

Leadership Styles of Regional Councils: Present Status and Problems for the Future

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Abstract

Leadership is increasingly important, yet its applications in substate regionalism are not well understood by academics and many practitioners today. This research shows that there are important differences between the leadership styles that regional council executives prefer for the present as compared to the future; new leadership styles will be needed to address the challenges that are most likely to arise in complex environments. These challenges are illustrated in the article by discussing the implementation of complex programs. One such program is the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). It is especially relevant because many regional councils have major roles in ISTEA's implementation.

Several styles of leadership are discussed in this article. One style, participative leadership, was the preferred style of regional council executive directors in 1990, while another style, directive leadership, was least preferred at that time. By 1994, however, the directive style of leadership had become slightly more attractive than participative leadership. In projections for the year 2000, directive leadership became the definitive choice over other styles.

This preference for directive leadership in the future is probably inappropriate for

a number of reasons. As this article points out, executive directors need to extend their understanding of participative leadership rather than trying to adopt directive leadership, a style that is not congruent with the limited authority that almost all regional councils have today or are likely to have in the future.

In extending their understanding of participative leadership, executive directors need to take into account the reciprocal interdependence and the lack of a single authority that accompany the absence of hierarchical control in their environments. Important elements that they must consider are championing and visioning, sponsorship and legitimacy building, articulation of strategic issues and policy alternatives, and mobilization behavior. They need to understand these elements in the context of the overlapping domains and conflicting authorities of the organizational network in which they must act.

This article concludes with some important theoretical considerations for regional council executive director leadership, in an effort to frame the leadership issues for regionalism in the coming century. It also concludes with the recommendation that the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) sponsor leadership training seminars for its executive directors.¹

Introduction

Leadership in substate regionalism in the United States has undergone major changes in this century. The quest for improved leadership and more effective approaches to metropolitan governance continues today. However, problems exist that must be confronted if this quest is to be successful. One such problem identified in this article is that leadership styles preferred by executive directors of regional councils for the future may be mismatched with future challenges the councils expect to meet.²

This article asserts that leadership styles in regional councils today are not well understood by the very people who will lead the councils into the twenty-first century. Our research suggests a need for better understanding of leadership, particularly the skills needed to proactively develop multilateral relationships. We believe that a better understanding of such skills has important implications for the future effectiveness of regional councils and for other organizations that work with them—local governments, citizens' leagues, chambers of commerce, and various community-based organizations. All of these organizations are important stakeholders in the quest for improved leadership at the substate regional level.

This situation is especially interesting because of the kinds of changes in substate regionalism that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, more types of regional organizations play important roles in regional governance. During the 1980s, new approaches to regional problem solving emerged, encouraged by the national emphasis on public-private partnerships and privatization. Many different kinds of intercommunity partnerships emerged, initiated by leadership from the private, public, and academic sectors (Dodge 1989; 1990; Committee for

Economic Development 1982; Fosler and Berger 1982).

In the 1990s, regional councils were faced with the challenges of implementing new transportation legislation. This new legislation, ISTEA, mandated significant new roles for regional councils that are designated as metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). These roles were especially significant for those councils located in air quality non-attainment areas (Gage and McDowell, 1995). Thus, regional council leadership today and in the future will need to accommodate an increased diversity of relationships with a multitude of different organizations in their regions.

In particular, regional council leadership will have a critical role in integrating the "products" of ISTEA. These products include long-range plans, transportation improvement programs (TIPs), state implementation programs (SIPs), and management system information garnered from models that themselves are developmental. ISTEA calls for six management systems to accomplish the integration of its various "products":

- highway pavement systems management,
- bridge systems,
- highway safety systems,
- congestion/mobility systems,
- public transportation systems, and
- intermodal systems.

Despite the various guidances given by the U.S. Department of Transportation, there is little agreement beyond that outlined in the legislation as to the specifics of some of these management systems (Transportation Research Board 1993, 46–90). For example, few regional councils have even the beginnings of an intermodal management system in place today. Council leadership will be a critical element in achieving ISTEA objectives. While all councils are not MPOs, many are, and the larger councils,

particularly in air quality non-attainment areas, have perhaps the greatest challenge to devise intermodal management systems.

Leadership Styles and Regional Councils

In this article, regional leadership is viewed as critical to the implementation of programs and policies—not only because it frequently provides the *only* regional vision and direction to those who must carry out these programs and policies, but also because it seeks to build the commitment necessary to sustain program efforts throughout the implementation cycle. Nowhere is this more necessary than in the implementation of complex programs (Mandell and Rossy 1992, 2).

