

## Leadership for What?

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### Abstract

We argue that the majority of leadership research and development has sought to make itself relevant in the wrong way—by supporting commercial organizations in their attempts to isolate pseudo-scientific levers that can align individual leader competencies and drive desired behaviors in the service of their core business. Elsewhere we have addressed this problem by outlining an alternative approach to leadership research and development as a networked, collaboratory process of multi-stakeholder engagement designed to tackle major societal problems and, in the process, to generate new ideas and to nurture the emergence of the relational capacities needed to address even more complex challenges into the future. In this chapter we elaborate on this collaboratory approach by drawing connections to ongoing conversations about leadership and purpose. We exemplify these connections by describing the design of an upcoming collaboratory engagement with public sector managers in the Gaunteng City Region, the most heavily populated province in South Africa. We build on this and other examples of similar engagements in public, commercial, and cross-sector contexts to discuss how to redirect leadership development to address pressing social challenges and to learn new things about leadership in the process.

### Introduction

Would it really matter in the broader scheme of things if leadership studies didn't exist? In its current state, we are not so certain that it would. When you pause to think about it, leadership research and development have not really made any sort of substantial contribution to society, nor have they provided much in the way of meaningful support for collective efforts to address major societal and global challenges. With a few laudable exceptions, leadership studies have had next to nothing to say about such complex problems as food waste, famine, or obesity, discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, the global refugee crisis, the rise of racist and anti-immigrant sentiments, the resurgence of nationalist and populist movements or political demagoguery, or the very real threats posed by human-made climate change. This is a major failing, we argue here, because leadership research and leadership development practice have the potential to address such pressing social and environmental challenges, to help repair fractured communities, and to contribute to the betterment of society on a global scale. Furthermore, we argue, engagement in multi-stakeholder efforts to address these sorts of complex challenges could in turn help to rejuvenate leadership

research and development in more conventional contexts, generating new connections, ideas, and practices, and spinning off vital new approaches to leadership that could also benefit commercial organizations and the persons who work for them.

Nearly two decades ago, Starkey and Madan (2001) sparked a debate that has continued to engage scholars of management and organization up to the present day when they argued that the predominance of an overly academic and theoretical mode of knowledge production (“Mode 1”) had given rise to a relevance gap between business school research and the managerial organizations such research should serve. They suggested that management research should adopt a more practice-based, problem-driven mode of knowledge production (“Mode 2”) that would more directly address the challenges confronting managerial organizations. Joining the debate, Huff and Huff (2001) responded that even a combination of Modes 1 and 2 was not sufficient to fix the problems facing business schools, because both modes of knowledge production were primarily directed at the wrong problems. They proposed a new mode of knowledge production (“Mode 3”) that would address problems of concern to humanity at large, and in so doing, would revitalize business schools as well.

This debate, and especially Huff and Huff’s notion of Mode 3 knowledge production, remain particularly important with respect to leadership research, because scholars have responded to a perceived relevance gap within this area in ways that threaten to render their work increasingly irrelevant and obsolete. The problem, we argue here, is that much of leadership studies has also been pursuing the wrong kind of relevance— primarily relevance to bureaucratic organizations and to the managers who run them, rather than relevance to complex societal problems that matter. We propose that the solution to this problem will require that leadership scholars engage and collaborate with a wider variety of public and private stakeholders in order to redirect the power of leadership research and leadership development to address complex social and even global challenges— rather than merely to generate new theory or to attempt to fix organizational performance gaps.

In this chapter we return to the debate Starkey and Madan started in order to map out a new approach to the production of leadership knowledge, and ultimately to the production and reproduction of leadership

itself. We explain how this new approach combines and extends elements of action research, service learning, collaboratory design science, research on the links between leadership and purpose, and complexity leadership theory. We illustrate the connections between these various ideas and practices by means of an extended description of the design of a proposed collaboratory engagement with public sector managers in the Gauteng City Region, an area that spans Johannesburg, Soweto, and Pretoria, and that constitutes the most heavily populated province in South Africa. We build on this proposal, and on other examples of collaboratory engagements in public and cross-sector contexts, in order to discuss how we might leverage leadership research and development as a collective endeavour, rather than an individual journey of self-discovery, so that it can address pressing social challenges both within and across commercial organizations, and produce new leadership knowledge in the process. The interconnected and admittedly ambitious goals behind asking the question “leadership for what?” are therefore threefold: to contribute to efforts toward meaningful social change, thereby to transform the way we study and practice leadership, and to benefit public and private organizations along the way.

