LEADERSHIP IN THE SHAPING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLABORATION AGENDAS: HOW THINGS HAPPEN IN A (NOT QUITE) JOINED-UP WORLD

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This article contributes to the theory of collaboration in social settings and is based on data collected during action research interventions in a number of public and community interorganizational collaborations. We conceptualize leadership in collaborations as stemming from three leadership media-structures, processes, and participants-and argue that none of these is wholly within the control of the members of a collaboration. Leadership activities that participants undertake in order to move a collaborative agenda forward are described.

The last decade has seen a worldwide movement toward collaborative governance, collaborative public service provision, and collaborative approaches to addressing social problems (Gray & Wood, 1991; Hambleton, Essex, Mills, & Razzaque, 1995; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Healey, 1997; Jennings & Ewalt, 1998; Provan & Sebastian, 1998; Scott & Thurston, 1997). The term "collaborative" here describes organizations (rather than just individuals) that are working together. Collaborative initiatives, which are poised to play a large role in at least the early years of the new millennium, can be seen as the latest examples of a long-established trend toward collaborative working (e.g., Friend, Power, & Yewlett, 1974). Many collaborative initiatives emphasize the participation of "the community" (King, Felty, & Susel, 1998; McCaffrey, Faerman, & Hart, 1995; Taylor, 1995). Typically, this emphasis means involving people who reside in a locality and/or interest groups relevant to the initiatives.

A profusion of examples of collaboration from (and between) all continents, addressing such issues as economic development, antipoverty initiatives, health, environment, education, and so on, can be cited. For U.K. public sector managers, the particular buzzword for the millennium is "joined-up." The Government's Modernising Government initiative, which is regarded by its senior politicians as one of its most important policies for entry into the 21st century, promotes the coordination of the public, private, and voluntary sectors so that citizens' needs are addressed in a way that will appear seamless. A particular thrust, which is new in the U.K. setting, is a deliberate policy of collaboration between central and local governments (Cabinet Office, 1999).

As government incentives and directives for collaborative initiatives become ever more abundant, localities increasingly abound with multiple overlapping partnerships in which various combinations of local organizations are represented (Huxham & Vangen, 2000a; Stewart, 1997, 1999). This trend can be regarded as the consequence of recognition of Trist's (1983) point that significant social issues necessarily sit within the interorganizational domain and cannot be tackled by any one organization acting alone. It is thus a trend that must continue; the arguments for the inevitability of a future in which power remains shared in this way have been ably put by Bryson and Crosby (1992). There seems little doubt that public sector management in the 21st century will need to be sophisticated in its understanding of the skills, processes, structures, tools, and technology needed for working across organizational boundaries.

Joining up, however, brings its own set of problems. Those public sector managers at the receiving end of collaborative policy drives often express extreme frustration, partly because little guidance is given on how to prioritize the initiatives being promoted, and partly because difficulties in communicating and gaining agreement to act arise out of differences between parties on, for example, or-

ganizational purpose, procedures and structures, professional languages, accountabilities, and power. Examples of genuinely positive collaborative outcomes do exist, but it is common to hear stories of slow or negligible progress. We have tagged this phenomenon *collaborative inertia* and have contrasted it with the desired outcome of *collaborative advantage,* in which something is achieved that could not have been achieved without the collaboration (Huxham, 1996a).

This article addresses some of the issues around what it takes to make things happen in this joined-up-or not quite joined-up-world. We refer to making things happen as "leadership," although the theory developed in some respects challenges common notions of leadership as being tied only to people, as we argue that leadership also occurs through collaborative structures and processes. Our work has its theoretical roots in research on collaboration in social settings (e.g., Gray, 1989; Huxham, 1996b; Osborne, 1997; Waddock, 1989) rather than in research on leadership, and it is intended, first and foremost, as a contribution to the theory of collaboration rather than to the theory of leadership. In the next section, however, we briefly review the leadership literature in order to address its relevance to the context of collaboration.

LEADERSHIP RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION

With a few notable exceptions, which will be discussed below, the literature on collaboration-including that on private sector alliances-has had little to say about leadership. Some texts make passing reference to leaders, but the concept is rarely discussed in detail. There has, however, been a wealth of research on the subject of leadership in organizations. Many authors suggest a progression of theoretical development since the 1930s that has included traits, style, contingency, and transformational approaches among its main threads (Bass, 1990; Bryman, 1986, 1996; Fiedler, 1967; Stewart, 1963; Stogdill, 1974).

The traits approach focuses on identifying the personal characteristics of successful leaders, and the style approach focuses on leadership behaviors (Argyris, 1953; Stogdill, 1948, 1974). In contrast, the contingency or situational approach emphasizes variables in the particular organizational situation under examination that will moderate the effectiveness of different leadership behaviors (Avolio, Howell, & Sosik, 1999; Fiedler, 1967; Graeff, 1983; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; Howell, Dorfman, & Kerr, 1986). A variant of this approach, and a popular research thrust in recent years, is

leader-member exchange theory, in which the unit of analysis, the dyadic relationship between a leader and individual members of a work group, suggests that leaders develop different types of relationships with different members (Phillips & Bedeian, 1994; Schriesheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998; Sparrow & Liden, 1997; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). In the transformational, visionary, or charismatic approach, leaders are seen as "managers of meaning" (Bryman, 1996: 280) who raise the aspirations of followers in such a way that the leaders' and followers' aspirations are fused (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Pawar & Eastman, 1987; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). This approach has often been applied to the consideration of successful top-level managers or CEOs (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Waldman & Yammarino, 1999; Wesley & Minzberg, 1989). Fiedler (1996) summarized what he considered to be the most important advances in knowledge to emerge from these approaches.

