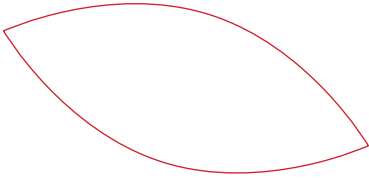


HUMANITY • FUTURE POSSIBILITIES • ENGAGEMENT  
COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE • INNOVATION • WHOLENESS

**PETRA KUENKEL**



# **NAVIGATING COMPLEX CHANGE.**

HOW WE CAN MASTER THE CHALLENGES  
OF STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

**COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP** STUDIES - VOLUME 2



**IMPRINT**

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*"Inaction is no longer acceptable."*

*Eric Lowitt, The Collaboration Economy: How to Meet Business, Social, and Environmental Needs and Gain Competitive Advantage*

# NAVIGATING COMPLEX CHANGE.

HOW WE CAN MASTER THE CHALLENGES OF STAKEHOLDER  
COLLABORATION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This *Volume 2* of our *Collective Leadership Studies* explores the conceptual background and application of our core methodological approach, the *Collective Leadership Compass*, that empowers individuals and groups of leaders to navigate complex change in multi-stakeholder collaboration. It can be used to drive integrated water management, manage initiatives to enhance climate change adaptation, create responsible value chain solutions, or any other sustainability challenge that requires actors across institutions, sectors or nations to work together to address complex change. Many existing multi-stakeholder collaborations are not delivering at full efficiency or effectiveness yet. This begs the questions: How can we move from the conceptual insight that we need to collaborate across nations, institutions, and cultures towards mastering the art of collaboration in a complex world? This Volume takes a backstage view by looking at underlying patterns for successful collaboration in complex change environments.

In **Section 1** we remind ourselves of the global agenda for sustainability and the transformative shifts that will require collaboration and partnering on a large scale.

In **Section 2** we explore the characteristics of successful multi-actor collaborations for sustainability and how the creative potential in sustainability inspires people to join in and commit.

In **Section 3** we reiterate the methodology – *COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP* – a practice-oriented approach to leading complex change in multi-actor settings and the *Collective Leadership Compass*, its tool for practical use. Each dimension of the *Compass* has its own dynamic and can be fostered and developed in many ways, for with attention to their joint presence, they mutually reinforce each other's strength.

**Section 4** dives into the conceptual background of the *Compass* and explains the research that has preceded its development.

**Section 5** explains how to use the *Compass* as a navigation tool – for planning and evaluating collaboration initiatives.

**Section 6** illustrates the application of the *Compass* with two brief case examples – the establishment of a sustainable textile alliance in Germany and the grooming of Rwanda's economic development through Public-Private Dialogue.

The *Collective Leadership Compass* is a tool for action and reflection. Derived from and tested in a variety of Stakeholder Collaboration settings, its application helps to structure processes in a successful way, it functions as quality check for stakeholder events, and it strengthens an appreciative and more holistic leadership style. This volume suggests that we need to scale-up both research and practice around capacitating groups of leaders to more consciously co-create a future aligned with sustainability across sectors and stakeholder interests.

# 1. THE GLOBAL AGENDA FOR BETTER COLLABORATION

In July 2012, invited by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, a 27 member High-level Panel composed of eminent persons from around the world began to work on their consultative advice for a global development framework beyond 2015. The report<sup>1</sup> emphasised “the central importance of a new spirit to guide a global partnership for a people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda, based on the principle of our common humanity.” It suggests five big transformative shifts:

- Ensuring that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities
- Putting sustainable development at the core of all development activities
- Transforming economies in the way that they provide jobs and inclusive growth
- Recognising peace and good governance as a core of human well-being.

The fifth shift is seen as an underlying support to reach the desired transformation: Forging a new global partnership in a “spirit of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual accountability”, coupled with the common understanding of our shared humanity<sup>2</sup> (United Nations Publications, 2013). The panel knew, whether it was about managing scarce water resources, adapting to climate change, securing access to adequate nutrition, or creating responsible value chains, that the challenges of sustainability required new forms of collaborative inventiveness. This is a heavy demand to place. Collaboration between different stakeholders is generally slow, includes different levels of understanding of partnering, high transaction costs, or has the tendency to want to reinvent the wheel. Many existing multi-stakeholder collaborations are

not yet delivering at full efficiency or effectiveness<sup>3</sup>. How can we move from the conceptual insight that we need to collaborate across nations, institutions, and cultures towards mastering the art of collaboration in a complex world?

In our previous volume titled “Shifting the Way We Co-Create”<sup>4</sup>, we suggested that most sustainability challenges are characterised by complexity, interdependence, and urgency. All three challenges require a change in the way we approach the future. In this volume we will focus on the challenge of complexity. In his recent article, Dave Snowden<sup>5</sup> suggests a decision-making framework for leaders that distinguishes between simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic change. Most sustainability challenges fall into the category of complex, for addressing the challenges requires that we test, probe, and prototype ourselves into the future. We need to open up to a global learning process. Multi-stakeholder collaboration is as a response to the complexity of the challenges ahead (Lozano, 2007; Kuenkel & Schaefer, 2013). It is also an emerging field of practice that is characterised by:

- Multiple actors with severe differences in interest that need to align around a joint improvement approach.
- Effectiveness of the collaboration being dependent on engaging actors into a joint approach who would normally not work together.
- The fact that problems that require solutions are complicated – they need expert knowledge and innovation; complex – they require a testing and learning approach, emerging solutions and innovation for scalability; and chaotic – they are subject to unforeseen market or political influences (see also Snowden, 2007).

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Publications (2013).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Biermann, et al. (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Kuenkel, P. & Schaefer, K.

<sup>5</sup> Snowden, D.J. & Boone, M.E. (2007).

Hence, our route to sustainability will become more successful as we not only learn to handle complexity, but also know to categorise problems as simple or complicated. However, there are issues with a level of complexity that surpasses the ability of an individual, a team, an organisation to solve them. Therefore we need to manage our road map into the future in a different way: None of the sustainability challenges can be addressed by one sector, one institution, or even one nation alone. Globally and locally, we need to step into an unknown territory and learn the art of Stakeholder Collaboration. This also requires planning, but in a different way. Collaboration across institutions, sectors, nations, and cultures invites us to navigate differences in interest, approaches, and expertise.