### **Modes of Knowledge Production and Debates About Relevance**

In “Bridging the Relevance Gap: Aligning Stakeholders in the Future of Management Research” (2001), Starkey and Madan delivered a bracing critique of the overly academic and theoretical way that most business schools, in their view, conduct research. To make this point, they drew heavily on Gibbons et al’s (1994) discussion of new modes of knowledge production as forces for change, and they drew in particular on the sharp distinction those authors drew between what they called Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production. Mode 1 knowledge production, “is what we traditionally conceive of as the scientific approach to knowledge creation and is what universities have historically concerned with.” Starkey and Madan argued that an obsession with academic disciplinary boundaries, and with the primacy of theory over practice, was threatening to render management studies irrelevant, unsustainable, and increasingly obsolete. As a result, they observed, there was “a growing concern among management academics that Mode 1 knowledge is losing touch with higher education’s stakeholders” (Starkey & Madan, 2001: S5).

Starkey and Madan proposed to bridge this relevance gap by embracing what Gibbons et al had termed Mode 2 knowledge production, a transdisciplinary, context-specific approach to “knowledge as it works in practice in the context of application (Starkey & Madan, 2001: S5).” Mode 2 knowledge production is a problem- and opportunity-driven approach rather than theory-driven like Mode 1 (MacLean, MacIntosh, & Grant, 2002); it values utility and efficacy over scientific validity (Van de Ven, 2007); and to the extent that Mode 2 knowledge production develops theories, they are not abstract, but rather descriptive of how things are done and normative concerning what should be done (Burgoyne & James, 2006: 312).

Starkey and Madan did not go quite so far as to maintain that management scholars should simply abandon Mode 1 pursuits in favour of Mode 2. At several points during their argument they appeared to endorse Tranfield and Starkey’s call for business school research that could straddle the “double hurdle of academic rigour and managerial relevance, embedded in both the social science canons of best practice and the worlds of policy and practice” (Starkey & Madan, 2001: S8; Tranfield & Starkey, 1998). At the end of the day, however, Starkey and Madan were arguing that business schools remained far too stodgy and academic, and that they needed to for the most part jettison Mode 1 in favour of Mode 2 in order to climb down from the ivory tower and get about the business of producing knowledge that was relevant for helping practicing managers to do their jobs. “Arguably, the Mode 1 approach to research and knowledge production is no longer sustainable,” they stated clearly. “Universities are the last bastions of [Mode 1] in a world where greater accountability and the speed of change in relevant knowledge encourage [a Mode 2] approach” (Starkey & Madan, 2001: S5).

Starkey and Madan’s article has been hotly debated ever since. A number of scholars have followed Starkey and Madan’s lead and tried earnestly to bridge the gap they highlighted. For example, Aram and Salipante (2003) sought to reinterpret Modes 1 and 2 within a broader epistemological frame, and to bridge the relevance gap by focusing on the common interest that both sides of the divide share with regard to problems drawn from practice. They argued that a common focus on problems, and on the questions that such problems generate, could help to set in motion a continuous, iterative cycle of switching between con-

textualized knowing and general/abstract knowing that would amount to what they called ‘bridging scholarship’. “Since problems are the stimuli for learning, bridging scholarship identifies the problematic experience of individuals who are puzzling out the challenges that environmental change presents to them,” they maintained (Aram & Salipante, 2003: 201).

Other scholars have remained considerably more skeptical about Starkey and Madan’s call to render business school research more relevant to managers, to the point of characterizing the implications of such efforts problematic, if not also ideologically suspect (Knights, 2008). Working from this critical perspective, Butler, Delaney, and Spoelstra (2015) interviewed leadership scholars about their experiences engaging with practitioners in order to question the whole notion of relevance. They found that these sorts of experiences often forced scholars to choose between managerial relevance, on the one hand, and their professional/academic ideals on the other. “Put bluntly, the idea that scholars must produce work that has a direct and practical application within organizations already serves to shape the nature and purpose of academic research around corporate imperatives at the outset,” they argued (Butler et al., 2015: 741). For this reason they proposed that rejecting the call for relevance should be considered a viable and legitimate option. “Our hope is to challenge the idea that ‘relevance’ is an unconditional good in itself,” they concluded. “...we also aim to provide legitimacy for scholars who wish to refrain from practitioner engagement altogether” (Butler et al., 2015: 742).

In defending scholars who would resist the pressure for relevance, Butler et al. were rejecting a decidedly narrow definition of the terms “relevance,” “problems” and “practice,” and advocating for a more pluralistic understanding of what these terms might mean. But their own argument very narrowly conceived of practitioners exclusively as corporate managers, and did not include other types of managers, practitioners, or activists engaged in addressing major societal challenges inside government organizations, NGOs, or social movements. For this reason, they also glossed over the countercurrent of pluralist approaches to the notion of relevance that had already characterized the debate Starkey and Madan started from the very beginning.

Writing in the same 2001 journal issue as Starkey and Madan, Huff and Huff delivered their own bracing critique of business school research, albeit one based on a very different conception of what constitutes relevance. In contradistinction to Starkey and Madan, they argued that even a combination of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production would not render management research relevant to problems and constituencies that really matter. Finalizing their response just after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and building like Starkey and Madan on James March's earlier call to "deepen an intellectual understanding of the relation between activities in business and the major issues of human existence," they proposed instead a third mode of knowledge production that would leverage the strengths of Modes 1 and 2 to tackle social challenges of concern to humanity at large. "The purpose of Mode 3 knowledge production," they proposed, would be "to assure survival and to promote the common good, at various levels of social aggregation" (Huff & Huff, 2001: S51).