A presumption in all of the above research is that leadership, by definition, is concerned with a formal leader who either influences or transforms members of a group or organization-the followers-in order to achieve specified goals. This formulation sets up two fundamental obstacles to translating results directly to a collaborative setting. Firstly, there is a problem with the leader-follower presumption. The implication that there is a formally acknowledged leader with managerial responsibility and a hierarchical relationship with followers does not apply in collaborations because the individuals involved come from different organizations or groups. The leadership challenge, in any case, is concerned with influencing or transforming individuals only (or at least largely) to the extent that such transformation may, in turn, affect the behavior of organizations. Furthermore, research has shown that there is frequently ambiguity and complexity surrounding the membership of collaborations, so there is no clear, consensual sense of who should be influenced or which organizations should be influenced (Huxham & Vangen, 2000a). Secondly, there is a problem with the presumption of specified goals. Here, research has demonstrated that the process of agreeing upon collaborative goals can be extremely difficult because of the variety of goals and constraints that different organizations and their individual representatives bring to a negotiating table (Eden, Huxham, & Vangen, 1996). Those involved therefore often have to take action without clear specification of what the endpoint should be.

It is not surprising, therefore, that it has been argued that new forms of leadership are needed to address the type of societal changes described in

the introduction. Emphasis has been placed on "shared responsibilities" (Murrell, 1997), "getting the most out of the diversity of perceptions, competencies and resources" (Vansina, 1999), "reconciling the goals of overlapping collaborative initiatives" (Stewart, 1999), "dealing with the fragmentation of power" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994), and "sharing leadership" (Bryson & Crosby, 1992). Drawing on experience of collaborative governance in the United States, both Bryson and Crosby and Chrislip and Larson contributed extensive discussions of the leadership tasks and skills needed in "shared power" and "collaborative leadership" societies. They focused broadly on processes for inspiring, nurturing, supporting, and communicating with individuals, teams, networks, and communities. Studies by Purdue and Razzaque (1999) and Feyerherm (1994), which conceptualize aspects of what actually happens in practice, complement these theoretical discussions. Purdue and Razzaque focused on the role of community leaders in urban partnerships and demonstrated (among other things) that burnout is the likely consequence of the energy and commitment that such people put into their roles. Feyerherm painted a picture of members of a collaborative group contributing different forms of leadership to the collaboration, using a wide range of facilitative behaviors. These perspectives all emphasize the role of *emergent* or informal leaders (Hosking, 1988; Kent & Moss, 1994).

In contrast, Berger (1997) and Galaskiewicz and Shatin (1981) focused on the role of formal leaders in collaborations. Berger assessed the role that those in top political or public executive positions can play in partnerships, arguing that their active involvement or its absence is an important influence upon outcomes. Galaskiewicz's concern was with the conditions influencing the way executives in neighborhood organizations form cooperative relationships with others. The collaboration context also opens up the possibility of considering organizations rather than individuals as leaders. Stewart's (1999) research, for example, concerns identifying how organizations will emerge as leaders or coordinators of overlapping collaborative initiatives in a locality, and many writers on collaboration presume there is a "lead organization" (e.g., Alexander, 1995; Lynch, 1993).

Although the mainstream research on organizational leadership as described above may be limited in its potential to contribute to thinking about interorganizational collaboration, some of the more recent approaches may have something to offer. Hosking's conception of leadership as the "processes in which flexible social order is negotiated and practiced so as to protect and promote the values and interests in which it is grounded" (1988: 315), seems highly applicable to collaborative situations. A research focus on self-managing work teams, which identifies the dominant role of an external leader as "leading workers to lead themselves" (Manz & Sims, 1987: 26), and on discretionary leadership, which takes account of the requirement for cooperation in "delayered" organizations (Korac-Kakabadse & Korac-Kakabadse, 1997) both imply a facilitative and relational outlook that may, at least in part, be transferable to collaborations (Murrell, 1997). Finally, research that ties leadership into theories of organizational culture introduces the notion of a fragmentation perspective (Martin, 1992), which focuses on the heterogeneity of modern organizations and suggests that this will give rise to organizations' having cultures that are unclear to their members (Bryman, 1996). In this perspective, the cultural value of diversity, ambiguity, and fluidity is acknowledged. Such a perspective would thus seem highly applicable to the interorganizational setting of collaboration. The perspective implies a "decentering" of leadership but, unfortunately, does not appear as yet to offer much elaboration of what this might mean.

Of the work described above, that of Bryson and Crosby, Chrislip and Larson, Purdue and Razzaque, and Feyerherm most closely defines the territory where we sought to contribute. Our research was an attempt to provide additional insight on the interpretation of leadership in collaboration through taking a fresh look at the topic. It explores what actually happens in real situations to shape the way that collaborations progress. Both the theoretical background and the methodological approach differ from those in the research described above. These are therefore outlined in some detail in the following two sections.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This research forms an element of a program that has so far spanned ten years and that is an effort to develop practice-oriented theory on the management of collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 1998a, 1998b; Vangen, 1998; Vangen & Huxham, 1998a). The program is rooted, to a very large extent, in action research of the type specified by Eden and Huxham (1996). This research paradigm has some similarity to ethnographic and other forms of research that derive their theoretical insights from naturally occurring data rather than from interviews or questionnaires (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). It differs, however, in its requirement that the researcher should intervene in the organiza-

tions studied and work with organization members as, for example, a consultant or facilitator, on a matter of genuine concern to them on which they have a genuine need to take action. Research data and insight are gained alongside-or on the back of-the intervention. The requirement for the "subjects" of the research to be concerned with action, together with the closeness of the researcher to the system being studied, increases the opportunity for gaining data about participants' "theories in use" (Argyris & Schon, 1978) or their expressions of "inner experiences" (Wittgenstein, 1968) rather then their "espoused theories" or "utterances." This point was expounded by Eden and Huxham (1996).