The global journey towards enhanced Stakeholder Collaboration is certainly not a road without obstacles. People can get lost in the jungle of impeding structures, get trapped in measuring questionable results, or become severely disappointed by a lack of understanding when dealing with people from different sectors, organisations, cultures, race, or gender. They tend to set up complicated collaboration structures that result in all talk and no action. Their passion often dries up eventually or they grow cynical towards weaker stakeholder groups. Naturally, conflicts, misunderstandings, failure, and hidden agendas are part of the journey as human beings negotiate the road map into the future. However, Stakeholder Collaboration is an opportunity to uncover and invigorate human competences, which then lead to result-oriented and value-based interaction in complex change.

*"I joined the company as a seasoned engineer but have had to develop skills of partnership development, community engagement, media relations, water policy negotiations, even some philosophy, and certainly have become a much better listener. Almost everyone comes to a discussion about water with visceral experiences, memories, cultural and religious ties, economic links, as well as strong opinions and feeling. It's a topic quite unlike carbon and global warming because of its local nature and its direct tie to human health and development. This makes any solution to a water challenge much more than just technical, economical or regulatory."*

*Collaborating for water: Greg Koch<sup>6</sup>, head of global water stewardship from Coca Cola*



Photograph by CIFOR

<sup>6</sup> Koch, G. (2010) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/coca-cola-water-efficiency-drive>.

## 2. DRIVING THE CAPACITY TO LEAD CHANGE

Forging global partnerships in a multi-actor setting requires leadership by various individuals towards a similar goal on a collective scale. It is the emotional exposure to collectively making a difference that counts. We cannot expect people to drop their scepticism, criticism, and doubt. We have, however, mastered the entry to fruitful multi-Stakeholder Collaboration when people are prepared to join a collective learning journey, to which everybody will contribute in a different way.

In many organisations, both in the corporate world and the public sector, dialogue and attention to high quality collaboration relationships are still side issues, qualified as soft skills or add-ons. Most employee performance indicators do not measure the quality of collective human interaction. Yet, this is what counts most in order to get better results in Stakeholder Collaboration. The leader-centric paradigm, however, is shifting as global challenges can only be addressed when the joint capacity of leaders to become catalysts for change is realised. This capacity building will be the cornerstone of our response to global and local sustainability challenges.

Successful multi-actor collaborations for sustainability share the characteristic of an orientation toward *FUTURE POSSIBILITIES*. It is the creative potential in sustainability that inspires people to join in and commit. Collaborative leaders are visionaries in the sense that they see the unknown not as a threat but as a potential and are therefore more likely to spot innovative solutions. We cannot travel the path towards sustainability in silos, but must harness *COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE* and let it complement individual expertise. Even in the midst of performance demands and project pressure we can access our *HUMANITY*, the deeper layer in the potential of human encounter that connects us all in the world. All these competences are addressed

in the *Collective Leadership Compass*, thus making it – a guiding tool to gauge the quality of human interactions in collaboration processes.

*“You have to have an image of the future that goes far beyond the operational goals you would normally set yourself. You need to inspire people to think in possibilities rather than limitations. And you need to ask people for their point of view. I never expected that we would have such a long-term impact when I took over the Ministry of Environment – suddenly people started to co-operate across ministries. We created round tables and joint initiatives, and people who had been dormant woke up and contributed. It was the feeling of a movement that pushed us forward.”*

*Driving the future of energy: Monika Griefahn<sup>7</sup>,  
Co-founder of Greenpeace Germany and Minister of  
Environmental Affairs in the federal state of Lower Saxony*



Photograph by David Evan Harris

<sup>7</sup> Interview conducted June 2012.



### 3. A COMPASS FOR NAVIGATING COLLABORATION

The concept of *COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP* that we introduced in our previous volume is a practice-oriented approach to lead complex change in multi-actor settings. The *Collective Leadership Compass* is the tool to measure, plan, and assess the level of *COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP* in collaboration. It empowers leaders to navigate successful collaboration settings for sustainable development in an integrative, inclusive way by attending to a pattern of human competences in interaction in six dimensions. It strengthens the capacity to navigate the *How, What, Why, Where to, When, With Whom, and What For* of our initiatives for sustainability. It can be used to strengthen our individual leadership skills, to enhance the leadership capacity of a group of actors, and to shift systems of collaborating actors towards better co-creation.

Stakeholder Collaboration in sustainability initiatives does not usually fail because of insufficient planning, goals that are not ambitious enough, ignoring complexity or lacking the capacity to deliver. It fails because of the human factors involved, namely mistrust, lack of transparency, power struggles, personal fights, lack of respect, or the inability to listen. There are ample opportunities to observe human ineptness when interacting. With knowledge and awareness this can change. The key to better co-creation and successful collaboration in complex multi-actor settings is the attention to a recursive pattern of human competences. The six dimensions of *COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP* compose such a pattern:

*FUTURE POSSIBILITIES,*  
*ENGAGEMENT,*  
*INNOVATION,*  
*HUMANITY,*  
*COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE,*  
and *WHOLENESS.*

***COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP for Sustainability*** is the capacity of a group of leaders to deliver their contribution to a joint purpose collaboratively, while putting high priority on a balance between the needs of people, profit, and planet. At the core of *COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP* is the human capacity to make a difference by building performance and innovation on dialogue and diversity. It invigorates networks of knowledge sharing, collective action, and mutual support.

Each dimension has its own dynamic and can be fostered and developed in many ways. With sufficient attention to each dimension and ultimately to their togetherness they mutually reinforce each other's strengths. Leading collectively becomes the natural way to bring forth a desirable future once we enhance our competence to make these six dimensions present, be it as individuals, in a team of leaders, and as a collective. The dimensions are, however, not a new invention, on the contrary, they are as old as humankind. Paying more conscious attention to their *joint* presence has a novelty value. It helps us navigate through human difficulties and enhances the vitality of both individuals and collectives.