Huff and Huff were expanding the definition of the terms "relevance," "practice," and "problems" to address complex societal challenges above and beyond the operational problems faced by managers in commercial organizations. They were also significantly expanding the ranks of the stakeholders with a vested interest in management education to include not only corporate managers and policy makers, but also non-governmental organizations, charitable causes, the committed people working in these contexts, and many others involved in social movements for significant and constructive change. According to Huff and Huff, these many different stakeholders would have to find new ways of interacting and collaborating with each other in order to tackle the challenges in question. "Inputs from diverse stakeholders will be required, contributors from NGOs, the media and electronic sources of information seem particularly important," they pointed out. "The process will not be easy, because the differences in values and interpretation are remarkably broad. As we frame it, more participatory practices than followed in many organizations also will be required" (Huff & Huff, 2001: S53).

Huff and Huff's argument in favour of Mode 3 knowledge production raised important questions about the broader purpose of business schools in relation to both business and society at large. Over the past several years, leadership scholars have struck up a parallel conversation about the nature and function

of leadership, and its connection to purpose. This connects back to our original point—if leadership research and development can't or won't address societal and global challenges, then what is it really for, and why do we need it? A brief review of the state of this conversation about leadership and purpose will help tie Huff and Huff's notion of Mode 3 knowledge production back to our main point about the need for a new way to go about conducting leadership research and development.

### **Leadership for What? From Unity of Purpose to Multiple Purposes**

In “Leadership as Purpose: Exploring the Role of Purpose in Leadership Practice,” Kempster, Jackson and Conroy (2011) distinguish sharply between notions of vision, mission, shared goals, objectives and plans, on the one hand, and the notion of purpose on the other. The former have come to refer primarily to corporate imperatives and strategies, they argue, while they use the latter notion to refer to major social challenges and societal goals. “When conceptualized as a process of sensemaking,” they argue, “leadership can provide an opportunity for notions of societal purpose to come to the fore in countervailing balance with corporate purposes” (Kempster et al., 2011: 323). With this in mind they argue for the realignment of the concept of leadership around the notion of purpose.

Kempster et al. point out that many popular and standard academic texts do not mention any notion of purpose in the process of defining leadership—that is, they don't really stop to ask what leadership is ultimately for (Daft, 2015; Gill, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Yukl, 2005). One standard text that does touch on such issues, they allow, is Drath (1998), who maintains that leadership should be understood not just as a person, but also as a sense of purpose and as a force that gives people a common direction (1998: 406). Drath anchors this argument about purpose and meaning in the literature on transformational leadership, which emphasizes the role of idealized influence and the interpersonal skills of the leader in motivating followers. But he also predicts that future discussions of leadership would place an increasing emphasis upon systemic relationships and mutual meaning-making (Drath & Palus, 1993).

Kempster et al. explore the philosophical underpinnings of this point about the need for a broader sense of purpose and common direction by drawing on the ideas of Aristotle by way of the Scottish philosopher Alistair MacIntyre, specifically his gloss on Aristotle's concept of *telos*. *Telos* has been defined

as “a vision anticipating the moral unity of life, given in the form of a narrative history that has meaning within a particular community’s traditions” (McCann & Brownsberger, 1990: 221). As Kempster et al. elaborate, “The telos is a meta-goal... MacIntyre suggests that a meaningless life is one that lacks movement towards a telos” (Kempster et al., 2011: 322). Kempster et al. argue further that processes of socialisation within commercial organisations lead to the minimisation of room for telos, or for any kind of broad societal purpose in leadership discourse, and they follow MacIntyre’s lead in suggesting that such minimisation results inevitably from managers’ fiduciary duty to maximise value to only one stakeholder, rather than to a multiplicity of stakeholders.

Parry and Jackson (2016) have elaborated on Kempster et al.’s point that leadership should function to champion societal purpose as a countervailing force to corporate purpose. They begin with a full-throated critique of the culture of shareholder value and the complicity of business school education in promoting that such an ideal. Ultimately, Parry and Jackson argue, we should be teaching that the purpose of leadership is to integrate corporate and societal purpose in a manner that gives priority to the latter. “Perhaps a responsible leadership message coming from business schools will integrate the goals of societal purpose and corporate purpose,” they conclude: “Perhaps accountability will be matched with responsibility” (Parry & Jackson, 2016: 161).

