

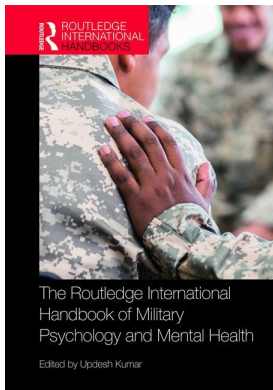
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12

SUSTAINABLE TEAM LEADERSHIP

Social identity and collective leadership for military and society

*António Palma Rosinha, Hermes de Andrade Jr,
and Marcos Aguiar de Souza*

A prompt, timely, and appropriate response that guarantees collective security requires fine cooperation between different stakeholders, people, and nature. Leaders must be prepared to transition rapidly from brutal environments to situations of close interaction with different realities and, ultimately, to maintain a high level of emotional self-control and efficiency. Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) foster a hazardous climate that places new demands on leadership and challenges leaders' ability to adapt. The complexity and prevalence of the challenges that potentially undermine national and international security, such as demographic shocks, the increase in terrorism and transnational crime, maritime piracy, cyber threats, regional conflicts, and resource disputes (Borges & Rodrigues, 2016) have forced teams, organizations, and states to take a broader look at leadership. Thus, although most definitions of leadership acknowledge that leaders are responsible for the leadership process, we should not assume that this role is fixed and predetermined—it can be contingent because events can be highly unpredictable and volatile (Rosinha, Matias & Souza, 2017). Furthermore, formal leaders do not act alone but interact with all those around them. The influence process is not unidirectional: quite the contrary; followers play a decisive role in influencing both leaders and outcomes. Trait leadership theories and behavioural, situational, transactional, transformational, and visionary leadership theories have been an important step towards viewing individuals as stakeholders in the leadership process. However, these theories are self-focused and their scope is narrow because modern organizations have become increasingly complex and are built on non-linear network structures that employ highly skilled teams (Daft, 2014). Traditional leadership models are too restrictive and too focused on the leader-subordinate dyad; therefore, a multilevel approach to leadership is required. Both research on leadership and a theoretical framework for leadership are still in the early stages.

Thus, leadership should be understood as a complex and dynamic process where different organizational roles are performed by several individuals (Gronn, 2002) and where those roles can be switched among work teams (Day, Gronn & Salas, 2004). This paper is based on the following assumptions: (i) leadership is a developmental process; (ii) leadership emerges when proximity to the in-group prototype is oriented toward common goals and expectations by affirming the group identity that gives it legitimacy; (iii) what distinguishes collective leadership from traditional

models is the fact that by sharing leadership, influence processes go beyond the traditional top-down influence exercised exclusively and unilaterally by formal leaders, recognizing individual expertise and allowing leadership, in its purest form, to be widely distributed among several individuals; (iv) leadership should be sustainable, ensuring that more people and their descendants have access to resources and opportunities, a democratic path, and a democratic future; and (v) sustainable leadership is a factor of positive participation that is essentially democratic (and not only discursive) and cannot be otherwise. Its gregariousness is a natural antidote to abuse and misuse of authority by generating trust and, of course, by promoting transparency. The key issue addressed in this study is whether preparing individuals and teams for sustainable leadership (collective, participatory, effectively shared, and virtuous, laying out a path for future generations in a turbulent world) will be rewarded by a social identity that has trust in authority and a truly representative governance that presents solutions to bring about democratic change, with emphasis on the participatory process. Thus, we strongly question the paradigm of leadership as an individual phenomenon and propose that the construction of leadership identity is a social process, given its nature and the requirements of communication and media scenarios; we point out the reductionism of the current studies on leadership, which focus only on the figure of the formal leader, neglecting the development of leadership as an inherently multilevel and longitudinal social process; we emphasize the participatory phenomenon of sustainable leadership, arguing that its goal is to aggregate values and virtues and to transform society into a democratic environment, as opposed to simply a group of people who have no commitment to the truth, and criticize the lack of professionalism and transparency that make a future in the shadow of authoritarianism even more uncertain.