#### **Human competences in interaction**

Collaboratively delivered contributions to a joint purpose in multi-stakeholder initiatives will inevitably include differences, conflicts, and the search for the right path. The purpose of the methodology is to guide attention and action towards patterns of successful and constructive human interaction that include the concern for the common good. Competences in the six dimensions are most likely enacted when leaders pay attention to certain aspects in each dimension, as shown in the table 2.

Table 1

Dimension	Related competence
<b>FUTURE POSSIBILITIES</b>	Our competence to take responsibility and consciously shape reality towards a sustainable future
<b>ENGAGEMENT</b>	Our competence to create step-by-step engagement towards building effective collaboration systems
<b>INNOVATION</b>	Our competence to create novelty and find intelligent solutions
<b>HUMANITY</b>	Our competence to reach into each other's humanness
<b>COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE</b>	Our competence to harvest differences for progress
<b>WHOLENESS</b>	Our competence to see a larger picture and stay connected to the common good

## COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP COMPASS

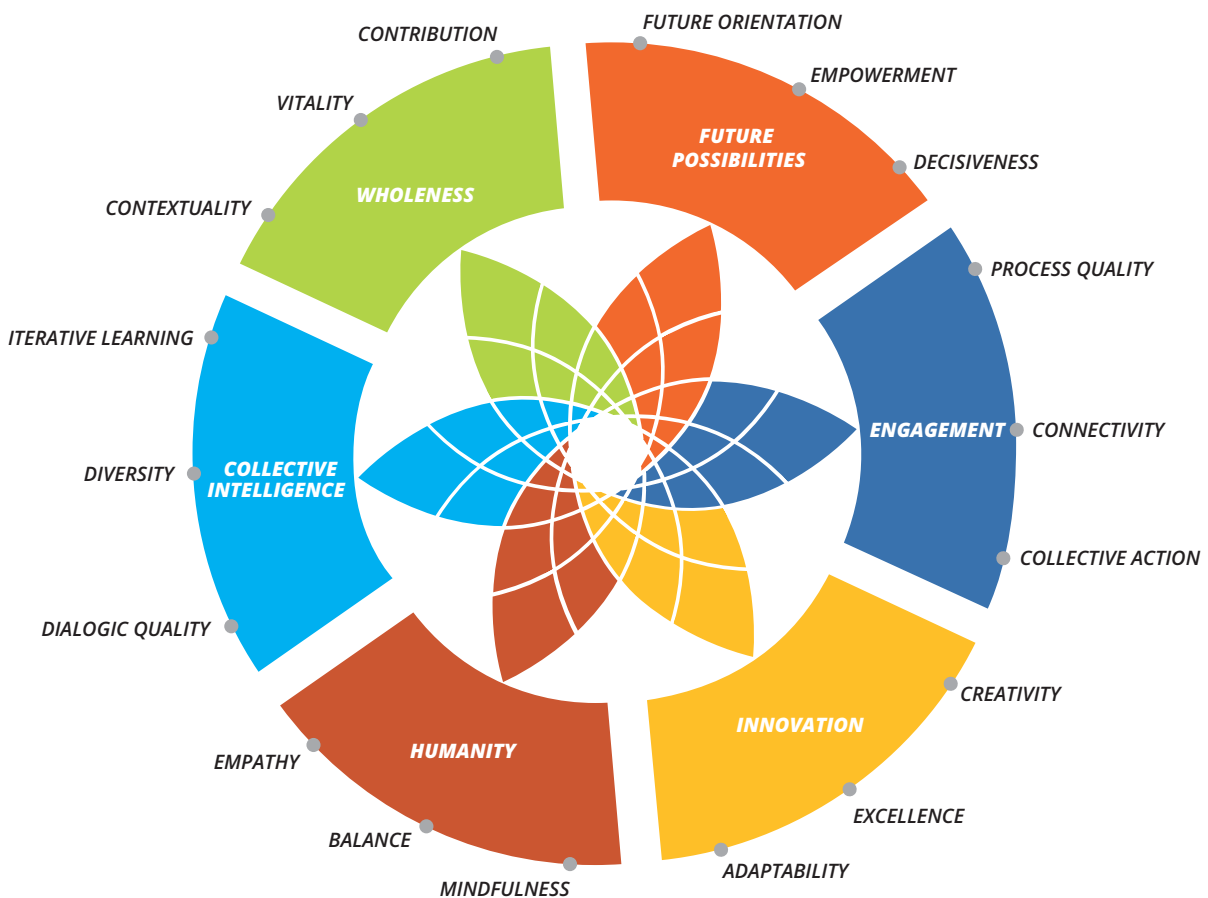
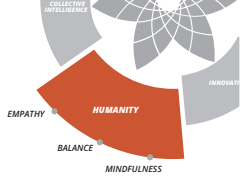
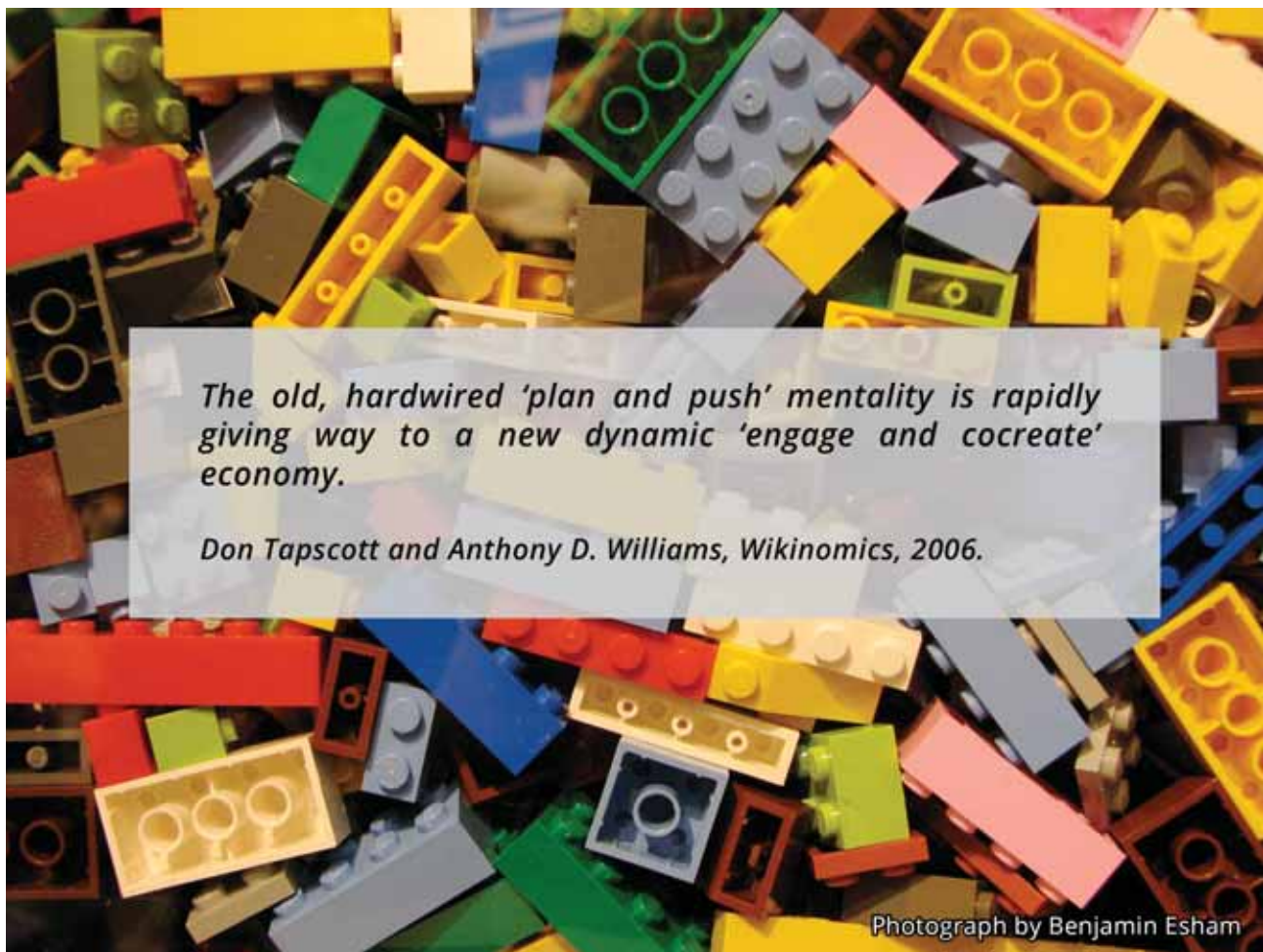