Eden and Huxham also specified that the theory derived in such research should be "emergent" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), or produced inductively from the data. Such theory is created incrementally, with each intervention having the potential to test and add to existing theory. This "constant interplay between proposing and checking" is similar to Strauss and Corbin's (1990: 111) requirements for grounded theory. So far as is practical, the aim is to suppress preunderstanding (Gummesson, 1991) in order to promote the emergence of new and creative insights. This form of action research thus follows a phenomenological approach. It differs from forms of action research that are essentially types of organizational development (Dickens & Watkins, 1999; Eldon & Chisholm, 1993), self-development (Whitehead, 1994), or empowerment (Stringer, 1996; Whyte, 1991). It also differs from action research that emphasizes inclusion of hypothesis-testing experiments in interventions (Alderfer, 1993; Lewin, 1946).

The data collected over the ten years of the program have derived from work with practitioners involved in a large number and variety of public and community partnerships. During these interventions, the expressed experiences, views, action-centered dilemmas, and actual actions of participants have been recorded as research data in a variety of ways, including notes, charts, videos, and computer-stored cause maps. The theory that has emerged from this work has centered around the concepts of collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia. Amongst the many strands of this work, one important focus has been the development of *themes in collaboration* (Huxham & Vangen. 1996, 2000b). These are in vivo labels (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) given to broad groupings of issues raised repeatedly by practitioners as causing anxiety or reward in collaboration. These include common aims, communication, commitment and determination, compromise, appropriate working processes, accountability, democracy and equality, resources, and trust and power. A deeper analysis of the data in these theme areas has revealed that the issues underlying the themes are much less straightforward in practice than initial practitioner views would suggest. A very central part of the research agenda has therefore been to develop a much deeper theoretical understanding of the issues underlying each theme (Eden, Huxham, & Vangen, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2000a; Vangen & Huxham, 1998b). The theory is practice-oriented in that it both derives directly from data collected during practice and is intended to inform practice (Huxham & Vangen, 1998a).

In the context of this article, it is significant that no theme on leadership had previously emerged from the data collected in our broad research program. It is also significant that there was very little spontaneous use of the terms "leader" or "leadership" by those from whom data had been collected. Our decision to focus on leadership was stimulated from outside of our research program by colleagues in the policy analysis field whose perspective led them to argue for its importance in informing policy makers. Two dilemmas thus emerged. Firstly, given that practitioners did not appear to make central use of the concept, the question arose as to whether leadership was a subject that should contribute to a practice-oriented theory at all. We address this question in our conclusion in the light of the arguments presented in the following sections. Presuming initially that leadership was at least worth exploring, the second dilemma was, given that people did not explicitly refer to it during their practice, how would leadership be recognizable? It would clearly not be feasible to collect data in a way that would be totally consistent with the emergent philosophy. We would need some framework for deciding how to differentiate data on leadership from the mass of potentially collectable data. However, we felt that the spirit of the action research philosophy demanded that the methodology should open up, rather than close down, possible theoretical perspectives, so this "winnowing" process (Wolcott, 1990) could not be guided by a single predefined framework. The methodology that was eventually used was the result of much discussion of this dilemma among ourselves and with other researchers; it is described in the next section.

METHODS

Data were collected from a number of action research interventions in the United Kingdom. These included work with three partnerships concerned with health promotion, four partnerships con-

cerned with economic and social regeneration, one partnership concerned with environmental issues, one community collaboration, and work with civil servants and others concerned with designing, implementing, and supporting Modernising Government, the initiative referred to in the introduction. Data collection also drew on many additional short-term involvements. In the main, we participated in meetings in advisory or sounding board roles, but sometimes we facilitated workshops and, in one case, we carried out interviews in connection with these. We also reviewed data from reports of studies of community collaborations produced by the colleagues in the policy analysis field who had stimulated the research.

The **data**-in the form of participants' comments and actions, descriptions of events in the life of a collaboration, and so on-were initially recorded largely in the form of notes taken during or immediately after any interaction with participants (see Huxham and Vangen [1998b] for a discussion of some of the issues that arise from this form of data recording). In order to maintain the desired open theoretical perspective, we sought to record anything that was observed or heard that might be argued to have something to do with leadership. At this stage, it was not essential that the argument could be sustained; **it** was important only to ensure that possibilities were recorded.

The theoretical understanding of the demands of collaborative environments captured in the themes in collaboration was central in directing attention to aspects of the situations that appeared to lead the collaborations forward. However, we also used a range of other perspectives as loose guides in selecting data as having potential relevance to leadership. For example, the mainstream theories of leadership discussed earlier indicated that it would be appropriate to be on the lookout for data indicating leadership traits, styles, and so on. However, it was felt to be equally important that there should be no deliberate attempt to seek out data to test the specific typologies of these theories. The passing references to leadership in research on collaboration directed attention toward various distinc-tions-for instance, the distinction between formal and informal leaders (0vretveit, 1993); between different types of leaders, such as administrators (Axinn & Axinn, 1997) and CEOs (Cauley de la Sierra, 1995); and between a leadership function carried out by one member organization or by many (Lynch, 1993). In addition, many insights and ideas about what to look out for came from discussions with colleagues in related research areas.