Writing in the same volume, Guthey has praised the intent of this point about leadership and purpose, but has critiqued the assumptions undergirding the whole conversation about this topic (Guthey, 2016). At issue, he argues, is the use of the term “purpose” to refer to an overarching societal meta-goal or unitary telos. Working from a relational perspective, he points out that “a radically relational perspective on responsible leadership would emphasize not just one purpose, but many purposes.” He goes on to argue that “the bulwark of a healthy society is a multiplicity of different purposes, competing visions of responsibility, different political perspectives, diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, regional, and gendered identities and interests, along with a vital and functioning political system that allows for debate, negotiation, and compromise among these different groups and interests.” From this pluralist perspective, he observes,



“the notion of corporate or societal purpose is not quite adequate to address the multiple purposes attached to either business, or society, or the combination of the two.” As Guthey concludes, “a radically relational approach to responsible leadership would begin from a recognition of the social, political, and often contentious give-and-take between different purposes and interests at play in a pluralistic democratic society” (Guthey, 2016: 212–213).

Recent advances in relational and complexity leadership theory provide support for this argument, and for the idea that even the members of a single organization often strive for a multiplicity of different purposes to productive effect. From the perspective of complexity leadership theory, for example, the impulse to seek out a single or overarching societal or corporate purpose that can unite a variety of different stakeholders appears very similar to what Uhl-Bien and Arena (2017) describe as an “order” response to complexity. As Uhl-Bien and Arena explain, “snapping back to previously successful, ordered solutions provides a sense of control that satisfies not only the needs of managers who have been trained in traditional leadership models, but also organizational members who look to leaders to take care of them and make things “right” again.” As they explain further, “the problem with this is that order is the enemy of adaptability, and ordered responses can stifle out the interactive dynamics needed by organizations to respond effectively to complexity” (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017: 10). In a similar vein, Ospina and Foldy (2010) have characterized leadership in social change organizations as a form of “bridging” that facilitates coordination across organizations without erasing substantial differences in interests, values and missions among such organizations under the umbrella of some assumed common purpose. In their discussion of intergroup leadership, Pittinsky and Simon (2007) have detailed how such appeals to unity of purpose can be highly counterproductive to collaboration in interorganizational contexts.

### **The ‘collaboratory’ as multi-stakeholder leadership development**

The preceding discussion gives rise to an important question: how can we transform leadership research and development so that it can mobilize multiple, diverse stakeholders and perspectives to confront major social challenges, in the manner of Mode 3 knowledge production, drawing on their collective strengths while not smoothing over the real differences between them— even differences of purpose—

precisely because those differences provide diversity of perspective and new, unexpected ideas and connections? This is where we invoke the ‘collaboratory’ process (Wulf, 1993). The word ‘collaboratory’ describes a joint process of collaboration and laboratory research fused together as an on-going dynamic of experimenting through application to develop innovations in practice (Muff, 2014: 12). Wulf (1993) first conceived of the practice as a space without walls in which scientists could come together around themes and projects to undertake research collaboratively. Still working within the physical sciences, Bly (1998) extended the concept to describe a partnership between researchers and the community served by the research; in other words envisaged as a continual flow between mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge contributions. Cogburn emphasized that collaboratories consist not only of technical research practices but also of social processes including “collaboration techniques; formal and informal communication; and agreement on norms, principles, values, and rules” (Cogburn, 2003: 86). Collaboratories are not one-offs. If they were then this would be no more than a fancy sounding title for a workshop. Collaboratories offer a longitudinal action research approach that tests emerging ideas in a multitude of settings and repeatedly interrogates what has been discovered in subsequent collaboratory gatherings (Kempster, Guthey, & Uhl-Bien, 2017).

Perhaps the most prominent example of a collaboratory is that established at Cern, the largest particle physics laboratory in the world. In this context, Mabey and Nicholds (2015) have explored the social processes of knowledge production associated with the research being undertaken through the ATLAS hadron collider. Their examination of this particular collaboratory suggested a horizontal approach to knowledge management. The empirical evidence pointed to a relational rather than a positional form of leadership (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Mabey and Nicholds offered the term ‘knowledge leadership’ to describe the most salient relational process in this context, which provides a compelling way to understand the leadership dynamic anticipated in a collaboratory “as being co-determined by a range of actors and as a shared activity appropriate for tasks that are highly interdependent, complex and requiring high levels of creativity” (Mabey & Nicholds, 2015: 44).

The experimental and on-going nature of a collaboratory reflects many of the core principles that inform the reconceptualization of management as a design science. Design science is a transdisciplinary

problem-led approach that can help “create systems of management and economy that are a better fit for purpose than we have currently” (Hodgkinson & Starkey, 2011: 609). Drawing from such fields as medicine, architecture, engineering, or psychotherapy (Aken, 2004: 224), design science can address the aforementioned relevance gap by connecting knowledge production from modes 1, 2 and 3. As Hodgkinson and Starkey (2011) suggest, design science focuses on ‘what works’ from a pragmatic perspective rather than simply what is true from a positivist one. It also enables interaction between those generating knowledge and those seeking to apply the knowledge (Kelemen & Bansal, 2002). Romme’s description helps explain why design science is uniquely positioned for addressing complex social and global challenges:

The idea of design involves inquiry into systems that do not yet exist. Will it work rather than is it valid or true? Rooted in pragmatism as underpinning epistemology, design science seeks to produce knowledge that is both actionable and open to on-going validation. Importantly it has a latent aspirational orientation to action where approaches to ‘design involves human beings using knowledge to create what should be (Romme, 2003: 562).