This is a complex arena in which networks of individuals and organizations somehow must work together as a unified whole (Agranoff 1989; Mandell 1990; O'Toole 1990). In the regional arena, there are likely to be a preponderance of horizontal relationships and a high degree of multilateral interdependence of regional councils with other actors in the regional decision-making environment, often with no clear-cut hierarchical dimension. It may appear or actually be the case that no one is "in charge."

Lateral interdependence is especially important in regional councils' relationships with their environments. External networking activities of council executive directors are critical in maintaining and expanding their influence. In such environments, policymakers and managers are likely to spend more time in lateral interactions with actors external to their own organizations, although they also must be involved in vertical relationships. They do this to build larger, more influential networks of contacts (Yukl 1989; Kotter 1982).

But leadership in regional councils remains something of an enigma today. Regional councils frequently have been criticized for failing to take a stronger, more directive role in regional decision making. However, the history of substate regionalism in this country clearly indicates that most councils are not accustomed to playing a directive role in regional affairs. The membership of most regional councils is voluntary, and the councils traditionally have lacked authority to require member participation in programs and to require implementation of regional plans (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations 1966, 13; 1973; 1982).

Purpose

The purpose of the research reported in this article is to demonstrate that council executive directors' preferences for leadership styles have changed since a 1990 national study (Gage 1993) and that the direction of change is likely to be inappropriate for the challenges they expect for the future. In the 1990 study, it was suggested that the voluntary nature of regional council organization caused the councils to prefer a participative style of leadership rather than a directive style. However, the 1990 research indicated that as executive directors of regional councils interpreted the challenge of the future, they believed that the demands placed upon regional councils in this decade were likely to require a more directive leadership approach if the councils were to be effective in regional decision making.

A strong case can be made that the style of leadership that is likely to be most effective is not directive, but a particular kind of participative leadership. The inappropriate preference for directive leadership in the future by council executives, suggested in the 1990 study, is not difficult to understand.

Early criticisms of regional councils (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations 1973, Table 1-3) implied that a more directive approach was needed. The councils have been urged to become more proactive in identifying and solving regional problems and in helping to resolve conflict in their regions (National Association of Regional Councils 1987, 1988).

As background, trends in regional council leadership will be presented in this article in a brief historical review of the development of substate regionalism in the United States. The leadership styles most preferred by regional council executive directors will then be reported. The results will be compared with the dominant styles of leadership preferred for the future, based on information collected in a 1993-94 national survey. In conclusion, the article will focus on a discussion of the leadership style that appears to be needed for the future.

Historical Background³

In the first phase of regional council development, initiative for policy leadership came from local sources, public and private. Leadership was basically participative. In the 1920s, regional planning emerged as a private foundation or civic club endeavor in New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Minneapolis-St. Paul (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations 1973, 54).

On the public side, the first metropolitan county planning commission was established in Los Angeles, California, in 1922, and the Ohio legislature passed the first enabling legislation for joint planning arrangements between local governments in 1923. The creation in 1945 of the Central Lane Planning Council (located in the Eugene, Oregon, metropolitan area) opened the post-World War II era of voluntary confederalism in substate regionalism

(Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations 1973, 55).

The participative style of leadership in these early efforts was permissive and effective for maintaining the voluntary basis of regional council membership. It gave local governments and civic organizations the flexibility to withdraw from the councils if serious threats arose.

A period of "guided ascendancy" followed the first phase of council development. It began with the implementation of Section 701 planning grants under the Federal Housing Act of 1954. Throughout the period of guided ascendancy, the federal government assumed a directive leadership role as did many regional councils, which acted as agents for implementation of federal government programs and regulations. As of 1977, funding for general purpose regional councils (metropolitan and non-metropolitan) was 76 percent federal, 10 percent state, 12 percent local, and 2 percent other sources (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations 1982, 289).

Heavy dependency on federal funds led to a common view of regional councils as vassals of their federal sponsors. The councils established program networks to implement the dominant federal programs of the period. At the end of this period, substate regionalism was described as "mature," with 671 councils covering most of the nation (McDowell 1980, 21). However, this was a pseudo-maturity, attained at significant cost to council independence.