Assumption (i): Leadership is a developmental process

The complexity of leadership

In its quest to obtain a more accurate picture of the true nature of leadership, the extant research on leaders has ignored the most appropriate ontological locus for leadership, which rests in the relationship between the leader-team dyad and the processes that explain how it emerges (Antonakis, Fenley & Liechti, 2011). Leadership can be defined as the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members (House et al., 1999). Vieira (2002) argues that leadership is defined as a process of influencing human behaviour that goes beyond the use of official authority, in order to achieve the purposes, goals, and objectives defined and provided by the appointed organizational leader. Most concepts define leadership as an influence process or ability, which one member of a group exerts over other members to achieve certain goals by eliciting motivation. Therefore, leaders are the main source of influence for processes and tasks, dominating the decision-making process and playing a key role in defining the strategy, dynamics, motivation and identity of a work group. This single-leader perspective views leadership as a specialized function that cannot be shared without jeopardizing group effectiveness (Ensley, Pearson & Pearce, 2013). A dynamic, interdisciplinary, and inclusive process, leadership cannot be separated from the core functions of organizations. Reality may have forced leaders to adapt to the changes brought about by globalization, but leadership theories have been slower to do so. Recent research based on previous studies stresses the need to redefine leadership. The traditional image of the leader as hero is slowly being replaced by a different image, that of a collective group of people who exert influence through formal and informal relationships between individuals (Chrobot-Mason, Gerbasi & Cullen-Lester, 2016; Yukl, 1999).

The developmental nature of leadership

Leadership development must focus less on leadership theories and more on developmental science. Murphy and Johnson (2011) examined the seeds of leader development and concluded that those seeds germinate in the stages before adulthood. The most important developmental experiences that occur during the sensitive periods of childhood and adolescence, when personality is formed and consolidated, influence the development of leadership into adulthood. Identity development and self-regulation are initial factors that relate to future experiences of leadership development and leadership effectiveness. Thus, early learning experiences of leadership, which are part of a cadet's basic training, combined with education and physical and military training, play an important role in the development of future leaders. Designing individual leadership development programs is part of a broader process of adult development (Day, Harrison & Halpin, 2005). This is in agreement with Kegan's (1994) view of leader development as a progression through stages of moral growth and individuation.

By looking at leadership development as part of human development, we can implement a longitudinal multilevel approach in stages, where prior knowledge can be absorbed and transferred to more complex levels that require new knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Examining this development involves mapping and understanding the patterns of change of individuals, groups, and teams over time (Day, 2000). These patterns of change reflect transitional phases between stages that represent changes in thinking based on mental schemes through which individuals intellectually adapt and organize their environment. Piaget (1976) believed that building knowledge requires balancing, that is, assimilating new knowledge and accommodating new structures of thought. Examining this development involves mapping and understanding the patterns of change of individuals, groups, and teams over time (Day, 2000). These patterns of change reflect transitional phases between stages that represent changes in thinking based on mental schemes through which individuals intellectually adapt and organize their environment. Piaget (1976) believed that building knowledge requires balancing, that is, assimilating new knowledge and accommodating new structures of thought.

Assumption (ii): Leadership emerges when the proximity to the in-group prototype is oriented toward common goals and expectations by affirming the group identity that gives it legitimacy

Building leadership identity as a social process: Formation of psychological groups

What distinguishes a set of individuals from a group? Is it cohesion, camaraderie, team spirit, unity, or a sense of belonging? There are several terms to describe the force that binds the members of a group, and the concept of attraction is common to all. The theories of self-categorization (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) help explain how attraction emerges. Participation in and adherence to a psychological group (that is, an individual believes they are a member of the group, regardless of how third parties would classify them) explain in part how the underlying processes in the social psychology of leadership unfold. When social identity becomes salient, people experience depersonalization at the cognitive level, stop perceiving themselves as unique individuals, and begin seeing themselves as members of the group (Turner et al., 1987). Hence, they begin acting according to the norms and values of the group (Reicher, Spears & Postmes, 1995). The psychological process of depersonalization makes it possible to develop group processes that extend to cooperation, to the definition of rules,

and, more importantly, to social influence and leadership. People must understand and accept themselves as members of a specific group before group-based processes such as the emergence of leadership can occur (Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins, 2015). According to self-categorization theory, self-concepts consist of cognitive self-categorizations in which members see themselves as similar to one another at various levels of inclusion. At one end of the spectrum, people are seen as unique individuals who are different from other individuals (i.e., personal identity). At the other end, they are seen as part of humanity as a whole (that is, collective identity). In-group and out-group categorizations fall between these two extremes. A person's relative in-group prototypicality, idea, or behaviour is a key factor that affects that person's degree of influence within a group (McGarty, 1999). Prototypicality is the cognitive criterion that determines how people or entities are placed together in a group and separated from others. Because prototypicality is an elastic entity, individuals are able to compare themselves to the prototype at different times of their membership to the group (i.e., self-prototypicality), to compare people who share the same prototype and, finally, to compare themselves to other people. The derivation of a theoretical personal identity accentuates the loss of personal identity in favour of group identity. The key factor that determines leadership is proximity to the in-group prototype, which in turn intensifies influence over the group (Turner, 1991). To the extent that there is variability among group members regarding the prototypicality of the in-group, there is a gradient of relative influence within that group. At any given moment, and in any inter-group context, the member of the group closest to the prototype spontaneously emerges in a social system and may become its leader (Yukl, 2002). In sum, the more an individual is seen as an integral part of the group, and the more that individual represents the group and advocates for it, thereby reinforcing a sense of belonging and emphasizing group identity, the more likely that individual is to be seen as leader of that group. The leader might not interact with and influence all the elements in a group, but only with the people who legitimize him or her. The leader's legitimacy stems from a process of mutual influence which results in joint action that is oriented towards common goals and expectations.