This observational data formed the main base for beginning analysis. Many other sources were used to supplement this base. These included working notes produced as part of our intervention roles, the output of workshops (such as charts and reports), and documents (such as partnership plans) associated with the collaborations. The analysis was carried out in several stages, each of which involved us in extensive discussions concerned with sense making, data massaging, and finding representations and links. Writing in the context of critical ethnography, Thomas (1993) richly captured the essence of this process:

> Interpretation of data is the defamiliarization process in which we revise what we have seen and translate it into something new, distancing ourselves from the taken-for-granted aspect of what we see.... We take the collection of observations, anecdotes, impressions, documents and other symbolic representations that seem depressingly mundane and common and reframe them into something new. (1993: 43)

Firstly, we each independently reviewed therecorded data from the three health promotion partnerships identifying any items arguably relevant to leadership. As before, this process was partially informed, but not limited, by the range of perspectives on what leadership could mean that was discussed above. The second stage then involved lengthy negotiations among ourselves about whether and how each data item should be included in the analysis. These debates-which were essential to ensuring "theoretical sensitivity" (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)-involved clarification of (1) the meaning of an item, (2) the wording of the description of the original comments, actions, or events and the reasons why these could be interpreted as relevant to leadership, and (3) the links between each new data item and those previously accepted.

The data items, their interpretations, and the links were electronically stored using the mapping software Decision Explorer, which is designed to assist with the analysis of qualitative data (Banxia Software, 1996; Eden & Ackermann, 1998). Gradually, clusters ofrelated ideas began to emerge. Concepts deriving from the literature were also included and linked to data items or interpretations. As each cluster was built up, one of the interpretation concepts was chosen, through further discussion and negotiation, as its designated label. Both the cluster boundaries and the labels sometimes changed as further data were entered.

By way of example, sections of two clusters appear in Figure 1. As can be seen, some items, such as numbers 239 and 23, are direct quotations or descriptions of what happened during an interven-

FIGURE 1
Extracts from Two Data Clusters

206 LEADERSHIP TASKS

1 make the agenda of the partnership really happen

239 "the leadership tas t is to enthuse and develop anyone who can deliver the partnership's aims" (Wendy)

240 implied leadership process- do 239 through seminar series

110 cf. leaders/managers distinction (Bennis, 1976)

25howconpro ""

empower people to make positive moves to further their partnership's interests?

241 PROCESSES FOR LEADERSHIP

272 designed leadership process

20 emergent leadership process

lit

26 e.g., can the health promotion partnership seminar process empower members to use the research?

42 e.g., Jack suggested a workshop might help to develop common understanding of language, definitions and issues

7 what processes can be designed that will help/encourage representatives to bring in the resources of their organization?

46 o.g., d••igning e process for joint working with other agencies concerned with health and people in this area (main aspect of the community health project)

19 "the original documents were produced in a hurry due to external deadlines so there was no time for appropriate debates (debated later)" (Wendy)

22 "how can members (e.g., those on the committee) be mobilized to contribute actively to the collaboration?"

23 e.g., Wendy's concerns with making university representatives representative

18 extemal deadlines move things forward

tion, and others, such as 25, are interpretations or generalizations drawn from specific examples. Item 110 represents a concept from the leadership literature. Items 25 and 239 appear in both clusters and thus signify links between the clusters. The item numbers are identifiers allocated sequentially by the computer software and have no analytical significance. It is worth noting, however, that the higher numbers associated with the two cluster labels indicate that they were created later on in the process. The items are intended to be cryptic triggers rather than representations of the full detail of the originally recorded data, so at later stages in the analysis it was often necessary to refer back to the latter. The use of maps in this way is an aid to the process of reframing the data into "organizing themes" (Thomas, 1993), which are similar to the "axial codes" of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The above process resulted in 16 clusters ranging in size from 2 to around 40 items. The third stage of the analysis-which was similar in purpose, though not in form, to the "selective coding" of grounded theory-involved reviewing the clusters and the links between them, with a view to creating a conceptual framework that would determine the structure of this article. As with stages 1 and 2, we first carried out individual reviews that were then discussed and debated. Some clusters, which predominantly contained concepts from the literature, were excluded from the framework as not being grounded in the data. The small clusters were also eventually excluded, since too little data had been recorded for coherent arguments to be formed around them. Some clusters had been created as elaborated subsections of others, separated off for convenience owing to the large number of data items associated with them. For example, a cluster labeled "leadership from partnership managers" was one strand of a cluster labeled "the leader." These were not treated separately from the point of view of the framework. One cluster, labeled "the partnership as leader," was felt to be important but on a different level from the others. It was eventually decided that space constraints precluded its inclusion here. The remaining clusters, which were called "leadership processes," "leadership structures," "the leader," "leadership tasks," and "shaping the collaboration's agenda," form the framework that is at the core of this article.

The fourth stage involved reviewing data collected in the other interventions mentioned earlier, taking the emerging framework as an additional and important guide to interpreting its relevance to leadership. This review helped to put additional flesh on the framework and provided a loose test of its robustness in the light of collaborations other than those around which it had been created. The process did not preclude the possibility of new clusters emerging. That none did at this stage confirmed the solidification of the clusters (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The process of building the clusters into a coherent framework-stage 5-involved the drafting and successive redrafting of the next two sections of this article, circulating drafts for comment, presenting the arguments at workshops in academic conferences, and using them with practitioners in further action research interventions. As will be seen below, the cluster "shaping the collaboration's agenda" eventually became the backdrop for the whole framework and is reflected in the title of this article. The clusters "leadership processes," "leadership structures," and "the leader" were drawn together and conceptualized as "leadership media." It was eventually decided that the label "leadership activities" would better represent the issues captured in the final cluster than its original label, "leadership tasks."

The arguments presented below have thus been subjected to wide-ranging scrutiny and refined accordingly. Nevertheless, these should be seen as an interim statement in what must be viewed as a developing story. The data set will be continuously expanded in the light of future action research interventions, and it must be expected that the existing clusters will be gradually redefined and that new clusters will emerge. In addition, space constraints preclude a detailed elaboration of all of the data, so the particular topics addressed should be regarded as indicative rather than as a complete picture.