Table 2

Dimension	Competence	Aspects	Attention
<b>FUTURE POSSIBILITIES</b> 	Our competence to take responsibility and consciously shape reality towards a sustainable future	Future Orientation	The way we focus on potential or opportunities and drive change for the better.
		Empowerment	The way we inspire and awaken passion and options for change.
		Decisiveness	The way we commit, focus, follow-through, and measure progress.
<b>ENGAGEMENT</b> 	Our competence to create step-by-step engagement towards building effective collaboration systems	Process Quality	The way we build step-by-step and structured engagement.
		Connectivity	The way we foster cohesion and build networks.
		Collective Action	The way we drive joint implementation and the delivery of results.
<b>INNOVATION</b> 	Our competence to create novelty and find intelligent solutions	Creativity	The way we nourish sources of creative energy and the collective generation of ideas.
		Excellence	The way we pursue mastery and grow our knowledge.
		Agility	The way we move through crises, stay open to change, and cultivate risk-taking.
<b>HUMANITY</b> 	Our competence to reach into each other's humanness	Mindfulness	The way we deepen our awareness of reality in all aspects.
		Balance	The way we integrate personal and professional aspirations.
		Empathy	The way we embrace the perspective of others and open gateways for reconciliation.
<b>COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE</b> 	Our competence to harvest difference for progress	Dialogic Quality	The way we attend to the quality of conversations.
		Diversity	The way we foster diversity in thought, viewpoints, background, and experiences.
		Iterative Learning	The way we develop cycles of reflection into action.
<b>WHOLENESS</b> 	Our competence to see a larger picture and stay connected to the common good	Contextuality	The way we connect with ourselves, each other, and a larger context.
		Mutual support/Vitality	The way we enhance each other's strengths.
		Contribution	The way we use our gifts, assets, and capacity to make a difference, towards a sustainable future.

Using the *Collective Leadership Compass* is like learning to design and implement a pattern by keeping the six dimensions in an appropriately balanced composition and ensuring that none gets lost. This enhances the likelihood of better co-creation since we become more efficient, more effective, better at learning quickly, more adaptive, and above all, oriented towards a future that future generations also want to live in. As a collective, we become more resilient – resilience being a capacity that we need in a complex, interdependent and quickly changing world. With climate change, resource scarcity, social imbalances, and the crisis of financial systems we now realise that our future depends on action that is based on the human capacity to become more resilient, to adapt, to learn, to re-create, to invent, to innovate, and to co-create better.

The *Collective Leadership Compass* can help us stay on track when we have to weather storms and uncertainties. The *Compass* is, however, not a recipe for all challenges that humankind faces, it is a tool that, if used wisely, can help navigate complexity in collaboration and in leading change for sustainability. It does not reduce the complexity of today's world, but it helps structure our approach of how to deal with this complexity. A collaboratively delivered contribution to a joint purpose in multi-stakeholder collaboration will inevitably include differences, conflicts, and the search for the right path. When we accept that the future is constantly created as a result of encounters between people, we become more aware of the pattern of human competences in interaction that can take us into a better future.



## 4. THE CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

The approach of COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP and the Collective Leadership Compass as a navigating tool stem from an evaluation of twenty years of practical experience in supporting international collaboration processes. The approach is, however, also built on conceptual insights into human evolution. The vast stream of theory that inspired the development of the Compass can be portrayed in different knowledge streams.