The role of social identity in building relationships

Dyadic leadership relationships are the basic building blocks of leadership networks (Kalish, 2013). Identity is an important part of self-concept because it helps answer the questions, who am I? and who do other people know me to be? (Ibarra, Wittman, Petriglieri & Day, 2014). Earlier research on identity and leadership initially focused on how people see themselves as leaders, emphasizing the socially constructed process by which individuals internalize leader identity as part of their self-concept (De Rue & Ashford, 2010). However, the construction of this identity stems from the work groups and organizations to which people belong. Role-based identity theory suggests that leader is only one of many roles with which individuals can identify. A leader's identity should not be seen as static or unidirectional, but rather as a process of mutual influence in which social interactions between individuals, as well as contextual factors, are responsible for that identity (Chrobot-Mason, Gerbasi & Cullen-Lester, 2016). Recent studies by DeRue, Nahrgang, and Ashford (2015) suggest that when individuals perceive the group as being warmer, their identification with the group is stronger and several people contribute to leadership. In short, individuals who have a stronger collective identity are more motivated to engage in leadership behaviours on behalf of the group. Research in the area of leadership development suggests that, in addition to developing a personal identity, successful leaders also develop a strong sense of collective identity (Ibarra et al., 2014). Inexperienced leaders emphasize individual identities (I) and more experienced leaders emphasize a more collective identity (we), one which strongly identifies with the values and priorities of the team or organization as a whole (Day & Harrison, 2007). Along the same line, other researchers

(Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, De Cremer & Hogg, 2004) show that would-be leaders receive stronger support when using self-oriented group behaviours rather than self-oriented to their own personality. When someone is considered a leader by favouring the in-group when distributing resources, it proves the theory that leadership is about “having it done by us,” which involves the principle of social identity. Thus, leadership is a psychological group process in which the members of a group elect one of their own as their leader. At least two key aspects improve the odds of a group member emerging as leader: engaging in “doing it for us” behaviours and actively building and rebuilding the very meaning of “us” (Chrobot-Mason, Gerbasi & Cullen-Lester, 2016). The greatest challenge for formal leaders is meeting the needs and expectations of the group while also meeting the needs and expectations of the organization.

Assumption (iii): What distinguishes collective leadership from traditional models is the fact that, by sharing leadership, influence processes go beyond the traditional top-down influence exercised exclusively and unilaterally by formal leaders, recognizing individual expertise and allowing leadership, in its purest form, to be broadly distributed among several individuals

Understanding collective leadership

We are faced with a paradigm shift in leadership, which is becoming the purview of the collective rather than the individual both in formal and informal relationships (Carter, DeChurch, Braun, & Contractor et al., 2015). These new leadership practices are referred to in different ways, such as distributed leadership, shared leadership, relational leadership, polarized leadership, and collective leadership. These approaches acknowledge that, as collective systems, organizations are complex relational systems and that leadership stems from interdependent interactions and connections that intertwine to form larger structural patterns. Although leader-follower relationships are already addressed in traditional and contemporary leadership approaches (for example, transformational leadership), what distinguishes this approach is the acknowledgement that teams, organizations, coalitions, communities, networks, and systems carry out their leadership roles and activities through distributed processes and collective social behaviours that change over time. The macro component of an organization’s leadership can be depicted as a tripartite representation, according to variables that describe collective leadership as concentration (people), roles, and time (Contractor, DeChurch, Carson, Carter & Keegan, 2012). Role concentration is the degree of leadership distribution from one individual to multiple individuals, with each role corresponding to a function—Navigator—Engineer—Social Integrator—Liaison (Carson & Tesluk, 2007). Role modelling refers to a person’s ability to lead by example, displaying effective ethical and behavioural patterns through social learning processes and becoming an ideal prototype for all members of an organization, who is capable of activating collective identities and goals (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002). Delegation is defined as the transfer of power and competencies and is expanded through the practice of shared leadership (Pearce, 2004).