LEADERSHIP MEDIA

Although data were deliberately sought that could illuminate leadership from various perspectives, the focus on development of practice-orientated theory led to a dominant conception of leadership as involving the mechanisms that "make things happen" in a collaboration. More formally, we addressed *the mechanisms that lead a collaboration's policy and activity agenda in one direction rather than another.* Thus, like other research, this research concerns influences upon outcomes (Berger, 1997). However, we take the notion of leadership beyond both individual and organization. What emerged from the data analysis was a holistic picture of leadership that included a wider view of the elements that, owing to the nature of collaboration, determine and influence the way in which collaborative agendas are shaped and enacted. In this picture, the structure and processes of a col-

laboration are as central to leading its activities as are the participants associated with it. This conclusion was reached independently by Vansina (1999) in research based on a collaboration simulation. Our emergent picture of leadership had two parts. The first identifies the media-the structure, processes, and participants-through which agendas are created and driven forward. The second identifies the activities that the participants try to carry out in order to create and drive forward agendas.

Leadership through Structure

In the context of this paper, the structure of a collaboration is taken to be the organizations and individuals associated with it and the structural connections between them. Structure is a key driver of the way agendas are shaped and implemented. This is a similar point to that made by Giddens (1979) in his concept of "structuration," but the structures referred to here are much more tangible-though sometimes not formally acknowledged-than the wider societal structures to which he refers. Murrell (1997) too argued that leadership and structure are similar concepts, with much of the influence of a leader being dependent upon the structural stage built for it. His focus is on the way that organization structure affects the potential for relational leadership, whereas the focus here is on the way interorganizational structure affects outcomes.

For example, an open structure that allows any organization that wishes to send a representative to meetings allows wide access to the agenda. However, it also tends to militate against the setting and implementation of clear agendas because it is likely to be difficult both to resolve differences between participating individuals or organizations and to coordinate action if representatives are allowed to dip in and out. In contrast, a tightly controlled membership structure, with, for example, a designated lead organization, a small, well-defined number of core member organizations, an executive committee, and a set of working groups that report to the committee, may be more able to gain agreement and to implement its agenda, but it may exclude key stakeholders from accessing the agenda. It may also restrict the freedom of the working groups to shape their agendas or even to source funding. As Giddens argued, structure affects the way people act, but does not preclude deliberate action (Whittington, 1992).

Structures thus play an important leadership role because they determine such key factors as who has an influence on shaping a partnership agenda, who has power to act, and what resources are tapped.

When the structure of a collaboration is part of a system of multiple overlapping partnerships, as mentioned in our introduction, the influence on the agenda may be even more significant. For example, the accountabilities of members become ambiguous-often even to themselves-so representatives do not always drive the agenda forward in ways that those represented might expect. Similarly, the agendas of one partnership may be moved forward at meetings of another of which some, but not all, participants in the first are members.

Given that collaborative structures play such an important role in shaping and implementing the direction of a partnership, it is significant that they are often not within the control of members of a collaboration. The structure of public sector collaborations is often externally imposed by policy makers or funders rather than determined explicitly by the collaborations' initiators or members. The extent to which these imposed structures are intrusive to a partnership rather than only part of its contextual environment varies greatly.

For example, health promotion partnerships set up under the auspices of the World Health Organization must have a prescribed type of management structure. Potential members are therefore often approached purely to satisfy the criteria for securing funding, but there is freedom for the partners to decide exactly which organizations and individuals will be involved. In other cases, the imposed structure may be much more intrusive, determining which organizations are involved, how they can be organized, and often, which organization will take the lead. For example, recent government policy in Scotland has dictated that new Health Service partnerships concerned with primary and acute care will be set up within certain physical boundaries and with specified membership. Individuals who have to function and manage within these partnerships thus have little or no freedom to affect who has access to their agendas. The intrusiveness of imposed structures can even be experienced at a level beyond the partnership level, when collaborations themselves exercise leadership over other partnerships. As the coordinator of a community health project commented, "If we are working within the Health Board partnership then we have to follow certain lines so it is better [allowed the project more freedom] to be under the local health promotion partnership."

The degree to which structures are imposed varies and, in some cases, the initiators or members of a collaboration may have the freedom to construct a partnership in whatever way they feel appropriate. Some are designed very deliberately. For example,

at a meeting of a regeneration initiative spanning several cities, the members discussed how they could design their structures to attract a related alliance located in one of the cities to become involved in their partnership. The members believed that securing the involvement of the alliance would be crucial to their ability to take their agenda forward.

Even though careful attention may have been paid to a partnership's design, however, structures normally emerge out of the practical reality of the tasks that they tackle. For example, the coordinator of one of the health promotion partnerships was unable to quickly name all its partners, even though they were well-defined, were relatively few in number, and were listed on partnership note paper. She indicated that some partners were in practice more central than others and that task groups emerged as and when new or altered agendas had to be met. She also commented that some preexisting community groups in the locality had been coopted into the partnership but that most of the groups' members would not be aware of this. Their annexment was likely catalyzed by the lead organization, which had funded the groups prior to the partnership's initiation and had now reconceived that funding to be part of its health promotion budget. Thus, as Ranson and Royston wrote about organizations, "Structure is a complex medium of control which is continually produced and recreated in interaction and yet shapes that interaction" (1980: 3). It is clear that emergent structures are generally not explicitly acknowledged, and members may be unconscious of the complexity through which they are working or the way that it is shaping their activities.

