEAD

All the above perspectives ultimately emphasize the power of human agency, be it of someone in a senior position or in a nominal 'follower' position. 'Leadership' and 'followership' is about engagement, a desire to influence and/or shape something, a readiness to act. But a realistic perspective should also identify factors that may constrain human agency whatever the level of engagement and the qualities of the individual concerned. Some of these are:

1. Socio-Cultural Expectations of 'Leadership' and 'Followership'

The 'leadership industry' is very much a western enterprise, even when it pays attention to 'leaders' in other continents and cultures. Little attention however is paid to socio-cultural expectations of 'leadership' and 'followership'. Such expectations about who can be a 'leader' and what type of behaviour is expected from a 'leader', may of course generate particular types of 'leadership', and make it very difficult for individuals that seek change to be acknowledged as 'leaders'.

Individuals that claim divine kingship have a legitimacy and authority that transcends that of ordinary mortals. Others may derive significant influence and authority from genealogical descent (in kinship-based societies) or from religious learning and position. Various societies around the world function(ed) around the phenomenon of the 'big man' – who amasses great wealth but also distributes a lot (creating patron-client relationships).

“The central problem is that leadership training programs build up a skill ‘supply’ that is most often not matched by societal ‘demand’, which basically means there is no reward for altering one’s behavior. In Timor, as in many post-conflict places, a good leader is equated with someone who has a ‘strong hand’, someone who takes unilateral decisions and is not afraid to push them through; someone who quells any opposition; someone who holds power, not shares it. It is an understanding of leadership framed by a history of military resistance. In such an environment displaying ‘soft’ leadership skills does not get much societal recognition, nor improve one’s power-base.” (von Kaltenborn-Stachau 2008)

The possible influence of widespread socio-cultural expectations of 'leaders' (which may vary of course between various sub-cultures in the same society) once again underscores the power of followers. Leaders have to behave the way followers expect them, or will find themselves alone and rejected.

2. Age and Gender

Historically and globally 'leaders' have constituted a male gerontocracy. Being a woman and being relatively 'young' are obstacles to the exercise of 'leadership'.

Gradually and in a number of countries, women are moving into top positions in the business sector and in politics, although less so in e.g. religious institutions, the army or labour movements. But their numbers are still small. In most environments there remain sensitivities about women having formal authority over men, and debates about whether they can or must lead with a more 'female style' (women are perceived as naturally better at collaborative and lateral leadership and the use of soft power), or can only reach and remain in top positions by adopting a more 'masculine' style of leadership (more competitive, aggressive, more use of hard power).

The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) in its annual conferences has been reflecting on women, culture and leadership in Africa. Factors that are seen as hampering women's equal and effective participation in political leadership for example include the following:

- People's expectations from aspiring politicians;
- Religious fundamentalism and cultural inhibitions in some countries/communities;
- Institutional mechanisms and practices that are not gender-sensitive; and
- Being under-estimated within the decision-making circles etc. (African Women's Leadership Conference Report 2009:6-7)

"...it was challenging to be a politician because in the rural areas people believe politics is for men. There is a perception that any woman in politics is not beautiful and thus not married." - Ms. Hanadi Fadul from Sudan (African Women's Network 2010:18).

"It is because society magnifies the mistakes of female politicians. The people overlook the flaws of male politicians to the extent of accepting or condoning them by their silence and failure to raise them. This is a key concern and it affects the quality of leadership in Africa." - Ms. Martha Karua from Kenya (idem p. 18-19)

'Age' has long been the poor sister of 'gender' considerations, but has now gained major attention through the lens of 'youth'. 'Youth' is a stretchable category that can encompass anyone between the ages of 15-35. 'Youth' has become both an issue of concern and of hope. They are an issue of concern if one considers large numbers of often educated but unemployed and disaffected youth, which could be prone to violence. They are a source of hope inasmuch as they are seen as the 'next generation of leadership' – that is expected to do better than the current one. Given that the current older generation once was young, such assumption of course remains to be tested. Yet even if 'youth'

can exercise leadership among their age group, there are significant sensitivities about younger people (particularly women) exercising ‘leadership’ over older ones. The authority of the older generation can be further reinforced by a socio-cultural norm of ‘respect for elders’.

Thus, being young and/or a woman will make it harder to exercise effective leadership – be it from a position of rank or through engaged followership.