In this networked environment, influence involves using techniques that appeal to reason, emotions, or values to gain the commitment of the group and the support of supervisors, as well as to negotiate and interact effectively with the members of the local population. The dispersed and fluid nature of operations requires the ability to analyze problems systematically and to act decisively without outside guidance or advice. Decision-making involves detecting, perceiving, and understanding the elements of the environment and projecting future states or events. Finally, support consists of displaying respect, sociability, individual consideration, and empathy (Hannah,

Jennings & Nobel, 2010). An example of its applicability to the field of communication is how reality and realism remake the tense environment of data collection in loco of the report. Concern over the repercussions of the news represents a challenge for communication professionals, who are easily criticized for decisions and attitudes that are perceived as wrong and unethical or that are uncomfortable to some audiences, who are increasingly aware of their identity. As cognitive and affective attributes demanded by the agent of communication, various forms of courage arise, such as physical, moral, and social courage (confronting a superior or colleague) and psychological courage (the risk of experiencing a new skill where it may fail; Hannah, Jennings & Nobel, 2010). We have also considered the cognitive styles associated with resilience, which is defined as the ability to find meaning and purpose in potentially stressful events, turning them into opportunities for personal growth. We have also encountered concepts related to psychological states, such as hope, optimism, resilience, and confidence. Self-confidence in the ability to perform leadership tasks was found to be a key factor. Positive emotional demonstration, or positive affectivity, as opposed to negative affectivity, is crucial for leaders who seek to elicit energetic and positive emotional responses, provide stress-relief resources, and rally the team (Rosinha et al., 2017). Similarly, a high level of emotional self-regulation is considered a key attribute in maintaining a positive attitude under stress. Several self-regulation attributes have been identified, such as the ability to process large amounts of information, which implies “thinking about thinking” or monitoring and controlling one’s own cognitive processes. Another critical factor of self-regulation is that, in order to remain effective, leaders must have a “genuine and visceral motivation to lead” (Hannah, Jennings, & Nobel, 2010, p. 436). The motivation to lead others can come from multiple sources, such as seeing oneself as a leader (identity-based), social or normative motives, or the result of a calculated cost-benefit analysis.

Assumption (iv): Leadership should be sustainable, ensuring access to resources and opportunities for more people and their descendants, and a democratic way and democratic future

Sustainable of what?

The term *sustainability* is widely used but little explained. It is conceptually misunderstood and regarded as a fashion accessory (Hasna, 2010) or a matter of common sense (Moldan, Janouaková, & Hák, 2012). The concept is inconsistently interpreted and ambiguously applied and reveals an incomplete perception of the issues of poverty, environmental degradation, and the role of economic growth (Mori & Christodoulou, 2012).

What we now call sustainable development (SD) has evolved as an integrating concept, an umbrella under which a set of interrelated issues is uniquely organized. It is a variable process of change with sustainability as its ultimate goal. In the same context, sustainability is the ability of a human, natural, or mixed system to resist or adapt to endogenous or exogenous change for an indefinite period, represented as a goal or end point (Hove, 2004). Therefore, to achieve sustainability, SD is usually required. The SD concept remains contested because of the different positions taken in relation to what can be considered fair (Todorov & Marinova, 2011).

It does not explicitly embrace future thinking, and almost all published definitions of the SD concept are based on principles of sustainability, e.g., long-term perspective, the key importance of local conditions, and understanding the nonlinear evolution of environmental and human systems (Moldan et al., 2012) because the term *sustainability* comes from renewable resources and has become the main motto of the ecological movement.

This sense of the concept refers to the existence of the ecological conditions required to support human life at a specific level of welfare through future generations, which is ecological

sustainability, not sustainable development. According to Ayres (2008), sustainability is a normative concept about how humans should act in relation to nature and how they are responsible for each other and for future generations.

As defined in this study, the sustainability paradigm also postulates the preservation of diversity in its broadest sense—sociodiversity—in addition to biodiversity, that is, that the system of values, practices, and symbols of identity that enables the reproduction of the social fabric and ensures national integration is maintained over time.

The political basis for sustainability is linked to the process of deepening democracy and building citizenship. At the macro level, this translates into the democratization of society, and, at the micro level, into the democratization of the state. The first of these goals requires strengthening social and community organizations, redistributing assets and information to the subordinate sectors, increasing their organizations' analysis and decision-making capabilities. The second goal is achieved by opening the state apparatus to citizen control, by reforming political parties and electoral processes and by incorporating the concept of political responsibility into public activity (Viana, Silva & Diniz, 2001).