Leadership through Process

In a similar way, the processes integral to a collaboration also play a significant role in shaping and implementing a partnership's agenda. In this context, "processes" are narrowly defined as the formal and informal instruments, such as committees, workshops, seminars, and telephone, fax, and e-mail use, through which a collaboration's communications take place. Processes may take many shapes and forms and may be important for a number of reasons. The way in which and the frequency with which members communicate, for example, are obvious components of processes. Similarly, some processes obviously encourage members to share information and develop common understanding of issues, whereas others hinder active communication.

More specifically, processes can empower paten-

tial members' access to debate concerning a partnership's agenda, or strip power from them. Workshops and seminars, for example, can provide specific members, such as community activists, with skills and information that they need to communicate their agendas, but formal, bureaucratic meetings can inhibit their contribution. Other processes can more generally help partnership members to make positive moves to further their partnership's interest; for example, workshops can help develop members' common understanding and definition of issues and a common language about them.

As with structures, many of the processes that shape a collaboration are not designed by members, or even wholly within their control. It is common for external forces-commonly, funding deadlines-to drive processes. Debates are often suppressed because of the expedient of getting a response in time. Such time pressure can have a positive leadership function, in that it promotes task-focused activity, but it can obviously also have negative effects on, for example, gaining ownership or evaluating practicalities. In one situation, members of a health promotion partnership began to discuss what they would like to achieve concurrently with beginning to implement the proposals that had been written into a plan for a funder. In another, the naturally emerging agenda of a series of seminars was halted because of a perceived need for the partnership to work on an issue on which a governing body required output.

Leadership through Participants

Participants, of course, also play a powerful leadership role in influencing agendas. We broadly define participants as including individuals, groups, and organizations. Any participant associated with a collaboration who has the power and know-how to influence and enact a partnership agenda may take a lead. In this section, however, the concern is to highlight types of participants who might particularly be expected to lead and others who might play significant or unexpected leadership roles. Surprisingly, even in this medium the leadership function is often not in the control of the members.

As discussed earlier, the notion of a leader with a hierarchical relationship to followers does not apply in collaborations, so the potential for exercising "decisive leverage" by virtue of a formal position is reduced (O'Toole, 1997). Nevertheless, some participants may be acknowledged by others as having leadership legitimacy because of their positions in the partnership structure (Weber, 1947). There are a

variety of types of such *positional leaders* (French & Raven, 1958).

In many collaborations, an organization is given positional leader legitimacy through being designated as a lead organization. Policy makers or funders often specify a lead organization, or at least require that one be nominated. In other cases, the lead may be assumed by the organization that convened a collaboration in the first place, or by a host organization that houses the collaboration physically and administratively. Individuals within the lead organization enact leadership and gain greater legitimacy to do so through working on behalf of the lead organization.

Whether or not there is a lead organization, most collaborations give a positional leader role to a management committee, board, or steering group comprising individuals representing organizations associated with the collaboration. These individuals formally have joint decision-making power with respect to the direction of the collaboration. However, many collaborations appoint a member of one of the participating organizations to the individual positional leader role of chair or convenor of the committee, board, or group. This position critically affects the ability of other group members to enact their leadership roles. A dominant convenor has the positional power to strongly influence their decisions, but a weak one may leave them directionless. The convenor of one collaboration, for example, was described by others as "liking the figurehead role rather than anything to do with implementing." In some cases, most commonly in community collaborations, the chair is rotated among members as a way to share the power (and the workload) associated with the position. This sharing brings its own set of leadership problems because of difficulty in maintaining continuity and responsibility for direction.

Members of a collaboration are thus not always able to drive an agenda in the expected manner, even though they have positional leadership roles. In many collaborations, the individual playing the most significant role in leading the collaborative agenda is the partnership manager, director, or chief executive, who, strictly speaking, is usually not actually a member of the collaboration. Such individuals do gain a degree of legitimacy to lead from their position in the collaboration, but they are employed as a resource to the collaboration, rather than being members of it, and are generally supposed to be independent of the member organizations. Typically, they report to the management committee, board, or steering group, and their degree of autonomy to act on behalf of the collaboration varies. They are often highly influential be-

cause they alone are employed by the partnership and care about it as their sole employment activity. For this reason, they often also have a much greater level of understanding of the partnership than do any of the members. Their personal beliefs and values are likely to dictate the energy with which they drive different agenda items forward. For example, one partnership manager decided deliberately to take a partnership's research and evaluation agenda forward because, in his view, it was more important than any of the other concerns of the management committee.

Though they may be the most significant, partnership managers are not the only nonmembers to play leadership roles in collaborations. Researchers, facilitators, and consultants may be commissioned to help members of collaborations manage their collaborative working processes or provide other support. Many would regard the role of such individuals as being very explicitly neutral, and they will often have been invited to be independent helpers or evaluators (Schein, 1987, 1988). Nevertheless, any intervention is likely to have an effect on the direction of a collaboration. For example, questions by such individuals aimed at seeking clarification sometimes result in serious rethinking on the part of the responding members. Strong facilitators who push participants may in this way drive an agenda very significantly.

Positional leaders of external organizations also frequently play roles in leading the direction of collaborations. For example, a community health project was only successful in establishing close communication with the local housing department after it appointed a new manager. The power of external positional leaders to influence may also stem from their positions in local society-elected mayors are always likely to have a large influence-or even from their positions in other influential local partnerships. For example, one individual was invited to a health promotion partnership's management committee because he was the director of another influential alliance.