In 1981, an abrupt change occurred. Sweeping reductions of regional programs began under the Reagan administration. Regional councils were forced to begin a third phase, a period of entrepreneurship (Gage 1988, 479-484). Pressed to fend for themselves, the councils in the 1980s had to rely much more on their own initiatives. Federal funding of council operating funds decreased from 76 percent in 1978 to 45

percent in 1988 (National Association of Regional Councils 1989, 7). With less federal support, regional councils gradually became less involved with administration of national programs and implementation of federal regulations. Consequently, regional council leadership moved away from directive leadership toward more supportive and participative styles.

Today, regional councils are at the center of new, potentially significant developments. Some observers believe that a period of resurgence for substate regionalism has begun. For example, DeGrove (1991, 2) indicated that involvement of regional organizations in state planning has the potential to move "regional agencies from an under-funded and generally weak position" to one with potential to "influence heavily the nature of both local and state...programs." DeGrove stated that stronger regional organizations, "in both a planning and regulatory sense, are an emergent fact in many states, and more loom on the horizon" (DeGrove 1991, 2). Thus, the "policy window" (Kingdon 1984, 173) for regional initiatives appears to be more open now than it was in the past decade.

Many regional councils have been designated as MPOs and are currently involved in implementing ISTEA, either in areas that have not achieved satisfactory air quality standards (non-attainment areas) or in those that have met federal air quality standards. As Gage and McDowell (1995) have noted,

Most MPOs...are encountering difficulties in implementing ISTEA. They do not know how to do many of the newly required tasks assigned to them, and the intergovernmental links that ISTEA depends on are not solidly forged yet. Much hard, pioneering work lies ahead.

These organizations are being asked to develop strong cooperative links with their state departments of transportation, governors, environmental and land-use regulators,

and transportation providers. They also are being asked to expand their boundaries and memberships, to build effective decision making capability, and to retool their staffs to perform technical tasks that are patently beyond state of the art transportation modeling today.

For example, models that can reliably account for the interactive effects of multiple contaminants leading to air pollution under different local conditions are not widely available. Yet such predictions are mandated under current federal regulations. The challenges ISTEA poses to leaders of regional councils are formidable, but many challenges exist in other arenas as well—in growth management and economic development; in human services and, for regional councils especially, services for the aging; in law enforcement; and in providing technical assistance to local member governments.

In this environment, a number of questions about regional leadership become important. What forms of leadership do councils prefer today? Have council executive directors reached an adequate understanding of the nature of participative leadership? Are leadership preferences likely to be effective or ineffective, given the roles regional councils expect to play in the future and the challenges they expect to encounter? If the relationships of regional councils with the private sector are likely to be important in the future, are regional councils' preferred leadership styles appropriate for working with the private sector in collaborative problem solving?

Methodology⁴

Data for this research were collected in 1990 and 1993–94. Two separate but related national surveys of regional councils form the basis for this article. In both surveys, questionnaires were mailed to executive

directors of regional council organizations across the country. In the first survey, a total of 525 regional councils received questionnaires, and 308 survey questionnaires were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 59 percent.

In the second survey, questionnaires were mailed to 540 executive directors of regional councils, and 228 completed and returned the questionnaires for a response rate of 42 percent. The lower response rate for the second survey may be attributed to the substantially greater length of the second questionnaire instrument. During the 1994 survey, supplementary information on leadership was obtained by fax-back services from those councils that completed the survey questionnaire: 202 councils, or 89 percent of those completing the survey, provided information.

The Analysis

The analysis focuses on three leadership styles and the relationships of these styles to assessments of regional council decision making, in the present and future.

These leadership styles—the directive, participative, and supportive styles—are taken from the work of House and Mitchell (1974). Because they seemed to have the most meaning to a small sample of council directors (as determined in pretesting the questionnaire for the first national study), this classification was preferred to other classifications. The leadership styles are defined in Figure 1.

Executive directors were asked to indicate the emphasis their councils currently place on each leadership style, ranging from a rating of 3 (strong emphasis) to 1 (little or no emphasis).

Leadership Styles. It was predicted that regional councils, largely voluntary organizations, would indicate that they use a participative leadership style in today's regional environment. Today's councils are engaged in regional issues as participants, but most still lack powers needed to take a more directive leadership role, although powers formally granted by ISTEA, especially for councils in non-attainment areas, are more extensive than usually has been true for other programs (Gage and McDowell 1995).