Design science reflects many principles of action learning – which often inform best practices in leadership development (Burgoyne & Turnbull James, 2001). The major difference is the manner in which design science blends a forward anticipating vision of what might or should be with a set of principles and prescriptions for guiding the research journey. Because design science seeks to develop an evidence base to help refine the principles for guidance in subsequent settings, it enables academics to participate within the process to retrieve mode 1 outputs. Yet design science similarly allows academics and practitioners from a range of backgrounds to collaborate together in an interdisciplinary manner to produce mode 2 knowledge that is connected with mode 3. At the same time those engaging in design science within the context of a collaborative travel together through a process of leadership development. Thus the process simultaneously produces Mode 3 outputs relevant for stakeholder communities and policy makers and Mode 2 outputs for participating managers and their organizations. Figure 2 illustrates

how we see these various modes of knowledge production interacting with each other in a virtuous circle to address important societal challenges in the collaboratory context.

**Insert Figure 1 Here**

Branching out from their use in the natural sciences, collaboratories have entered the lexicon of management education. In this context it exhibits prominent dimensions of responsible leadership (Kempster & Carroll, 2016; Miska & Mendenhall, 2018), namely: multiple levels of responsibility – the individual, the team, the organisation, suppliers, customers, communities and broadly society and the environment (Doh & Quigley, 2014; Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012) addressed through alignment of personal, organisational and societal purposes (Kempster et al., 2011); balancing shareholder value with stakeholder value (Maak & Pless, 2006; Waldman & Galvin, 2008); ethical assumptions of doing no harm and a duty of care to such stakeholders through addressing Elkington's triple bottom line that embraces a broader humanitarian perspective and a sense of worldly appreciation (Elkington, 2004; Maak & Pless, 2009; Stahl & Sully de Luque, 2014; Turnbull, 2012); and an approach that suggests a shared orientation (Pearce, Wassenaar, & Manz, 2014) and is relational and collaborative (Pless, Maak, & Waldman, 2012).

For these reasons we suggest that collaboratories can function as a crucible for engaged leadership research, as well as a model for a new kind of multi-stakeholder leadership development. On the level of content, the collaboratory process provides a deeply informing educational process for managers with respect to many issues beyond the normal vista of everyday management concerns. The collaboratory immerses participants into the thick of complex challenges, and sparks an emerging sense of ownership of the problem(s) together with a growing commitment to address these (reflecting Gosling and Mintzberg's (2003) argument for developing the global and worldly mindset). On the level of process, the collaboratory provides an effective mechanism for the transfer of learning back to organisation (Belling, James, & Ladkin, 2004; Burgoyne & Turnbull James, 2001).

Our description of the collaboratory process bears several points of resemblance to the social change model of leadership development designed for use in student leadership development contexts (Dugan, 2011; Komives & Wagner, 2017), but the differences are instructive and serve to highlight three key characteristics of collaboratories as we have described them. First of all, implementations of the social change model “almost uniformly take the developmental perspective and focus on individual outcome achievement,” (Dugan, Turman, & Torrez, 2015: 7), whereas the collaboratory rejects an individualistic, inner-directed, or leader-centric view in favour a leadership-centered focus on collaboration and interaction. Second, the social change model foregrounds the importance of the “Seven C’s” – essentially a list of core values that are critical for leadership efforts to drive social change— whereas the collaboratory process places a premium on the emergence via interaction and practice of not only values, but also purposes, practices and solutions. Third, the social change model of leadership development overemphasizes common purpose as a core leadership value in the context of social change, whereas the collaboratory stresses the importance of multiple purposes and the necessity of negotiating among them in the process of addressing major societal challenges.

### **Collaboratory Design: The Gauteng City Region Academy**

In this section we exemplify these many aspects of the collaboratory as a form of multi-stakeholder leadership research and development through problem-solving by describing the design of one such set of collaboratory practices in the context of a partnership between the Gauteng City Region Academy (GCRA) in South Africa and the Lancaster University Leadership Collaboratory (LLC). Management at the GCRA wanted to develop a new programme for leading strategic change in their local organisation and region. The programme will be offered to the 14 departments (consisting of the 3 clusters Economic, Governance, and Social); initially commencing from spring, 2018 onwards. The goal of the programme is to expose senior managers to thought-provoking content in leading strategic change, together with affording them the time to create a leadership value change network.