Without directly referring to sustainability, Fritjof Capra describes this concept in his book *The Turning Point*, which was also published in the 1980s. In the work, Capra presents his concept or systemic view of the world from an ecological perspective that contrasts with the fragmentary system that supported the modern world of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. For Capra, any concept of sustainability must be directly linked to the complex web of interdependencies that have the capacity (inherent in nature) to transform human culture.

Being sustainable means acknowledging that reality is a continuous, systemic, non-linear process in which relationships (social, natural, and socio environmental) occur both simultaneously and subsequently and that each party inevitably has responsibilities in the process, as the pattern in nature is a network of interdependencies between beings and resources coexisting in a given environment. Other definitions of sustenance, such as to bear, to nourish, or to fortify, also mean to maintain, provided they are being used correctly.

This conceptual approach inspired us to conceptualize sustainable leadership for democracy. Therefore, our definition of sustainable leadership is a collective leadership with an ideal, inspiring, and consensual nature, which includes delegation of powers, sharing of trustworthy actions, and commitment to a future for all.

Assumption (v): Sustainable leadership is a vector of positive participation with democracy in its essence (not in speech) and does not allow it to be otherwise. Its gregarious sense becomes a natural antidote to abuse and misuse of authority by generating trust and of course inducing transparency

This section will demonstrate how sustainable leadership helps legitimize participation.

Sustainable leadership is ethical, shared, participatory, and distributive; is based on the best human traits and virtues; and works under the assumption of trust based on prior conduct; it effectively bets on its own perpetuity and on its multiplier effect over space and time. Over space because it is an intercultural and international chain of leadership that many adhere to when provided with a sound role model, and over time because it ensures that future generations have the opportunities that are denied by authoritarian and individualistic capitalist alienation.

The importance of social participation is recognized by scholars and rulers because representative democracy cannot adequately meet the demands of society. The concept of

participation has a highly symbolic charge and is emblematic within the ideological context and the social structure that perceives it. The extant literature seems to agree that “engaging” generally means “being involved, taking part in or influencing processes, decisions and activities in a particular context or field of action” (Nirenberg, 2006, p. 121).

However, the risk of widespread participation in the democratic environment is trivializing the process, with people having an idea of what it is they are participating in and confirming that they want to participate but in which their participation is not characterized (Carpentier, 2012) and becomes a fad that cannot yield the expected benefits.

Broadening the discussion, Sirvent (2004) refers to two forms of participation: real participation, in which members of an institution or group effectively influence all processes of institutional life, including decision-making, and are able to change the power structures, and symbolic participation, which involves “actions that have little or no influence over institutional politics and management and which generate in individuals and groups the illusion of a nonexistent power” (Sirvent, 2004, p. 129).

We see this as the problem of participation, as its symbolic activity, which is present in symbolic interactionism (Carvalho, Borges & Rêgo, 2010) or symbolic power (Wacquant, 2013), is not significant enough to implement solutions and cannot raise the awareness required for it to take effect.

In symbolic interactionism, because people’s actions only acquire meaning through the actions of others and during a social act, the objects of the perceived environment are defined and redefined. These dynamics consist of symbolic interactions, which are not a direct reaction to the actions and gestures of the other, but an interpretation of these actions or gestures based on the meaning attributed to them (Carvalho, Borges & Rêgo, 2010). That is, leaders should set the example by ensuring transparency in their attitudes and by participating as citizens, motivating other citizens to replicate their participatory behaviour and becoming inspiring leaders. Without this inductive, gestural, and active effect caused by this “other” that we see in the mirror, the process of participation has little hope of transforming reality.

Symbolic power emerges from the symbolic mechanisms of group formation and domination and is experienced through recognition/false recognition, that is, a constant and diversified effort to inculcate and impose categories of perception that help form social reality, shaping its representation (Wacquant, 2013) and portraying figures of authority as worthy of distrust. Effective participation is linked to commitment and trust: trust in the authorities and in the quality of their leadership, which must transcend discourse (negative symbolism).

Committed people and organizations will move away from the symbolic and imaginary dimension (collective) and towards the micro reality dimension, in which participation is required because the state has flaws that must be corrected.

To ascertain if this participatory activity is sustainable, we examined a literature review aimed at improving the quality of public services. The review’s authors (Struecker & Hoffmann, 2017) used as benchmarks a set of 56 articles published from 2005 to 2015 in high-impact journals and on consolidated metadatabases.

Kluvers and Pillay (2009) point out that the interest in a more participative model of decision-making results from the growing lack of trust in democratic institutions. In this regard, social participation may be the answer to reestablish the bonds between citizens, military, and governments by lending credibility to public actions (Mattia & Zappellini, 2014; Eriksson 2012; Karkin & Calhan, 2012; Kloby, 2009; Kluvers & Pillay, 2009; Lawton & Macaulay, 2014; Yang & Pandey, 2011).