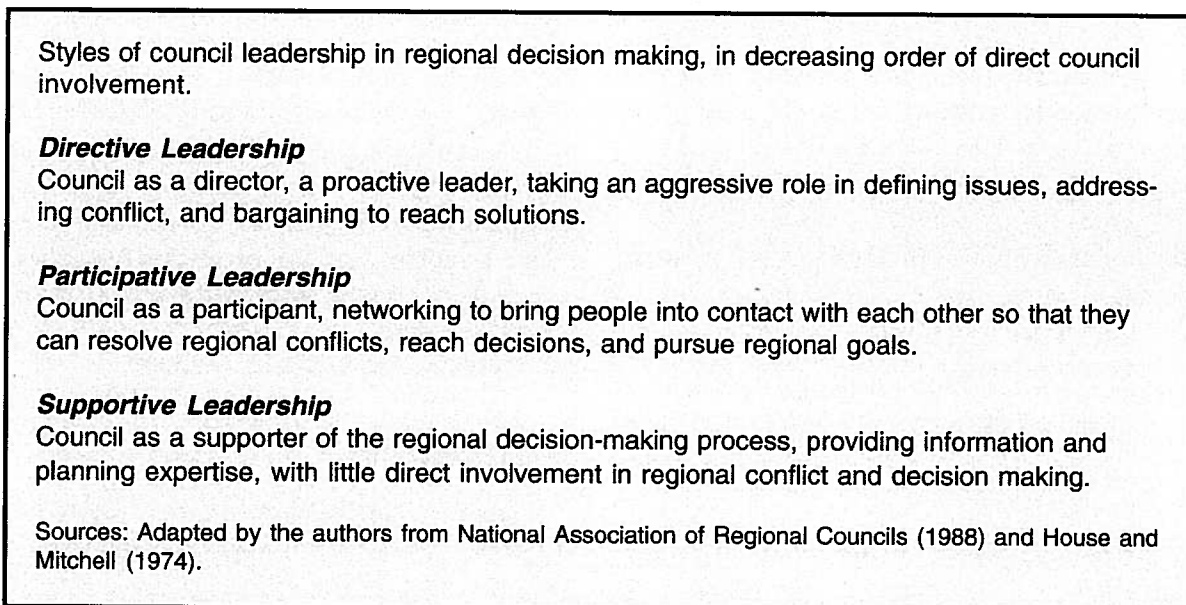


Figure 1. Leadership Styles of Regional Councils

Leadership Styles and the Future. Regional councils have traditionally been more adept at regional planning and less adept at plan implementation. Their lack of governmental power has been a limitation in assuming a directive leadership role in implementing their plans and in solving regional problems. It is logical that regional councils would prefer to be able to employ a directive style of leadership for dealing with regional problems in the future because of the frustrations they have experienced in attempting to implement programs with limited authority.

The Results

Leadership Styles. Executive directors of regional councils indicated that their

councils prefer the participative style of leadership. Part a of Table 1 shows that for 1990 the participative leadership style received the highest average ratings of the three leadership styles (2.39 of a possible 3.00). Almost half of the executive directors (46 percent) rated their councils as strong on the participative leadership style. The supportive style also received a relatively strong rating (2.15). In contrast, directive leadership received the lowest rating (1.92), and only 19 percent of executive directors gave their regional councils strong ratings on directive leadership.

Thus, the participative style emerged as the preferred leadership style among regional councils in 1990. However, this was not the case in the 1994 study. While none

Table 1. Ratings by Executive Directors of the Use of Three Styles of Leadership in Their Regional Councils

<i>a. Ratings for 1990</i>	Participative		Directive		Supportive	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strong	140	46.2	59	19.5	95	31.4
Moderate	140	46.2	161	53.3	158	52.3
Weak	<u>23</u>	<u>7.6</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>27.2</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>16.2</u>
Total	303	100.0	302	100.0	302	100.0
Average	2.39		1.92		2.15	
<i>b. Ratings for 1994</i>	Participative		Directive		Supportive	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strong	44	19.2	45	19.9	43	19.2
Moderate	92	40.4	120	54.0	101	45.1
Weak	<u>92</u>	<u>40.4</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>27.0</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>35.7</u>
Total	228	100.0	226	100.0	224	100.0
Average	1.79		1.93		1.83	
<i>c. Ratings for 2000</i>	Participative		Directive		Supportive	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strong	28	13.9	125	62.8	37	18.8
Moderate	58	28.9	58	29.2	53	26.8
Weak	<u>115</u>	<u>58.2</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>8.0</u>	<u>107</u>	<u>55.4</u>
Total	201	100.0	199	100.0	197	100.0
Average	1.57		2.51		1.64	

