

Liberating Leadership

Challenging leadership
myths and building
community leadership

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What do I mean by liberating leadership?

- 1. Leadership needs to be liberated from the narrow confines of a corporate inspired, individualistic ideology
- 2. Leadership should be aimed at freeing people – supporting others to act and opening minds to new possibilities; to valuing themselves, their families and communities; to mobilising them towards ends they value

Five myths about leadership and Liberating Leadership alternatives

Myth 1

Leadership is always a good thing

Liberating leadership

- *adopts thoughtful and ethical processes and improves diversity of leadership opportunities for others*
- *articulates valuable purposes such as well-being, sustainability, happiness*

Myth 2:

Leadership is a single-handed heroic performance by a visionary individual

Liberating leadership

- *resists pressures to provide answers*
- *collaboratively mobilises group towards collectively-shaped possibilities*
- *less invested in the self: 'less-ego'*

Liberating views of leadership

We call for someone with answers, decision, strength, and a map of the future: someone who knows where we ought to be going – in short someone who can make hard problems simple. Instead of looking for saviours we should be looking for leadership that summons us to face the problems for which there are no simple, painless solutions – the challenges that require us to work in new ways.

(Heifetz and Laurie 1999)

Liberating views of leadership

- Leadership is ‘a social process...of dynamic collaboration where individuals and organisational members authorize themselves and others to interact in ways that experiment with new forms of intellectual and emotional meaning.’
(Gemmill and Oakley, 1992 p. 283)

Myth 3

Leadership doesn't have a dark side

Liberating leadership

- *recognises personal hungers and appetites*
- *requires 'identity work' to ensure others aren't exploited in the pursuit of leading*

Myth 4

Diversity, gender and bodies are irrelevant to leadership

Liberating leadership

- *recognises that conventional leadership privileges white male able bodied leaders*
- *works to change assumptions about what good leadership looks like*

Myth 5

Leadership should focus on achieving future, material goals

Liberating leadership

- *pays attention to the present*
- *gives priority to relationships and making connections with others now*