First, some crucial background: The Gauteng province of South Africa is located in the north-eastern part of South Africa. While it is the smallest province in terms of land area mass, it is the most

populous province with approximately 13.2 million people calling Gauteng province home, which is about 24% of the total South African population (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>). A mixture of both urban and rural, the cities of Johannesburg, Soweto, and Pretoria and centrally located within the province and are the main financial districts in the region. The Gauteng province contributes approximately one third of the total South African GDP (<http://www.gauteng.gov.za>). Most of the Gauteng inhabitants are young – only 4% are over the age of 65.

A closer look at the statistics make clear that the Gauteng City Region is a study in contrasts. While it serves as one of the key economic engines of the South African economy, it also shares in the country's crippling unemployment. Roughly 25% of the South African population, and 50% of young people—the GCRA's core constituency— are without jobs. Consequently, the region is also characterized by massive disparity in economic well-being, a contemporary reality deeply connected to South Africa's long history of racial disparity and Apartheid. Income inequality in South Africa is among the highest in the world, and the Gauteng region shares in this unfortunate statistic as well, with a full 10% of the regions inhabitants living below the poverty line. While the recent growth of a black middle class in South Africa appears as a bright spot in this landscape, it has the unfortunate side-effect of increasing income inequality among South Africa's roughly 80% black population itself. South Africa also currently contains between 5 million and 8 million undocumented immigrants- upwards of 5% of the population- and these numbers are higher in major urban centers such as Johannesburg. The large number of migrants contributes to major problems in employment, housing and other services. Meanwhile, education in South Africa has experienced major problems over the past several years— with respect to quality in secondary education, and with respect to access in higher education (GCRO, 2013). One of the most newsworthy consequences of these latter interconnected problems over the last two years was the rolling lock downs of South African universities, including those in the Gauteng region, as a result of the Fees Must Fall/Afrikaans Must Fall protest movements spearheaded by disaffected university students across the country (Hauser, 2016).

These complex and interconnected problems exert considerable, often very challenging, impact on youth development, jobs and education, and therefore they directly confront the GCRA, which is a branch of the Gauteng Department of Education, and a part of the regional government. According to their own website, the mandate of the GCRA is “skills development for both the public sector and the youth of Gauteng Province, which is central to building skills for the economy and to ensure an efficient, effective and developmental oriented public service. The role of the Academy is therefore, to contribute to socio-economic transformation.” The GCRA’s strategic goals include “To develop interventions which respond to the skills development needs of the Gauteng public servants; and to enable young people to make the transition from school to work, through relevant work training opportunities.” (<http://www.gauteng.gov.za/services/youth/Pages/GCRA.aspx>).

The GCRA works with and for its own governmental employees, members of the public and private sector, its youth, and those seeking support. As the GCRA’s strategic goals and mission make clear, the focus and objective of the academy isn’t merely leadership development, but leadership for social change. From the very outset, leadership is purposefully and explicitly defined as a mechanism and tool for larger social and cultural change. Driven by the vision of the GCRA, therefore, the force motivating the Gauteng/Lancaster Collaboratory stems from a need to better equip GCRA managers to facilitate better practices and processes at work as well as enable them to work as individual citizens to bring about social change. More specifically, the GCRA seeks to be better at responding to practical and emergent realities such as resource constraints, organisational conflict, and conflicting stakeholder interests.

The GCRA’s partner in this initiative, the Lancaster Leadership Collaboratory, is comprised of academics from the Lancaster University Management School who teach and research issues related to leadership, organisational communication and behaviour. Members of the LLC have experience working with the Collaboratory in other projects that range in topic from youth empowerment, healthcare management, human rights recognition, human migration and social integration, and organisational cultural/structural change. Past Collaboratory experiences including working with groups from Europe, North America, Asia, Australia, and Africa. A number of these collaboratories were joint efforts among a network of

leadership scholars from several different countries, alongside practitioners in leadership development and social change work. These included a workshop on the dynamics of cross-sector partnerships between the Danish Red Cross and a number of private-sector organizations working to support refugees in the process of integration, hosted in Copenhagen, Denmark in May 2016; a NATO funded workshop, together with the Center for Creative Leadership and the Geneva Center on Security Policy, on the dynamics of leadership in fragile and post-conflict environments, hosted in Geneva, Switzerland in September 2016; a workshop on inclusive and grass-roots leadership in the context of refugee resettlement, hosted jointly by the annual conference of the International Leadership Association and the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia in November 2016; and a two-day collaboratory with South African university students, parents, faculty, representatives of university administration, and student protesters and activists, conducted at the University of Pretoria in March 2017, on the challenges facing university stakeholders in connection with the Fees Must Fall and Afrikaans Must Fall protests that had led to incidents of violence and the lock-down of Pretoria and many other South African Universities in 2016 and 2017.