Ratings were measured on a three-point continuum from strong (3) to weak (1).

of the styles received a clear endorsement from executive directors, the directive style moved ahead of the others by a slight margin. Part b of Table 1 shows that for 1994 the directive leadership style received the highest average ratings of the three leadership styles (1.93 of a possible 3.00). Almost three-quarters of the executive directors (74 percent) rated their councils as moderate or strong on the directive leadership style. In contrast, the participative style received the least strong rating (1.79). This is a substantial change from 1990, but nowhere near as great as indicated in ratings for the leadership styles in the future. In these ratings, the directive leadership is the clear preference of executive directors (2.51 of a possible 3.00, part c of Table 1). The results for each year are summarized in Table 2.

The Mismatch between Leadership Styles and Future Regional Decision Making. Executive directors of regional councils also were asked to indicate involvement of their councils in making key regional decisions in their respective regions. In 1990, less than 40 percent (112, N=286) indicated that most key regional decisions were made *by* their councils, and 61 percent (174) indicated that most key regional decisions were made *outside* their regional councils. In 1994, 45 percent (102, N=228) indicated that most key regional decisions were made *by* their councils, and 55 percent (126) indicated that most key regional decisions were made *outside* their regional councils. There was some increase in the

number of executive directors from 1990 to 1994.

For the year 2000, there was a change in the relative proportions, indicating a greater number of executive directors projected that most key regional decisions would be made by the councils rather than outside them: 53 percent (108, N=202) indicated that most key regional decisions would be made *by* their councils, and 47 percent (94) indicated that most key regional decisions would be made *outside* their regional councils. These results indicate an incrementally increasing perception of council influence in regional decision making by their executive directors.

Results for 1990 show that those directors who indicated that most key regional decisions are made *by* their councils gave their councils significantly higher ratings on directive leadership (2.31) than those who indicated that most key decisions were made *outside* their councils (1.63, $F=44.43$, $p<.001$, Table 3). Those directors who indicated that most key regional decisions are made *by* their councils also indicate that their councils give less preference to the participatory leadership style (2.00) than those directors who indicated that most key regional decisions occur *outside* their councils (2.64, $F=42.43$, $p<.001$, Table 3).

Results for 1994 show that those directors who indicated that most key regional decisions are made *by* their councils again gave their councils significantly higher ratings on directive leadership (2.30) than

Table 2. Average Ratings by Executive Directors of the Use of Three Styles of Leadership in Their Regional Councils

Ratings	Participative	Directive	Supportive
1990	2.39 (303)	1.92 (302)	2.15 (302)
1994	1.79 (228)	1.93 (226)	1.83 (224)
2000 (Projected)	1.57 (201)	2.51 (199)	1.64 (197)

Ratings were measured on a three-point continuum from strong (3) to weak (1).

Table 3. Involvement in Regional Decision Making and Leadership Style, 1990

	Involvement in Regional Decision Making		Leadership Style	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
Most Key Regional Decisions Are Made by the Regional Council	2.31	112	2.00	112
outside the Regional Council	<u>1.63</u>	<u>174</u>	<u>2.64</u>	<u>174</u>
	1.90	286	2.39	286
Range of Averages	0.68		0.64	
F Ratio	44.43		42.43	

Significance of F is <.001.

those who indicated that most key decisions were made *outside* their councils (1.61, $F=34.67$, $p<.001$, Table 4). Those directors who indicated that most key regional decisions are made *by* their councils also indicated that their councils gave less preference to the participatory leadership style (1.55) than those directors who indicated that most key regional decisions occur *outside* their councils (1.99, $F=25.93$, $p<.001$, Table 4). Thus, it again appears that regional councils that chose the participative style of leadership may be less involved in making key regional decisions.

Finally, the projections for the year 2000 show interesting differences—preferences for directive leadership increase substantially; those directors who indicated that most key regional decisions are made *by* their councils gave their councils significantly higher ratings on directive leadership (2.67) than those who indicated that most key decisions are made *outside* their councils (2.30, $F=6.72$, $p<.001$, Table 5). Those directors who indicated that most key regional decisions are made *by* their councils also indicated that their councils gave more preference to the participatory leadership style (1.44) than those directors who indicated that most key regional decisions occur *outside* their councils (1.70, $F=5.13$,

$p<.001$, Table 5). Thus, it again appears that regional councils that use the participative style of leadership may be less involved in making key regional decisions.