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

In the previous section, we argued that the formation and implementation of collaborative agendas is led by three media-structure, processes, and participants-that are clearly interlinked. Structures influence process designs and what participants can do. Processes influence the structures that emerge and who can influence agendas. Participants influence the design of both structure and process. It has been argued also that these three media are, to a large extent, normally outside the

control of the members of a collaboration. These media may therefore be thought of as providing *contextual leadership.*

In this section, the perspective moves to the kinds of activities that individual participants actually carry out in order to shape agendas and move them forward. Specifically, it addresses the question, What is it that participants do in order to cope with, or build on, the constraints or possibilities dictated by structures, processes, or other participants? The three subsections below, which are exemplary rather than comprehensive, each describe a category of activities that was repeatedly observed in the collaborations researched. The way in which participants tackled activities did not necessarily concur with traditional notions of leadership. Often participants were singularly unsuccessful in bringing an activity to the desired conclusion. The term "leader," in quotes, is used to indicate that the individual concerned was endeavoring, through the activity described, to affect the direction or output of a partnership.

Managing Power and Controlling the Agenda

A very large amount of leadership activity actually centers on finding ways to control collaborations' agendas. Three perspectives on this stand out from the data.

From one perspective, leadership behavior can be viewed as manipulation. "Leaders" use the power of their position, tools, or skills to influence the activities of a collaboration. For example, in one community collaboration, a survey conducted prior to a bid for funding suggested that local people did not regard the installation of closed circuit television (CCTV) in their neighborhood as important. Nevertheless, those preparing the bid chose to use the power of their position to emphasize CCTV. In many other cases, participants gave out prepared notes in meetings with a view to focusing discussion. In other cases, shrewd questioning or requests for clarification shifted the focus of discussion. This kind of leadership behavior does not generally seem to be intentionally manipulative in a negative sense. Rather, it appears as though the individuals concerned would generally conceptualize it as a way of moving collaborative activity in what they see as an appropriate direction. Providing others do not regard it as offensive, it may be a very effective leadership strategy.

For some participants, however, a central concern of collaboration is empowerment (Himmelman, 1994). or facilitating access to an agenda for all members and potential members. Such a focus generally seems to involve "leaders" in championing the development of facilitative processes. For example, "leaders" in the community health project we studied designed processes that would provide local residents with the information and skills needed to allow them to communicate actively with other individuals represented on the partnership's board. Such communication gave the residents access to debates about the partnership's agenda. Other processes may be designed to empower members more generally, to make positive moves to further a collaboration's interest. A "leader" in the intercity regeneration initiative, for example, forced discussion of the possibility of building a series of workshops into the collaborative processes, with the aim of developing members' common understanding, language, and definitions of issues.

Processes that open up access to agendas can be difficult to manage for a variety of reasons. In one partnership in which a series of workshops had been set up with a view to involving some task groups more centrally in the partnership's activities, the employed manager commented that it was important for the partnership that she balance looking after process with moving forward on substance. In practice, doing this meant disrupting the continuity of the workshops in order to attend to immediately pressing issues. In another example, the initiator of a community collaboration commented on the painful experience of running community consultation events where he received verbal abuse.

The third perspective concerns the leadership activity associated with opening up the content of agendas in new ways. This implies the ability to help those involved to think creatively and often involves shifting deeply held mind-sets. For example, in many social collaborations the conventional way of operating is to research locally relevant issues. Thus, for example, health partnerships research local health issues, environmental partnerships research local environmental issues, and regeneration partnerships research local sources of economic and social development. Challenges to the taken-for-granted focus on researching substantive issues arose in two of our cases. One of these emphasized setting in place processes that would help the collaboration's task groups to implement the output or implications of their research. In the other, an attempt was made to demonstrate that process-oriented research that would help members understand how to influence the agenda of another local partnership was a legitimate activity. In the first case, a seminar series was devised; in the second case, the challenge to thinking was made through asking questions at a meeting. At the

time of writing, neither of these efforts had borne fruit, and even the seminar series had been, at least temporarily, overrun by more immediate considerations. Paradoxically, it seems that leading creativity requires single-minded attention to keeping process a high priority.

Representing and Mobilizing Member Organizations

The issue of representation can be viewed both from the perspective of member organizations and from the perspective of collaborations. From the perspective of member organizations, representatives-notionally, at least-are responsible for "leading" their organizations' roles in a collaboration. The leadership activity associated with such leading involves ensuring both that an organization's needs are represented and that it plays its role as a partner. The practicalities of making this happen are frequently not easily surmounted. One member of the environmental collaboration, for example, commented that members of his organization had bought in mentally but had no way to be active in driving the collaboration forward. Another member, who was actually representing a confederation of organizations, commented that members of the confederation had agreed to be in the partnership but knew little of what it was about. Both recognized that they would have to devote a great deal of personal effort to the task if the management committee concluded that mobilizing these member organizations was a high priority.

From the perspective of a collaboration, ensuring that representatives are acting as conduits to the resources of their organizations is often an important "leadership" activity. For example, universities have valuable scientific and social scientific research expertise to offer and are often represented by an academic from a relevant discipline in socially oriented collaborations. It can be difficult to tap the resource, however, because traditionally academics act autonomously and do not see themselves as able or willing to mobilize staff from a range of departments. How to address this problem has been a recurring concern of the management team of the health promotion partnership. A similar problem was addressed in a radical way in an antipoverty collaborative group when, after several years of uncomfortable activity, members suddenly became aware that almost all of the workload and resource commitment were being undertaken by just two member organizations, while representatives of the other five acknowledged that they saw their role as no more than attending steering group meetings. The representatives of the active organi-

zations took the lead in instigating a discussion of the group, which resulted in its being reformulated as a partnership between the two, with the others no longer participating in any way.

In some collaborations, "leaders" create specific processes for the purpose of involving the member organizations in the collaborations' work. The annual planning day of the community health project is a typical example. Although useful in raising awareness, it seems unlikely that such events will yield real member "buy-in" unless commitments made at the time are carefully nurtured through to fruition. Another approach is to focus on the capacity building of member organizations. One partnership worker argued that his role was to "help people in the member organizations to gain confidence in what they are already doing and in things they know nothing about." Such activity, however, requires significant resources.

