Movement Building for Sustainability:
The Role of Leadership

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What is a social movement?

Social movements are defined by their ability to move large numbers of people to action to achieve structural and cultural transformation [local, regional, national, global]… Engaging a diverse range of communities and approaches simultaneously, social movements unite people through shared strategy, shared principles and shared goals.

Examples of social movements

- The anti-Apartheid movement
- Anti-colonial movements across Africa
- The Treatment Action Campaign (South Africa)
- The civil rights movement in the US
- The women's movement

Characteristics of sustainable social movements

- Well organized and are in it for the long run
- Not over-dependent on a few charismatic leaders
- Fuelled by passionate people
- Build alliances across social divides
- Multi-stakeholder, and often multi-sector
- Mobilize diverse actors around a shared vision

Characteristics of sustainable social movements

- A ‘systemic view’ of change
- Not ‘project-focused’
- Not bound by the constraints of a ‘log-frame’
- Deal with complexity
- Surface power relationships, build shared power and secure access to power

Characteristics of sustainable social movements

- Develop a compelling theory of change
- Build trust across boundaries
- Create new and unexpected alliances
- Pool resources and leverage new resources
- Value learning and innovation
- Thrive on dialogue and create a larger public dialogue

Characteristics of sustainable social movements

- Constantly analyze and synthesize the changing environment
- Nimble and adaptive
- Able to live with uncertainty, take risks, and learn from setbacks
- See difference and conflicting views as creative forces for change

Characteristics of sustainable social movements

- They put people at the centre (*'**The fight is never about grapes or lettuce. It is always about people**' – Cesar Chavez*)
- They model the kind of change, and the kind of society, they seek
- They understand that we all part of the problem – ***and*** that we can all become part of the solution

Movement Building for Sustainability:
The Role of Leadership

Social movements require 'bridging leadership'

- Bridging leadership is a leadership approach to address complex issues and social inequalities
- It is both a ***process*** and a ***style*** of leadership focused on building effective working relationships among diverse stakeholders
- It recognizes that social progress depends on the collective effort, ideas and assets of multiple players

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Movement Building for Sustainability:
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Bridging leaders are:

- Change agents
- Visionaries
- Conveners of dialogue
- Lifelong learners
- Values driven
- Systems thinkers who deal with complexity