As explained earlier, a collaboratory is a blend of *collaboration* of stakeholders and *laboratory* – it is a collective experiment with the aim of addressing a specific problem or challenge. This is a process that unfolds over a pre-determined length of time. The GCRA determined they had 18 months for the Gauteng/Lancaster Collaboratory. The figure below illustrates the flow of the collaboratory process:

### **Insert Figure 2 here: GCRA/Lancaster Collaboratory Design**

Central to this process is the act of naming, examining, and confirming the issues, challenges, or problems facing the GRCAs. The specifics of these challenges and contributing factors are understood best by the local participants – the employees and stakeholders. Therefore, the first thing the Collaboratory will do is seek to build stronger relationships and develop trust between the members of the GCRA and other relevant stakeholders. To help accomplish this, the Gauteng/Lancaster Collaboratory will use



collaboratory workshops, actions, and action learning sets to help facilitate rapport and trust among GCRA members and stakeholders. The Collaboratory workshops (four in total) provide space and opportunity to begin (and continue) the process of blending the vision and aspirations of the participants with the practical realities that constrain or complicate change. Expert input to help facilitate this process is provided by the members of the LCC.

Unlike most leadership development programs and change management schemes, a key feature of the collaboratory is that it provides the mechanisms by which ideas are created, tested, and refined. The collaboratory is intended to create a safe space to fail, so to speak. This safe space consists of the collaboratory activities, in which participating stakeholders work together to test out emerging ideas that are subsequently examined in the following workshops. In other words, after the initial workshop, the ideas generated in the workshop discussion will be tried and tested to determine their efficacy, appropriateness, and usefulness. Further, possible unanticipated consequences and/or outcomes will be noted. In this latter regard, action learning sets serve a crucial support function for the members of the collaboratory. Through the use of a facilitator, the action learning sets catalyze conversations among groups of participating stakeholders (approximately 6-9 people) about what is working or not working, and about alternative plans, unforeseen consequences, hidden assumptions, and new challenges or problems. In this manner they provide a forum for collective leadership development in which participants together explore aspirations, identities, and skills associated with their roles within the collaboratory and, more importantly, within their organisation. The focus of this mode of development is not directed inward toward individual leader traits and skills, emotional intelligence or competency profiles. The focus remains on the collective effort, or more specifically, on the thorny task of negotiating and forging collective effort via collaboration across difference, marshalling the strengths of multiple purposes and perspectives to the task of addressing the complex challenges at hand. The collaboratory approach we have designed for the GCRA/Lancaster collaboratory does not take productive collaboration for granted, nor simply assume that

common effort provides a ready starting point for leadership development, but approaches productive collaboration as a fragile achievement, one that can emerge from the sense of urgency that stakeholders bring to the task of addressing common complex challenges.

## **Conclusion**

Where will new leadership ideas come from? A leadership development consultant asked one of us this question a few years back. He was not asking rhetorically—he really wanted to know, because in his opinion the leadership development and consulting industries had not produced any truly new ideas in quite some time. From the perspective we have developed in this chapter, we would answer his question as follows: new leadership ideas will not come from pure academic research or theorizing—that is, from Mode 1 knowledge production—because as Starkey and Madan were not completely wrong to point out, academic theorizing can often become too distanced and detached from pragmatic concerns and pressures. Neither will new leadership ideas come from simply engaging directly in practical managerial challenges themselves—from Mode 2 knowledge production—because practical organizational activities come with their own set of blinders, roadblocks, and biases in the form of daily performance pressures, bottom-line short termism, management fashions and buzzwords, organizational politics, and sometimes even corruption and greed. As we have argued here, new leadership ideas will emerge as a by-product of various forms of engaged and interdisciplinary Mode 3 knowledge production. This will require that leadership scholars connect and collaborate with a wider variety of public and private stakeholders in order to redirect the power of leadership research and development to address complex social and even global challenges—rather than merely to generate new theory or to attempt to fix organizational performance gaps.

To reiterate an important point, it would be a mistake to think of this Mode 3 approach to leadership knowledge production as simply providing a new common ground or meta-purpose that unites or aligns a variety of different stakeholders and agendas around a shared vision. Drawing again on complexity leadership theory, and on Ospina and Foldy's insights about bridging across difference, we would argue that this kind of very traditional leadership vocabulary is not adequate to address wicked societal problems or complex global challenges. These sorts of imposing challenges require that multiple and even

conflicting interests and purposes connect, coordinate, and work together without erasing the very real differences that constitute the sources of their respective strengths.

By this same token, we would argue, confronting complex societal and global challenges via Mode 3 engagement requires the valuable contributions of both Modes 1 and 2 knowledge production, each with their own agenda, but each with something important to offer. In other words, the three modes are distinct yet interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Mode 1 research is a close bed-fellow of Mode 3, because pure research clearly seeks to enhance society by understanding and explaining phenomena and ideas in order to advance human condition. At the same time, Mode 3 knowledge production recognises the need for research breakthroughs in order to address complex challenges in a socially useful manner (Willmott, 2012), and offers the side benefit of opening up new topic areas, contexts, and connections for Mode 1 research. Mode 2 brings practical experience, know-how, operational discipline, and sometimes considerable financial and organizational resources to the table. And by engaging in Mode 3 efforts to address major social and global challenges, managerial organizations and the people who work in them will encounter new ideas about leadership and new organizational practices of relevance to their Mode 2 challenges.