Enthusing and Empowering Those Who Can Deliver Collaboration Aims

Closely linked to both of the above categories are "leadership" activities concerned with ensuring the active involvement of those who are critical to delivering a partnership's aims. Getting buy-in to the role and purpose of a collaboration is an obvious leadership task, and some of the processes-seminars, workshops, and so on-in the collaborations studied here were deliberately designed to achieve this end. However, in many cases it seemed that the complexity of the task, or of the structure of a collaboration, or of the logistics involved meant that all participants were distracted from paying attention to getting buy-in.

For example, in the environmental partnership, one of the four member organizations was located at a significant distance (over five hours travel time) from the other three, which were all within easy reach of each other. In the initial phase of the partnership, when a bid for funding (whose success would determine whether the partnership was actually convened) was being developed, communication with the distant organization involved fax and phone, but individuals from the other three organizations were in regular face-to-face contact. These processes were not deliberate, but emerged out of the nature of the membership. It seems highly likely that they played a significant role in creating a much greater degree of mutual understanding between the three close organizations than between them and the distant one. It is not altogether surprising that the distant organization withdrew from the partnership within a few months of the funding being awarded and that

members of the other organizations commented that the distant organization's understanding of the partnership's agenda differed importantly from theirs. In one of the regeneration partnerships, the manager commented that she had underestimated the partners' interest and understanding because they only become involved once every three months at the quarterly partnership meeting. She stated, "As partnership manager I have to get in and fight ... I am not sure if I can energize them ... a year of badgering-like a spider in the web-has its ups and downs."

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This article is an attempt to provide a holistic view of leadership in collaboration. In making this attempt, we have taken as the defining characteristic of leadership the mechanisms that are central to shaping and implementing collaborative agendas. We have argued that this definition promotes a view of collaborative leadership as being enacted not only through the behavior of participants identified as leaders, but also through things that happen because of the structures and processes embedded within a collaboration. The significant further point that the research identifies is that all three leadership media-structures, processes, and participants-are often, to a large extent, outside of the immediate control of the members of a collaboration. That is, structures and processes are often imposed upon or emerge from the activities of the collaboration, and many of the participants who influence and enact the collaborative agenda are not members of the collaborating organizations.

We have also argued that within the contextual leadership provided by the three media, individual participants become involved in "leadership" activities that are intended to take collaborations forward. The three categories that have been described are exemplary, but they illustrate the overwhelming general conclusion that although the activities clearly affect the outcomes of a collaboration, those "leading" are frequently thwarted by dilemmas and difficulties, so the outcomes are not what they intended.

This general conclusion is consistent with conclusions drawn from other aspects of our research program, such as its focus on collaborative processes like building trust and mutual understanding and negotiating joint goals. In these areas, too, efforts to make a collaboration move forward are likely to be thwarted by difficulties and dilemmas. For example, trust building generally requires creation of a "virtuous circle" in which initially mod-

est activities lead to trust generation and hence to a willingness of parties to take a risk with more ambitious joint activities. However, frequent changes in government policy and in the organizations involved in a collaboration, and role or job changes for the individuals involved, often mean that the continuity required to maintain the loop is not present (Huxham & Vangen, 2000a; Vangen & Huxham, 1998b).

The practical implication to be drawn from the examples and arguments presented here is that carrying any one of the "leadership activities" through to completion requires very large amounts of resources in the form of energy, commitment, skill, and continual nurturing on the part of a "leader." Leading across the full range of activities and processes that need to be addressed to drive a collaboration forward holistically is thus highly resource consuming. Wherever the researched examples showed "leaders" achieving the outcomes they wished for, they had done so because they had devoted very significant personal attention to championing their causes. It is paradoxical that the single-mindedness of leaders appears to be central to collaborative success.

This view of leadership in collaboration complements the views of the other authors discussed earlier. Our view enhances understanding of the nature of the challenges embodied in the tasks and skills advocated for collaborative leaders by Bryson and Crosby and Chrislip and Larson. Together with other output of our research program, it explains the burnout that Purdue and Razzaque (1999) identified in community leaders and clarifies what individuals are trying to influence through the leadership behaviors identified by Feyerherm (1994).

There is ample scope for further development of this research. Our own future agenda is threefold. One thrust will be to explore further the types of "leadership" activity that collaboration participants become involved in, with the expectation that new categories will be identified and that it will be possible to develop a more detailed picture of each than is presented here. A second, parallel, thrust will be to investigate the nature of skills and resources appropriate to these specific activities. These might include, for example, skills associated with recognizing the effect that imposed or emerging structures and processes are having and consciously managing them, designing processes to support the range of leadership activities, mobilizing and capacity building, devising tools to move an agenda forward, and shifting mind-sets. The third thrust will be to explore, at a more general level, the practical implications for policy makers and practitioners of this not quite joined-up world

that is so laden with inherent dilemmas and difficulties. One key issue must surely be the extent to which the benefits of seeking to join up outweigh the costs of getting there. Trist's (1983) arguments for the need to work in the interorganizational domain remain sound, but without a discerning vision of where and how joining up is to be achieved, it is doubtful that attempts to link organizations will be able to deliver collaborative advantage.

We posed the question earlier as to whether leadership is a subject that should contribute to a practice-oriented theory of collaboration, given that the data suggest that practitioners seldom explicitly refer to leadership. The picture painted here both complements and differs from both existing theory on collaboration in general and theories of leadership in collaboration in particular. Researching collaborations from the viewpoint of leadership thus adds an important dimension to theory and, in this respect, it can be regarded with hindsight as a valuable line of inquiry. Whether or not the terms "leader" and "leadership" will be helpful in using the insights with practitioners remains to be seen.

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