Likewise, the literature suggests that increasing citizen participation confers legitimacy to decisions (Karkin & Calhan, 2012; Lawton & Macaulay, 2014), provided that the process is

genuinely collaborative and does not lend itself to particular interests (Boin et al., 2011) or to the capture of the state by elites due to power asymmetries and social exclusion (Aiyar, 2010).

Kloby (2009) also argues that citizen engagement improves the quality of decision-making (Lawton & Macaulay, 2014), which represents the will of taxpayers, and leads to greater efficiency and savings in most public actions (Neshkova, 2014). Along the same lines, Aiyar (2010) highlights the momentum that participation can bring to the performance of the state, making it more agile and responsible; dialogue and articulation between the state and its citizens ensure that local demands are heard, while at the same time enabling effective decision-making.

The desire of public authorities to improve service performance and to promote social participation must necessarily be accompanied by new forms of accountability and concern for the legitimacy of decisions (Simmons & Birchall, 2005). Thus, social participation is an opportunity to bring information to citizens, contributing to transparency and accountability (Aiyar, 2010; Eriksson, 2012).

However, some scholars suggest that accountability must be achieved through citizens' participation in decision making and service delivery assessment (Kloby, 2009). The learning acquired in the participation process empowers participants to exercise citizenship effectively, allowing them to contribute their knowledge and experience to achieve the best solutions (Eriksson, 2012; Lawton & Macaulay, 2014; Neshkova, 2014).

Citizens can even offer innovative solutions to collective problems because they are not constrained by the traditional model of decision-making generally adopted by the public administration (Neshkova, 2014), as well as proposing new forms of public service delivery (Osborne & Strokosch, 2013).

Despite the advantages pointed out in the literature, social participation has its critics. The articles identified in the systematic review are unanimous about the benefits of citizen engagement; however, they also refer to negative aspects found in other studies, such as: the risk of losing control of the process, which can be dominated by interest groups (Neshkova, 2014; Osborne & Strokosch, 2013), and the population's lack of expertise and lack of time to make good decisions (Eriksson, 2012), as many individuals are incapable of constructive criticism and thrive on alienation and conflict (Musso et al., 2011 cit. by Struecker & Hoffmann, 2017).

The need for transformative leadership and cultural change is one of the recommendations of a reviewing on social participation (from 2005 to 2015), as both are important factors that foster sustainability (Struecker & Hoffmann, 2017, p. 379). Therefore, we will now organize the elements and process of our proposal on sustainable leadership.

So far, we have seen that the reductionism of the studies that focus on formal leadership has ignored that the development of leadership is intrinsically a multilevel and longitudinal social process. The evidence shows that leaders emerge when the proximity to the in-group prototype is oriented towards common goals and expectations by affirming the group identity that gives them legitimacy.

When we consider the contributions of the studies that address multilevel phenomena, the empirical limitations of reductionism become clear. That which is true at one level of analysis (the individual) cannot be directly extrapolated to other levels (the collective of individuals) through a cause-and-effect correlation.

Reductionism in the study of leadership has been shown to lead to discontinuity of effects between levels of analysis. Higher-level phenomena are more than the product of lower-level processes. Any attempts to transpose dyadic, group, or organizational level aspects to the individual level run the risk of producing distorted ideas about how leadership emerges (Fisher & To, 2012).

Developing the collective identity of the organization leads to the emergence of more plural forms of leadership. Leadership is a group psychological process that involves the principle

of social identity, reinforcing behaviours that emphasize “doing it for us,” in the sense of constructing and actively rebuilding the very meaning of “us.” The more individuals identify with their organization and coworkers, the more likely they are to consider others as sources of leadership and to be seen as potential leaders, even if they are not formal leaders.

Examining how influence emerges within the group and the multiple formal and informal relationships that are established is a new approach to the leadership process. Thus, shared leadership is required in order to face the challenges posed by the new global challenges.

The following modelling dimensions (Figure 12.1) have been considered inputs for sustainable leadership: (a) Spiritual, which involves the factors that motivate long-term and life projects; (b) Emotional, which encompasses affective attributes and emotional intelligence; (c) Cognitive, which incorporates knowledge about the process in community and personal limitations (self-knowledge, mental structuring); (d) Values, which sustain life in society and harmony with others; (e) Culture, which includes all the specificities of the individual and collective context and their representations; (f) Beliefs, in the sense of degree of involvement/commitment; (g) Attitude, which is manifested in the direct direction of transformation vis-à-vis the other and that which is new; (h) Will, which involves firmness of purpose and endurance; (i) Empathy, which involves the decision to live and share with others; and (j) Technology, which uses resources, knowledge, and experience combined with competence to achieve sustainability.