We cannot predict the exact outcome of the GCRA/Lancaster leadership collaboratory in advance—not only because it hasn't taken place yet, but more importantly, because the collaboratory process hinges on the emergence of new connections, new ideas and new solutions that participants haven't even anticipated yet out of the rough and tumble of multi-stakeholder collaboration and experimentation. Neither can we predict the exact outcome of leveraging this and future collaboratories to nudge leadership research and development toward an interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach to Mode 1, 2 and 3 engagement with major societal and global challenges that matter. It is our hope that such an effort would help fix what's wrong with leadership, and would lead to the emergence of new connections, new ideas about leadership, and new solutions to some of the pressing and complex challenges facing humankind. Perhaps, as a long-term result of such an effort, leadership research and development could even fulfil their potential as very powerful mechanisms for social and global change.

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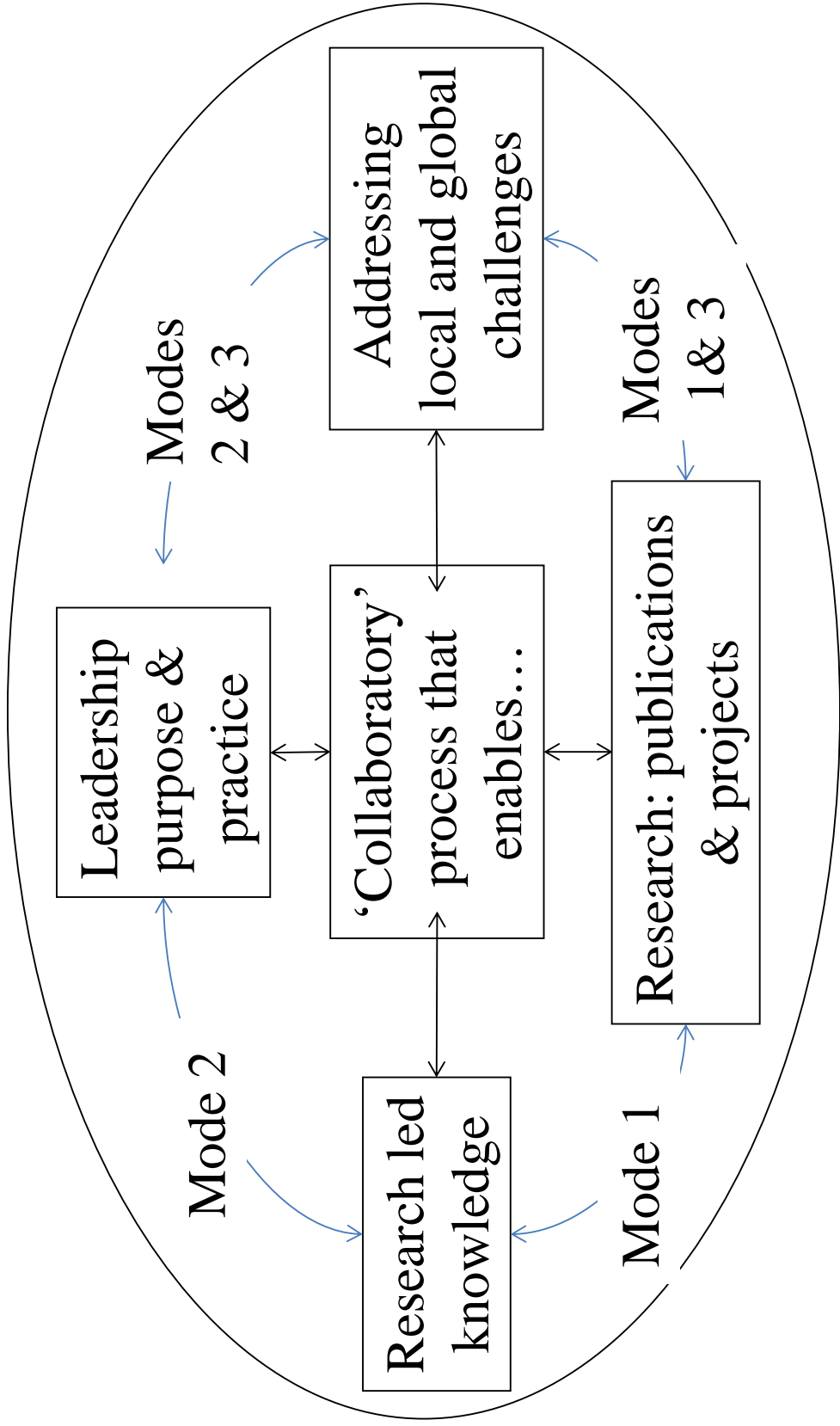
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**Figure 1: Collaboratory leadership development**



**Figure 2: GCRA/Lancaster Collaboratory Design**