The results of this research indicate that the dominant mode of leadership of regional councils today is in flux. No strong preference existed in 1994, although a trend toward directive leadership became apparent. That trend is more strongly indicated in the preferences for directive leadership projected to the year 2000.

The question arises: is the dominant leadership preference for the future, namely directive leadership, preferable for regional councils in particular, and for substate regionalism more generally? Unfortunately, the answer most likely is no. This preference is more likely an unrealistic wish of regional council executive directors.

Revising Our Perceptions

The difficulty is this—with the perception that in the future more decisions will be made *by* the councils instead of outside them comes the perception that this means regional councils must take on a more directive style of leadership in order to be “in charge.” What is overlooked is that regional councils are a unique type of organizational

Table 4. Involvement in Regional Decision Making and Leadership Style, 1994

Involvement in Regional Decision Making	Leadership Style			
	Directive		Participative	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
Most Key Regional Decisions Are Made by the Regional Council outside the Regional Council	2.30	97	1.55	102
	<u>1.61</u>	<u>126</u>	<u>1.99</u>	<u>125</u>
	1.91	223	1.79	227
Range of Averages	0.59		0.44	
F Ratio	34.67		25.93	

Significance of F is <.001.

structure. This type of structure, often referred to as a "network structure" (Mandell 1995), is well suited for the challenges of the twenty-first century but requires a revised perception of what is meant by leadership and the leadership skills needed.

A major feature of this unique structure is that no one is "in charge" in a network structure. Each member is independent of every other member. Even in single organizations where the notion of the hierarchical organization has given way to the "network organization," it is implicit that there is still someone in the organization who holds a position in which he or she would have the "final say," if necessary. This is not the case in a network structure. Since each member is an integral part of the whole, no one member has the ability to call the shots based on his or her position in the network structure. Power, therefore, is not based on position (as in a single organization) but on actions and expertise. Members need the ability to redefine issues, find mutual ground, and get things done.

Two corollary features also make a difference in this type of structure. In a network structure, each member has individual affiliations that place demands on him or her. The needs of and commitment to the network structure often conflict with

those of the members' own individual organizations. They also cause conflicts *within* the members' individual organizations.

These conflicts are both visible, such as problems in management and coordination, and invisible, such as problems of turf, power, or resource allocation.

In addition, members in a network structure are not just "interconnected." They are "interdependent." A network structure, therefore, does not involve only the ability to coordinate individual efforts but also the ability to manage interdependencies. There is a difference between *interdependent roles* and *interconnectedness*. With interdependent roles, there is a need for consensus. This often results in inaction on the part of members of the network structure.

As a result of these features, a revised perception of what is meant by leadership styles is needed. For one thing, a network structure is not based on participative management (i.e., delegating authority to lower levels) but on *unbounded participation*. This can lead to creative, innovative solutions, but it also places unique demands on the leadership.

This does not mean that there is no room for a directive style of leadership. Indeed, initially there is no shared vision, rather individual ideas of what is needed.

Table 5. Projected Involvement in Regional Decision Making and Leadership Style for the Year 2000

Involvement in Regional Decision Making	Leadership Style			
	Directive		Participative	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
Most Key Regional Decisions Are Made by the Regional Council outside the Regional Council	2.67	107	1.44	106
	<u>2.30</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>1.70</u>	<u>94</u>
	2.50	197	1.56	200
Range of Averages	0.37		0.26	
F Ratio	6.72		5.13	

Significance of F is <.001.

There is a need to make these separate visions compatible to lead to a synergistic approach. The issue, however, is no longer *either* participative leadership *or* directive leadership but how to develop leadership skills that take advantage of *both* leadership styles, while also recognizing the impact of working through a network structure.

Regional councils need to find ways to exert more effective leadership in the future. It is more likely that they will be able to do this by effectively building on a participative leadership style. What they need is a better understanding of how they may use participative leadership to leverage regional decision making.

Gardner's analysis of leadership skill areas has promise for helping council leadership to use participative leadership. Gardner (1990, 118-120) suggests that five leadership skill areas are important for managing interconnectedness. Among these skill areas are (1) exercising nonjurisdictional power (the other legitimate forms of power such as the power of the media and public opinion, the power of ideas, and the power that accrues to those who understand how various systems work) and (2) agreement building, with skills in conflict resolution, mediation, compromise, and coalition building.