- Research into schools of thought around co-creative human evolution.
- Action research into personal leadership development with 14 leaders from government organisation, civil society, and global corporations.<sup>8</sup>
- Qualitative interviews with 30 change practitioners in multi-stakeholder collaborations addressing sustainability issues.<sup>9</sup>
- Experiential observations regarding success factors for collaboration in 20 years practice of supporting international multi-actor collaboration processes.

### UNDERSTANDING SYSTEMS

An important feature of natural (including human) systems is that their relationship patterns are ordered in the form of networks with constant internal communication. All systems need to balance their autonomy with the rules and relationship patterns of larger systems that they belong to (Sahtouris and Lovelock, 2000). The key to a negotiated balance is diversity, in nature a crucial requirement for the resilience of a system. The greater the internal diversity, the more sustainable a system becomes in the long run. This also applies to multi-stakeholder collaboration initiatives. They are built on internal relationship patterns and a shared context of meaning (Luhmann, 1990; Capra, 1996), sustained by continuous conversations.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is a way of forming temporary goal-oriented systems of human interaction. Because of their temporary nature and – in comparison with institutions – their loose structure, they turn into catalysts for the change in behaviour of the participating institutions and individuals. Viewed through the lens of chaos theory they become a fractal of the desired future and model Gandhi's famous quote: "We need to be the change we want to see in the world." These insights are an integral part of the Collective Leadership Compass. Actions geared towards balancing the six dimensions create a pattern of human competences that in turn enhance the effectiveness of collaboration. The combined actions become a fractal of the resilience of the collaboration system.

### UNEARTHING ETHICAL KNOW-HOW

Though slow in take-up, the insights from quantum physics have made their way into our consciousness. In 1986, the Western physicist David Bohm and the Eastern metaphysician J. Krishnamurti published a booklet titled *The Future of Humanity* (Bohm & Krishnamurti, 1986) documenting their conversation on how human thought creates divisions – between 'me' and 'you' and between 'me' and 'the world' – and then acts on these divisions as if they were facts. Both authors saw the human mental activity as causing polarisations in the world – difference, disparity, and conflict. In his lectures on *Ethical Know-How*, Francesco Varela noted that human perception is not the representation of a pre-given external world, but in itself a co-creator of reality, i. e. we create reality as we perceive it (Varela, 1999; Capra, 1996). Ethical expertise is, for him, hence not a skill, which we acquire, but that what we unearth when we remove the layers of obscured consciousness and begin to see this very nature of reality. We become empathetic with humankind and the world if we enact

<sup>8</sup> Kuenkel, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Kuenkel&Schaefer, 2013.

or free this inner disposition. The six dimensions of the Collective Leadership Compass serve as a lens into accessing the intelligent awareness that Varela emphasises. By supporting individuals and groups to move towards a more constructive pattern of co-creation, they free the human disposition to contribute and make a difference.

## LISTENING TO A PATTERN LANGUAGE

The six dimensions of the Collective Leadership Compass mutually reinforce each other by following the principles that the architect Christopher Alexander describes in his pattern language (Alexander, 2002). He suggests that the structure of elements in an architectural space creates a response in the internal structure of a person. The more the external structure is composed in a life-enhancing way with centres of attention that mutually reinforce each other, the more the person feels alive (or human). Structure can thus enhance or impede the vitality of a human system. The Compass functions as a structured space with a mutually supportive pattern of centres of attention. This contributes to vitality – in the person, in groups, in collaboration initiatives, and in human systems.

## CHANGING THE STRUCTURE OF ATTENTION

It was Peter Senge who drew attention to the insight that the focus on prescriptions for the behavioural action of leaders and the interaction between leaders and followers often results in us forgetting the essence of leadership, which, in his view is “[...]about learning how to shape the future. Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of circumstances, but participate in creating new circumstances.” (Senge, quoted in Jaworski, 1996, p. 3). For a long time leadership has been viewed as the capacity of individuals (Kellermann, 2012), but it is time to shift this paradigm and explore leadership as the capacity of a collective – be it a team, the core group of a multi-stakeholder collaboration initiative, or the senior leadership group of a corporation. Peter Senge hinted to this long ago when he said

that leadership “[...] is the capacity of a human community to shape its future and specifically to sustain the significant processes of change required to do so (Senge, 1999, p. 16).” Joe Jaworski took this further when he said: “[...] the deeper territory of leadership [is] collectively ‘listening’ to what is wanting to emerge in the world, and then having the courage to do what is required (Jaworski, 1996, p. 182).” Otto Scharmer developed this underlying idea into his approach of the Theory U, which is essentially built on the capacity of a group of people to change their structure of attention and subsequently their collective pattern of thought and action (Scharmer, 2007). As individuals and teams carry more and more responsibility in complex multi-actor change initiatives, this capacity to become constructively co-creative grows in importance. The dimension of INNOVATION is an entry point to collectively creating novelty, if connected to all other dimensions. In that way The Collective Leadership Compass functions as a road map to new structures of attention and thinking – on the individual level, the level of a team and organisation, or the larger system most multi-stakeholder collaborations operate in. They create a conscious connection between leadership as an individual task and as a collective task.

## DRIVING COLLECTIVE ACTION

Events, such as the Rio+20 summit and the aforementioned recommendations for a post 2015 agenda, made it even clearer that in order to address global challenges, the joint capacity of leaders to become catalysts for change is called for. This is the cornerstone of our response to the global sustainability challenges, irrespective of whether we are creating responsible supply chains, developing innovative technology for climate adaptation, or engaging stakeholders for better water resource management. A brilliant example to illustrate this is the idea of creating shared value as outlined by Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer (Porter & Kramer, 2011). They argue that in advanced economies the need for products that meet societal needs better is growing fast, be it energy saving devices, clean cars, or better nutrition. This also applies to less

developed economies. However, the potential of integrating disadvantaged communities in these countries is even more important, be it through mobile phone banking or agricultural information for small-scale farmers. With societal needs in mind, uncounted venues for innovation are opening for companies that think several steps ahead. Multi-stakeholder collaborations create learning advantages for the public sector as much as for the private sector. They also remind us of the simple fact that people jointly create the future. Yet people differ as their assumptions and experiences are formed by culture, knowledge, theories, practices as well as their particular way of seeing reality. Depending on their professional background and institutional embeddedness, they favour particular strategies while they ignore or dispute others. Both the dimensions of FUTURE POSSIBILITIES and ENGAGEMENT function as an entry point for societal and global change endeavours. At the same time they contextualise actions in relation to all other six dimensions of the Collective Leadership Compass, inviting to pay attention to the dimensions of WHOLENESS, INNOVATION, HUMANITY and COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE.