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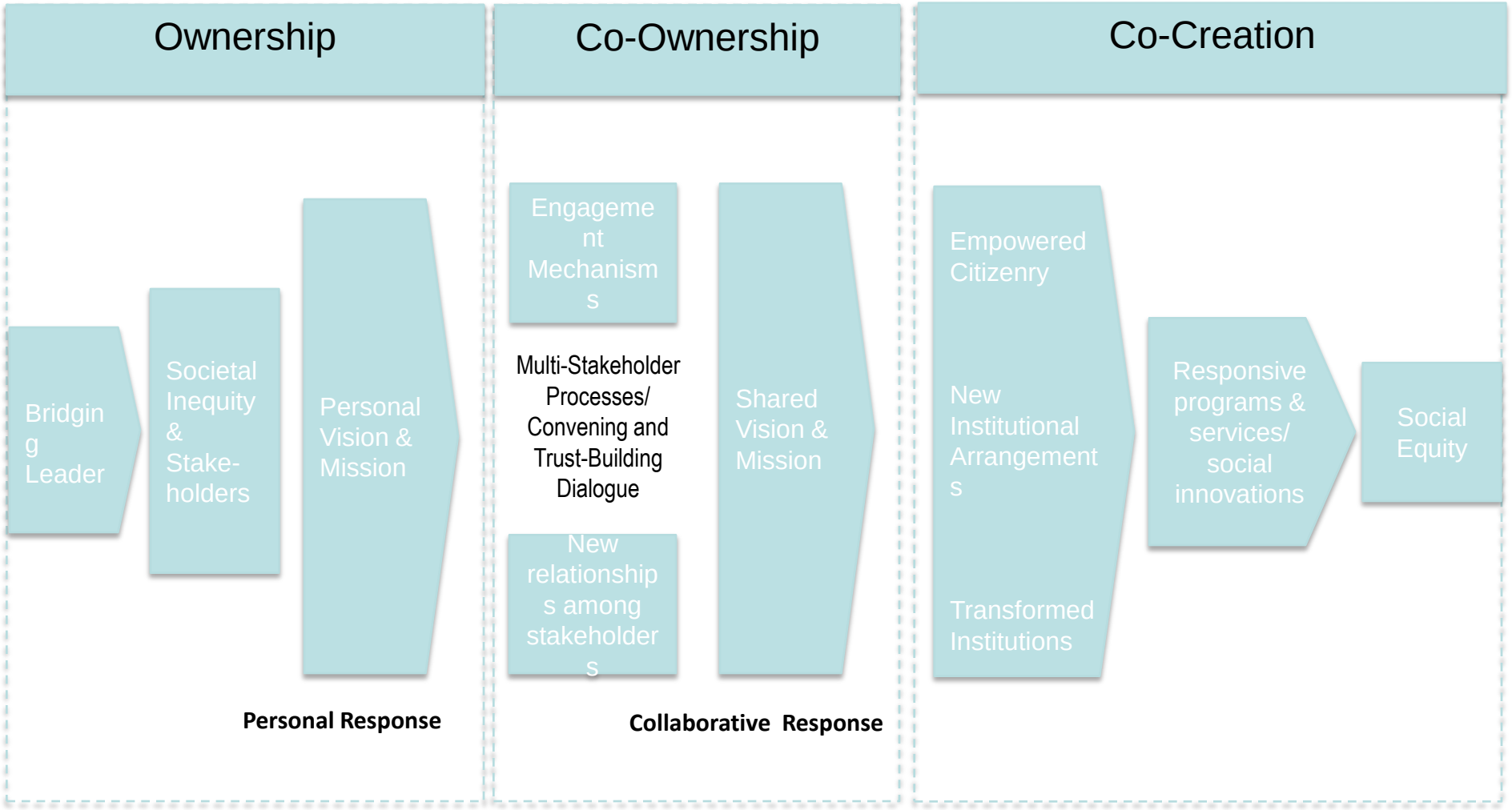
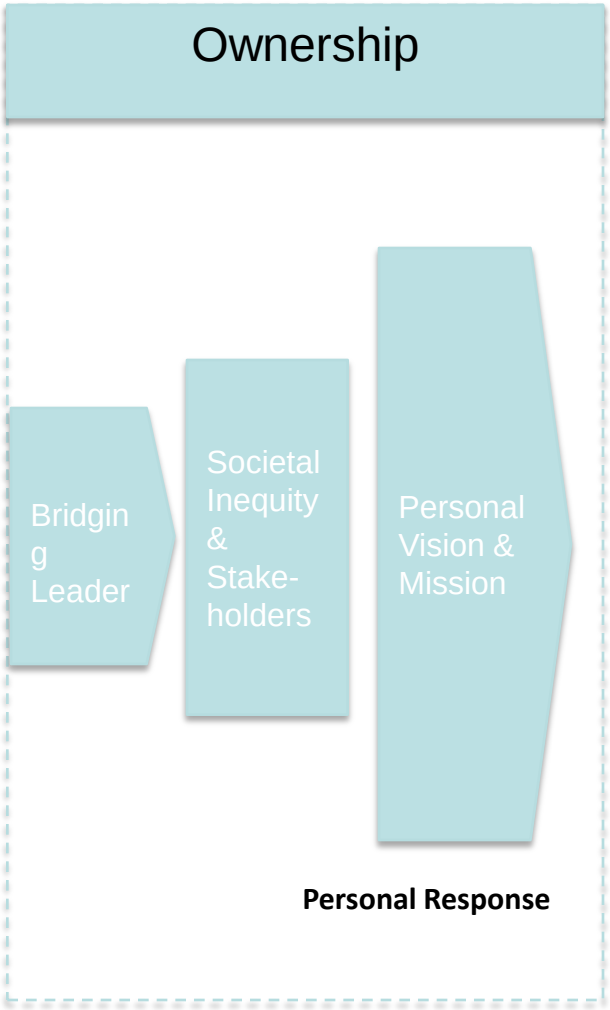
The Bridging Leadership Process