Gardner indicates that these leadership skills can be learned. Council leaders can become more proficient in using nonjurisdictional forms of power and building agreement in the face of conflict. These skills can help regional councils move from their participative style toward a more directive style of leadership, and they certainly are compatible with the projected demands of working more closely with private-sector leadership. They promote a nonconfrontational approach. By changing in this manner, regional councils should be more able to maintain the initiative in solving regional problems today and in the future.

The difficulty is that Gardner's work does not go far enough. Perhaps even more helpful is the leadership model proposed by Mandell and Rossy (1992), which points to the importance of

- championing/visioning,
- building sponsorship and legitimacy,
- articulating strategic issues and policy alternatives, and
- engaging in effective mobilization.

Championing/Visioning

Championing goes beyond simple "coordination" to providing "the energy and commitment to follow through" (Bryson 1988). The primary leadership role in a network

structure is to champion program objectives by focusing attention and resources on the ultimate synergized purpose of the program. Agreement on program objectives is important because it provides an effective way to distinguish between ends (purposes) and means (solutions). By drawing attention to purposes, leaders can build general commitment to the program. (This is similar to Selznick's [1957] notion of institutional leadership.)

Building Sponsorship and Legitimacy

When applied to network structures, sponsorship and legitimacy address the *simultaneous* requirements of focusing on program objectives at the operational level and articulating choices at the policy network level. They also include framing underlying conflicts in ways that do not alienate decision makers at the policy network level.

Articulating Strategic Issues and Policy Alternatives

In a network structure, where members may be committed not only to the program but also to their individual organizations and/or professional responsibilities, agreement may be difficult to reach. This conflict creates the illusion of an overly complex environment and creates an environment in which members strive to maintain the status quo. To overcome inertia, leaders must understand, and build on, existing communication channels.

Although many different commitments may be represented in a single network structure, these commitments also represent an underlying foundation of shared meaning. Building multilateral communication channels (Mandell 1984) allows individuals to capitalize on these shared meanings. If guided by an overall program commitment, these differing commitments

can serve as the basis for identifying and articulating a variety of complementary and innovative policy choices for the network structure.

Engaging in Effective Mobilization

Coupled with these three processes is the need to engage in mobilization behavior (Porter and Warner 1979). Mobilization behavior includes those actions taken by administrators in network structures to marshal resources and remove obstacles so that program initiatives can progress. In network structures, mobilization behavior refers to the ability to identify resources and maintain support and legitimacy for the program by *building coalitions of key policy-makers*.

It is seldom necessary for a leader to secure complete agreement from all involved policymakers. Instead, mobilization behavior describes the importance of allowing policymakers, for their own reasons, to demonstrate their commitment to the underlying objectives of the program structure. To accomplish this, a leader must redefine and rearticulate the program's underlying objectives so that they are simultaneously consistent with each individual's (or organization's) policy framework. Rather than trying to gain complete agreement among all policymakers, the leader strives to build an alliance in which each member is committed, for his or her own reasons, to achieving the program's objectives, services, and/or products. (This process of coalition building is similar to what Lindblom [1965] calls "partisan mutual adjustment.")

Conclusions

For regional councils to be effective well into the twenty-first century, those in leadership roles will need to reshape old thinking

and create new environments. Doing this will require building leadership skills such as those possessed by

- Conflict managers (removing obstacles and stepping into another person's shoes),
- Catalysts/cultivators,
- Multilateral brokers or facilitators, and
- Consensus builders.

The National Association of Regional Councils can play a strong role in the development of these leadership skills through sponsorship of leadership training seminars for its executive directors. The development of these leadership skills, coupled with the revised perceptions of what is meant by leadership in regional councils, will help insure the role of the regional councils as a key player in the political arena well into the twenty-first century. ☉

Notes

¹ The views presented in this paper are solely those of the authors and do not in any way reflect the viewpoints of NARC or any of its constituent member organizations.

² The term *regional council* is used throughout this article to refer to different kinds of regional organizations, including regional planning associations, regional commissions, regional resources planning and management committees, and regional councils of government. This usage follows the general definition of regional council by NARC:

A regional council is a public organization encompassing a multijurisdictional regional community and is founded, sustained, and directly tied to local governments through local and/or state government laws (National Association of Regional Councils 1985, 3).

³ This section relies heavily on Gage (1993).

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