The transformation process that occurs in the formation of sustainable leadership has several stages (Figure 12.2).

First, the individual becomes aware of his or her situation as an individual leader and reflects on the dimensional elements described above.

In the second stage, there is the realization that one’s individual condition can be expanded by the condition of the other (by example).

In the third stage, after the decision has been made to expand the process, the real and symbolic interactions and interrelationships between the individual and the other become

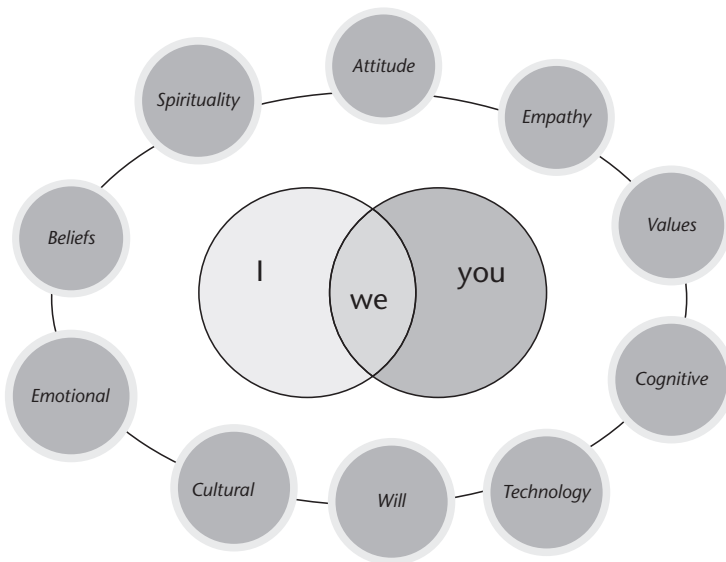


Figure 12.1 Inputs in the formation of sustainable leadership.

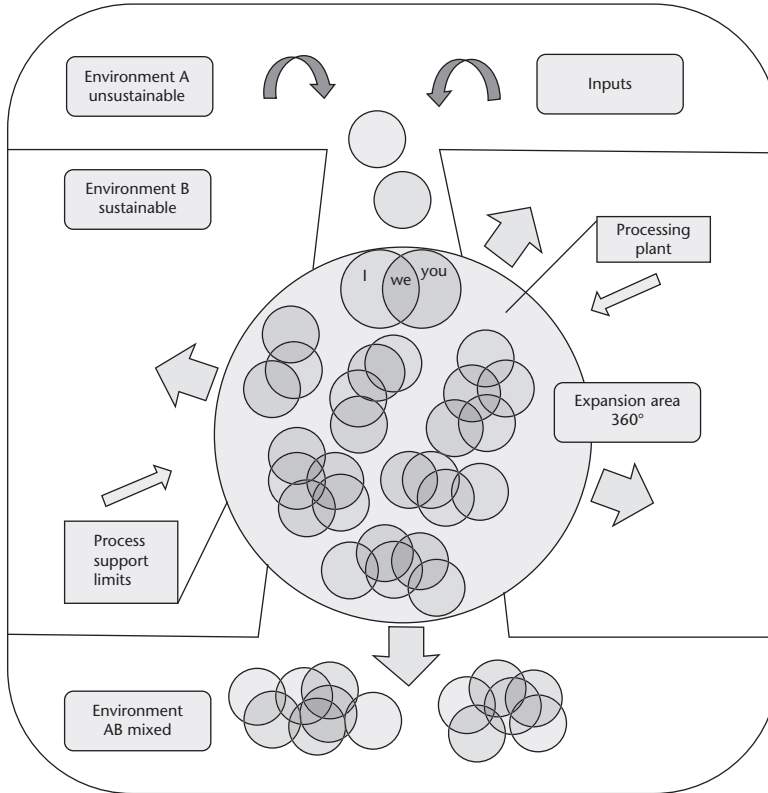


Figure 12.2 Sustainable leadership formation process.

Source: Proposed by the authors

significant for both, which is a feature of collective leadership. From that moment on, decisions will be made together.

The fourth stage is the moment of multiplication or aggregation, since several individuals acting in the same propitious environment (environment *b*) will tend to exchange references, experiences, and meanings. The moment occurs when several individual conditions become references for one another and vice versa.

The fifth stage is that of interactivity, in which the benefits of synergy for sustainability are achieved.

Environment *b*, in which ecosystems interact with people, is a sustained and controlled environment because it is preserved.