### INTEGRATING FLATLAND AND WONDERLAND

Ken Wilber (Wilber, 1995) has termed the two often-juxtaposed worlds of flatland and wonderland. Today, what counts in sustainability efforts as much as in business settings, is flatland. It is the world of key performance indicators, quarterly reports, monitoring systems, metrics, and incentive schemes. It is the dominant culture that determines not only the corporate world, but also government and civil society organisations. There is nothing fundamentally unseemly about flatland – what gets measured, gets managed and improved. We need to give evidence that sustainability is possible and that it works. However, the world of values needs to inform what we measure and how we structure. Ken Wilber describes wonderland as a world where different things count: Our zest for life, our heart's passion, our ability to be with others in mutually supportive communion, our appreciation of others as fellow human beings,

our capacity to learn collectively, our competence to co-create a more sustainable future. The six dimensions of the Collective Leadership Compass structure a conscious integration of flatland and wonderland aspects in strategising collaborative change across all dimensions and within each dimension. This helps to humanise our global change efforts while at the same time it ensures that leaders collectively keep driving tangible results.

### ALIGNING LEADERSHIP JOURNEYS

The action research into the leadership journeys of 14 leaders from a variety of different cultures (the US, the UK, Germany, Ethiopia, Yemen, South Africa) was designed as an accompanying process of 9 months to grow awareness of both individual leadership and as part of a leadership collective. The striking insight across cultures was: No matter how different their contexts were, these leaders had a similarly growing awareness of an individual thematic quest. This quest usually originated in adolescence, drove their career choices, consciously or unconsciously, was often lost under the pressures of professional and private demands, but was re-awakened by (often professional) crises. All research participants mentioned that at some stage they started to inquire into the meaning and the connection between their outer career path and their inner quest. This was inevitably the moment when leaders began to return to their early aspirations or dreams, reinterpreted them in accordance with their matured status, and always brought their heart – including dreams and longings – back to the forefront of their leadership endeavours. At this stage they began to ask new questions regarding their contributions to the world. They subsequently changed or adjusted their career paths to create a more profound alignment of the values of their inner and their outer leadership path. They also saw themselves act more consciously as part of a collective, to which they intended to contribute also in a more conscious way. The six dimensions of the Collective Leadership Compass reflect pathways for both the inner and outer leadership journey. They help integrate action and reflection of both outer strategic change endeavours and personal stock-taking.

## STRATEGISING COLLABORATIVE CHANGE

A qualitative study with 30 practitioners from local and international multi-stakeholder collaboration initiatives (Kuenkel, & Schaefer, 2013) was carried out to crosscheck the initial design of the six dimensions of the Collective Leadership Compass with the field of collaboration practice. The results also shaped the aspects of attention for each dimension. The interviewees all applied one or more of the following strategies:

1. *Fostering trust building through respecting difference, invigorating passion for the future, and putting effort into finding common ground. This confirmed the importance of enhancing HUMANITY and FUTURE POSSIBILITIES.*
2. *Modelling evolutionary change processes through engaging stakeholders step-by-step with focus on creating results collectively and ensuring a good flow of communication. This confirmed the importance of enhancing ENGAGEMENT and COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE.*
3. *Invigorating connectivity by developing personal networks that grow into interconnected movements for change, as a contribution to the common good. This confirmed the importance of enhancing ENGAGEMENT and WHOLENESS.*
4. *Creating patterns of vitality through enabling actions of mutual support, balanced flexible containment through agreed upon rules, and structures with creativity and the capacity to learn as well as to adapt quickly. This confirmed the importance of enhancing INNOVATION and WHOLENESS.*



Photograph by Collective Leadership Institute



## 5. HOW TO USE THE COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP COMPASS

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP empowers individual leaders to unfold their potential to contribute to sustainability in collaboration; it enhances their self-efficacy. Groups of actors who aspire to achieve something together can use the *Collective Leadership Compass* and make it work for them, and collaboration systems (networks, initiative, partnerships, platforms etc.) can improve their outcomes. At each level there is an inward aspect-looking at how the individual develops – and an outward aspect-looking at how a collective can jointly enact the future in collaboration with others. The *Compass* is a navigating tool and, at the same time, it can be used for checks and balances. It gives a larger frame to evaluate whether the chosen change approach is getting where it is supposed to lead and, most of all, whether

it is improving co-creation through COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP. The *Compass* helps us to balance the six dimensions that we need for leading collectively and ensures that our human competences become more present. It also emphasises the pattern of interacting human competences that works best for our case. Let us remember: better co-creation is about increasing the impact of sustainability by getting things done faster, coming to better decisions, saving money, and being more content as we jointly achieve results. The following table shows how we can make the *Collective Leadership Compass* work for us at different levels.

Table 3

Level	Application	Purpose
<i>Strengthening individual Leadership competence</i>	Self-assessment, identification of development areas, personal development plans, coaching guide	Enhance individual holistic leadership capabilities and capacity to lead in conjunction with others, increase self-efficacy in sustainability leadership
<i>Empowering collaborative action groups</i>	Group-assessment, identification of improvement areas, team reflection, definition of focus areas, action plans, team coaching guide, meeting planning	Enhance collaborative group/team efficacy, refocus team on sustainability issues, increase awareness of the interface between hard and soft skills, improve impact of action plans
<i>Building communities for change</i>	Assessment and self-assessment of collaboration systems, joint action planning, planning of meetings, workshops and collaboration events; monitoring quality of collaboration; progress reviews	Engage organisation/ department or cross-sector network for sustainability goals, improve collaboration results, strengthen collective action, increase collaborative impact

## 6. PRACTICE CASES – BUILDING COLLABORATION SYSTEMS WITH THE COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP COMPASS