3. Legal and Institutional Frameworks

We consider institutions ‘strong’ not just when they are efficient and effective, but also when they provide checks and balances on all individuals, including those in senior positions of formal authority. The potential influence of individual personalities and individual agency – for self-interest or the common good – is greater in weak institutions. That means that weak institutions are potentially easier to reform, but also that ambitious individuals have a strong incentive to keep the institutions weak.

The strength of the constitutional order and the rule of law also provide certain constraints on what a potential ‘leader’ can do and how s/he can do it. Constitutions for example will shape what type of leadership is possible. In some countries with a Presidential system, the President has significant executive power, typically more than the Prime Minister. In others however the Presidency is very much a symbolic function and the individual in the post is expected to stay above the political fray and not to meddle too directly. In the first case the President can make use of ‘hard power’ and be more ‘directive’, in the latter case s/he will have to rely largely on ‘soft power’ and exercise much ‘lateral leadership’.

4. Change Space

The concept of ‘change space’ also seeks to point at the contextual opportunity or resistance to leadership-led change, particularly in institutional environments.

“‘Change space’ is the potential in a given environment for leadership-led change. It is the result of the correlations between three major variables that influence organizational and social capacities to adjust to contextual demands: ‘acceptance’, ‘authority/accountability’ and ‘ability.’” (Andrews et alii 2010:6)

‘Acceptance’ refers to the broad readiness among all those concerned and with potential influence over the process to see change happen (and contribute to it). Terms related to this are ‘political will’, ‘buy in’, ‘ownership’ etc. ‘Authority’ with ‘accountability’ is necessary to act on the beliefs and commitments to change. ‘Ability’, not so much of the individual but of the wider group, organization or society, is the third key variable. It refers to manifest resources such as financial, human and informational capacities, but also to less obvious ones such as ‘time’ and ‘creativity’ to explore, pursue

and implement change.

The more acceptance, authority with accountability, and ability there is simultaneously in the same environment, the higher the potential to catalyse and achieve change. Where two or more of these variables are weak, the possibilities for leadership-led change are limited. In such environments, potential change agents do best to focus on creating better conditions for change rather than try to push for the change itself too directly.

“Leadership contributes to change when it builds change space—where leaders foster acceptance for change, grant authority to change (with accountability), and introduce or free the abilities necessary to achieve change. Change space is especially enhanced where leadership facilitates open access societies and learning organizations in which members are empowered—in groups—to pursue change through problem solving.” (Andrews et alii 2010:50)

We started this working paper by focusing on ‘leaders’ and what they do and how they do it. We are ending it here by focusing on ‘change’ (be it e.g. towards sustainable development and/or sustained peace), and the consideration how change may occur, and then what role there might be for multiple, functional, distributed leaderships in making desired changes happen. That is a significant shift in focus, with important implications for how ‘leadership interventions’ for peacebuilding should be conceived and designed. To take again the ideas from Andrews et alii 2010:50-51:

- Leadership is a key to effecting change and promoting development (read sustainable peace);
- Leadership interventions should focus on building functional groups of leaders—in teams, coalitions and networks—around unifying problems;
- Leadership interventions should always be focused on creating change space rather than creating leaders as an end; and
- Leadership interventions must be fitted to context but consistently emphasize leadership plurality, functionality, problem orientation and change space creation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This working paper grew out the author’s involvement with a Leadership for Peacebuilding course that has been run collaboratively since 2009 by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Interpeace, the Swiss Federal Dpt. of Foreign Affairs and UNITAR. Special thanks are due to Caty Clément and to the various resource people and participants who shared their experiences and insights during the courses. All errors and omissions of course remain the author’s responsibility.

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ENDNOTES

¹ E.g. Reyhler and Stellamans 2005; Wolpe and McDonald 2006

¹ She herself has rejected being seen as 'iconic', because of the possible connotations that 'icons' are not or no longer working very hard.

¹ Bahá'u'lláh was born as Mírzá Husayn `Alí Núrí in 19th century Persia, and is seen as the founder of the Bahá'í faith. Believers see him as the latest of divine messengers.

¹ I got the term 'systems sensitivity' or being inclined to taking a 'systems perspective', to take a holistic perspective and see the interconnectedness of various factors, from Robert Ricigliano, who got it in a conversation with Melanie Greenberg.

¹ Kearns Goodwin 2005 has made a famous study of how the relatively unknown Abraham Lincoln incorporated his rivals for the 1860 Republican nomination into his Cabinet after his election as president.