Those who participate in the process of leadership formation give back to the environment by being sustainable, collectively responsible for their actions, and aware of the consequences for environment *b*. Leaders are formed with multiple skills and types of intelligence and can elicit pro-sustainable attitudes in the team. Therefore, these pro-sustainability attitudes maintain the environment's habitability conditions over time. This synergistic mechanism is facilitated within the limits of the sustainability of environment *b*.

The result of this synergy is an important artefact, that is, a team that can be described as self-managed due to the meaningful exchanges and trust generated in the process.

When sustained teams form in this way, the environment of origin (environment *a*) receives them again, but with a new configuration, which is directed from the individual to the other

and leads to the transformation and formation of leaders, a fundamental part of the process of societal transformation.

The chain reaction triggered by the emergence of multiple sustainable teams in the environment of origin will characterize it as an *ab* environment, that is, a hybrid environment capable of changing the status quo and the existing power configurations.

Modelling dimensions, considered as inputs for sustainable leadership, will be recognized from individual and personal references until their collective construction: a moment in which the context of individual insertions will be considered and progressivity will be achieved through the process of transformation that passes through the different stages mentioned.

Conclusion

Leadership is one of the most complex and multifaceted organizational phenomena; thus, it cannot be understood through a simple or unitary perspective. Leadership theories have been slow to incorporate innovative notions that emphasize the synergistic strength of joint leadership.

What distinguishes collective leadership from traditional models is the fact that, by sharing leadership, influence processes go beyond the traditional influence unilaterally exercised by formal leaders, recognizing individual expertise and allowing leadership, in its purest form, to be widely distributed among several individuals. Shared leadership prevents traditional leadership from collapsing because, in practical terms, a single leader is not capable of dealing with multiple factors that require diversified knowledge, which can only be achieved through the communication, information sharing, and social interaction that characterize formal and informal networks.

Leadership can emerge anywhere, at any time, and is not limited to a particular configuration or person. This has been reflected in changes in the literature, which now addresses leadership as a relational property rather than as an individual entity. The integrative framework of the network-centred organizational context shows how a collective engages in the social process of leadership, examining whether the relationships that foster direction, alignment, and commitment among employees are present, as well as their possible predictors.

All leadership is about self-identity, self-leadership, and shared and collective leadership. Communicators must manage themselves strategically, becoming more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and actions, and be able to acquire wider and more complex contact and relationship networks, fostering change at all levels of the organization through collective leadership. Only by reaching these deeper levels of consciousness can one arrive at the process of dematerialization of the self, eliminating narcissism and promoting more inclusive forms that recognize the potential and expertise of others, allowing the influence processes that occur in organizational networks to happen naturally. The principles of collective leadership recognize diversity of competencies, the need for dynamic distribution, and exchange of information as a result of a set of interactions that requires a broader awareness of teamwork, and as fundamental pillars in this construction.

This paper has immediate practical implications, the need to consolidate a leadership model that is sufficiently parsimonious, that consists of more than a typology of competencies, and that can address to the systemic complexity of global phenomena. It would be useful to establish the foundations for leadership programs, which include self-leadership, team leadership, and collective leadership, as theoretical orientations that enable the creation of mental schemes, which are vital to the stages of leadership development. It should also be emphasized that implementing collective leadership requires institutions to be aware of the need for networking and the notion of sharing, as well as recognize individual competencies.

Thus, we strongly question the paradigm of leadership as an individual phenomenon and propose that the construction of leadership identity is a social process, as well as a way to meet the

increasing need to adapt to a network-centric environment dominated by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, given its nature and the requirements of communication and media scenarios; we point out the reductionism of the current studies on leadership, which focus only on the figure of the formal leader, neglecting the development of leadership as an inherently multilevel and longitudinal social process; we emphasize the participatory phenomenon of sustainable leadership, arguing that its goal is to aggregate values and virtues and to transform society into a democratic environment, as opposed to simply a group of people who have no commitment to the truth, and criticize the lack of professionalism and transparency that make a future in the shadow of authoritarianism even more uncertain.

This study can contribute to leadership research, not only to our understanding of the process of collective leadership, but also by transforming organizations and individuals and implementing leadership development programs. This investigation is a strategic requirement if we wish to develop a generation of leaders who effectively care for a future for all, in the sense that it is worth participating in their project.

Sustainable, collective, shared and participatory leadership is essentially democratic, and not only discursive, and cannot be otherwise. Its gregariousness, based on shared power, fosters the subject's identity and identification with the organization, and is a natural antidote to abuse and misuse of authority by generating trust and, of course, by inducing transparency.

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