Conscious collaboration – setting up a temporary or lasting system of multi-stakeholder actors – is a form of creating life. Whether we manage to bring a sufficient degree of life to such a system determines its success or failure. A people-centred and planet-sensitive future requires us to build many nested *Collaboration Ecosystems*, which are issue-based systems of (institutional) actors who aim to change the status quo (usually a common good) for the better. The envisaged change benefits all actors involved, including our planet Earth. In well-functioning *Collaboration Ecosystems*, the diversity of stakeholders adds concerns, interests, and expertise to the system: People learn about one another's respective thematic knowledge and geographic context. They identify key challenges, articulate goals together, and, by drawing on their complementary roles, strengths, and agility, they are able to realise their shared vision. The better

the understanding and culture of collaboration, the more the *art of leading collectively* is known, the more likely the envisaged outcomes are. The two examples that follow are far from perfect, but they show that even under difficult circumstances one can build a collaborative future. In the two brief case examples that follow, the *Compass* was used as guiding tool for planning change interventions in complex systems. The first example is about establishing a sustainable textile alliance in Germany and the second one shows how the *Compass* is used to support Rwanda's economic development through Public Private Dialogue. Neither of the cases is perfect, neither in process nor results. Navigating the complex (and complicated) change was, however, greatly supported by a methodology that functioned as a guiding frame for actions and interventions.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> For more detailed information on the application: Kuenkel, P., 2015.

## 7. CASE 1:

### DRIVING COLLABORATION FOR SUSTAINABLE TEXTILES

If the sustainability challenge feels too complex, one can either give up or take a bold step towards involving a wide range of stakeholders in the actual innovative co-design of a change process. When the newly appointed Minister of Development Cooperation in Germany announced in the spring of 2014 that his desire was to be sure that the new suit he was wearing was produced in a sustainable way, most people tended to ignore the message. Even though the challenges of sustainable supply chain management in Asia were well recognised and most companies felt that they were on a good path to improving their supplier relationships to include sustainability aspects, the Minister had set the bar higher. He started by inviting 34 high-level stakeholders to a round table and made clear that he expected them to do much more to change the status quo and, above all, to do it jointly. Else, he would think about legal ways to ensure supply chain responsibilities. The outcry among companies was widespread. Not only did they think he had made demands that are impossible to implement, but they also felt that their current activities to improve the situation were largely ignored. Emotions ran high, the tone of press statements became fiery, and the industry associations grew nervous as their members expected them to fight back.

It took another large gathering of all stakeholders to get people into a more constructive dialogue, which became the starting point for an unexpected process: The co-design of a textile alliance committed to economic, environmental, and social sustainability along the entire textile value chain. Even though the task seemed overwhelming, people, who were already very busy, committed to join the alliance development process to create a sector-wide approach to sustainable textiles. Why was this an innovative process? All stakeholders knew they were venturing into the unknown, embarking on a

learning journey with unclear outcomes: Although many different sustainability standards already exist, none of these approaches address the entire supply chain. To look at all sustainability issues at the same time and to bring all actors on board was entirely new. Experts from industry, trade, business associations, NGOs, and standards organisations participated in co-design working groups to tackle these kind of issues with a holistic supply chain analysis, the definition of most critical improvement areas, and the definition of minimum sustainability criteria for a membership in the alliance. Six months later the co-design process resulted in the official launch of a German sustainable textile alliance with an ambitious action plan to create an impact on the entire textile sector. What made all the experts and professionals put in the extra time that this innovative co-design process required?

1. Despite the fact that the Minister was criticised for his forceful approach and perceived lack of knowledge about the complexity of the sustainability issues, it was his *decisiveness* that pushed the process forward. Besides his pressure, the issue itself tapped into already existing ambitions. Most stakeholders had been working on similar sustainability issues for years, albeit with considerable frustration about the absence of a joint approach. Here was a window of opportunity that was opening up for people to see the larger vision, specifically the possibility to really make a difference in the textile sector (*FUTURE POSSIBILITIES – decisiveness /future orientation*).
2. It was clear that each of the stakeholders possessed a part of the knowledge that was required for a holistic approach. It was the *diversity* of knowledge and expertise that became important. Bringing together this diversity was more than a cumulative process (*COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE – dialogic quality, diversity*).

3. As the working groups looked into the mapping of the entire textile supply chain, the spirit of co-design took root because everybody began to see the entire picture of challenges and possibilities more thoroughly. It became even clearer that solutions could only be found in a collective effort among all stakeholders (*WHOLENESS – contextuality / mutual support / contribution*).
4. Even though getting all stakeholders into a structured co-design process was initially seen as chaotic, a committed project secretariat<sup>11</sup> streamlined the process and built trust between stakeholders with a transparent and reliable sequence of workshops, regular information, and the establishment of a stakeholder-composed steering structure that would oversee the entire process until the launch (*ENGAGEMENT – process quality*).



<sup>11</sup> The project secretariat was run by GIZ ([www.giz.de](http://www.giz.de)).

## 8. CASE 2: FOSTERING DIALOGUE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2014 Rwanda celebrated 20 years of post-genocide recovery and reconstruction under a stabilised political, social, and economic environment. The country has ambitions to transform itself into a private sector-led middle-income country with a healthy, educated, and prosperous population by 2020 (Government of Rwanda, 2014). This required extraordinary commitment to reform and the result has been high rates of economic growth in recent years. The World Bank's *Doing Business Report 2014* mentions Rwanda as one of the countries with considerable improvements and ranks Rwanda 32<sup>nd</sup> in its international comparison of business environments (World Bank, 2014). But challenges remain. The Rwandan economy has been dominated by a public sector run business environment and it has not yet been possible to take full advantage of the improved business environment, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Productivity of the private sector is a cornerstone for creating employment opportunities and improving the employability of the overwhelmingly young population. One of the challenges has been barriers to the efficient functioning of local businesses. In October 2012 the Rwandan government launched a new national Public Private Dialogue mechanism – a structured stakeholder dialogue platform established to address issues impeding small and medium sized businesses. The dialogue has been implemented across sectors and on thematic issues at both the district and national level. The aim is to engage the public and private sectors in dialogue to identify and resolve business related issues at the local and national levels. The decision to establish the dialogue mechanism was made at the highest level with impetus from the National Leadership Retreat (a gathering of 300 top executive, legislative,

judiciary and private sector national leaders). The process created a sense of urgency as performance targets for all relevant government agencies were based on such high-level resolutions and progress was measured annually.

The practical implementation of the dialogue mechanism presented challenges because it was public sector-led. Dialogue leaders expected that the business community would welcome and embrace the initiative. David Rugamba Muhizi, the Head of Strategy and Competitiveness Division at the Rwanda Development Board, highlights the biggest challenge, namely engagement of the private sector into the future possibilities that would emerge from the dialogue: “It is very important to forge a common understanding around the objective of such (a dialogue) mechanism. Building a collective vision and purpose and of course at the same time creating a win-win situation.”<sup>12</sup> In the beginning the private sector, particularly smaller businesses, did not quite understand the purpose of the dialogue. They saw that it means getting things from the government without doing their own adjustment in ways of operating, accountability, and transparency. David remembers that implementing the dialogue mechanisms at the provincial level required iterative learning. “It is part of the (growing) collective action. You need to understand both parties. Government and private sector need to have a collective future that is designed, commonly understood, (with a) shared vision and shared action.” Building understanding of the other stakeholder’s constraints and roles became the cornerstone of success. *HUMANITY* and *empathy* were essential to stepping into the shoes of the other in order to jointly solve the problem of misalignment and to find resources for small and medium enterprises to participate effectively in the Rwandan economy. What led to a successful

<sup>12</sup> Personal conversation between Adele Wildschut and David Rugamba.

outcome despite the original challenge of a low sense of process ownership in the private sector? It was a combination of conscious approaches to a clear and transparent process, genuine stakeholder engagement, and iterative learning.

1. Because a government-initiated public-private dialogue required clear administrative procedures, the secretariat set up a process plan that showed how the dialogue mechanism would be enacted in the provinces. The immediate learning was that the envisaged public-private collective action required slowing down the process and ensuring its quality by first building relationships. Forcefully pushing the private sector into dialogue did not work (*ENGAGEMENT – process quality*).
2. The investment in relationship building with the private sector paid off. Engaging in bilateral conversations with selected entrepreneurs, listening to the situation from the other point of view changed the impression that the private sector was not interested in dialogue. Gradually, the secretariat of the public-private dialogue mechanisms conveyed the bigger goal, i.e. contributing to the country's future economic performance (*HUMANITY – mindfulness, empathy*).
3. The secretariat learned quickly that keeping the big picture alive was as important as building the trust that the view of the private sector was increasingly important to shaping policies and laws. Convincing the private sector to become part of a larger vision was essential to success (*WHOLENESS – contribution*).
4. David recalls: "In fact we were trying to shape that vision of collective action [...] and] a future that was full of possibilities, trying to show them that it is very important for this country's policies and laws to [...] take the private sector into consideration." (*FUTURE POSSIBILITIES – future orientation*)
5. Yet the next challenge arose when the secretariat discovered that not all public representatives in the provinces would approach the dialogue with

a genuine openness to contributions. Not only did the private sector need to get engaged, but the provincial authorities needed to more deeply understand the potential of a dialogic approach as well and begin to see themselves as partners of the private sector (*INNOVATION – agility*).

It was the perseverance and the focus on continuous engagement that yielded results. The secretariat knew that both the private and public sectors would stay engaged when they saw results. It required strong and committed leadership at national and provincial level to ensure that the results would benefit both the public and the private sectors. With the public-private dialogue mechanism established, Rwanda can now move to the next stage, namely addressing issues that lie below the surface of an improved business environment such as integrating more vulnerable groups into the local economy and promoting women's economic empowerment.



Photograph by Darren Kumasawa

## 9. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

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Multi-stakeholder initiatives require conscious attention to how a group of leaders from different stakeholder groups, become a joint driver for change while navigating their differences, overcoming internal and external conflicts, and keeping the purpose of the initiative high on the agenda. The *Collective Leadership Compass* is a tool for action and reflection. Derived from and tested in a variety of stakeholder collaboration settings, its application helps to structure processes in a successful way; it

functions as quality check for stakeholder events, and strengthens an appreciative and more holistic leadership style. This volume suggests that we need to scale-up both research and practice around *COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP* by capacitating groups of leaders to more consciously co-create a future aligned with sustainability across sectors and stakeholder interests. Since multi-stakeholder initiatives are an essential way of navigating complex change in large systems, it is important that we help them succeed.



Photograph by Collective Leadership Institute

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## 11. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Petra Kuenkel**, Founder and Executive Director of the Collective Leadership Institute, a not-for profit organisation that builds competence for collaborative change and advocates for high quality dialogue and cooperation. Petra is a leading strategic advisor to pioneering international multi-stakeholder initiatives that tackle sustainability issues. Based on her practical work in successful change processes, she developed the Collective Leadership Institute's Dialogic *Change* methodology and the *Collective Leadership Compass*, a guiding tool for navigating change in complex multi-actor settings. She promotes the scaling-up of collaboration skills for change agents from the private sector, the public sector, and civil society and pioneers approaches that re-invent leadership as a collective competence.

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## 13. ABOUT THE COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

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The Collective Leadership Institute is an internationally operating non-profit organisation based in Germany (Potsdam) and South Africa (Cape Town). It was founded 2005 and is an independent initiative that supports leaders, change agent, and practitioners from the private sector, the public sector, and civil society in creating and implementing collaborative change initiatives for innovative and sustainable solutions to global, local, and societal challenges.

**The Collective Leadership Institute's vision is to empower future-oriented people to lead collectively towards a sustainable future.**

The Collective Leadership Institute's work is based on the principle of cooperation and collectively created solutions – across sectors, institutions, nations, and cultures. With Executive Education, Integrated Capacity Development, Community Building, and Research, the Collective Leadership Institute builds competence for sustainability – for responsible business, people-oriented public service, and a strong civil society.



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