Source: E Garilao

The Bridging Leadership Process: Ownership

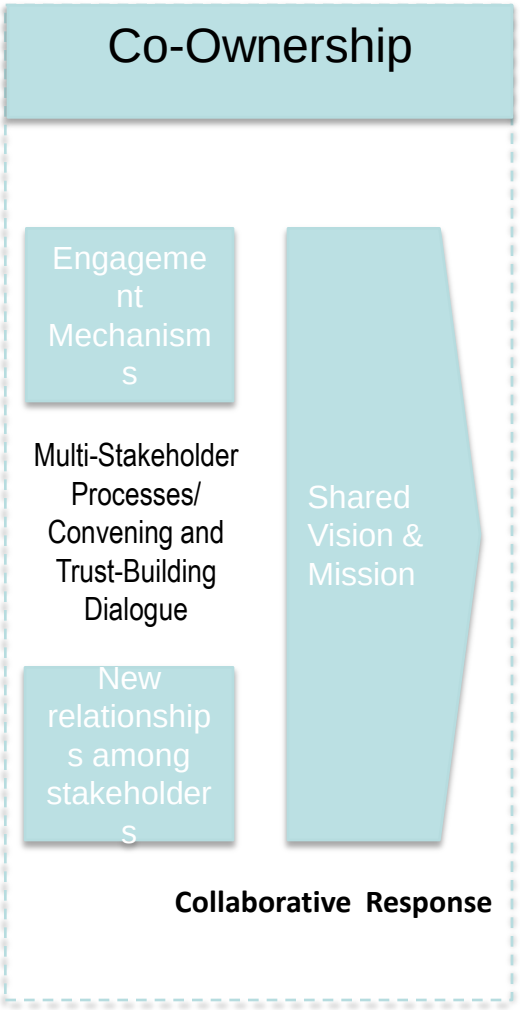
- The Bridging Leader owns the issue
- Understands its systemic analysis and recognizes the interests of its many stakeholders
- Makes a personal response to the issue



Source: E Garilao

The Bridging Leadership Process: Co-Ownership

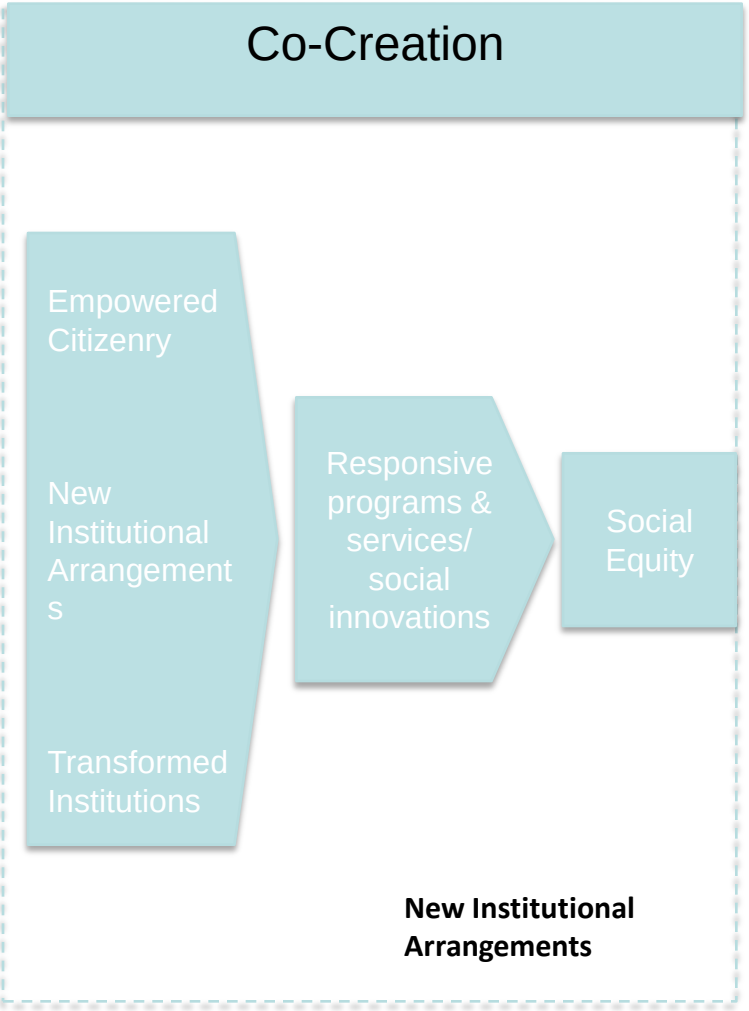
- The Bridging Leader convenes the stakeholders of the issue
- Through a process of dialogue and engagement, the stakeholders arrive at a shared vision and shared response.
- The vision becomes the societal outcome aspired for by everyone.



Source: E Garilao

The Bridging Leadership Process: Co-Creation

- New institutional arrangements are new & innovative rules for & ways of doings things
- Over time, the new arrangements that are inclusive, accountable & transparent lead to more empowered citizens & more responsive institutions
- Empowered citizens & responsive institutions, supported by new arrangements, collaborate on responsive programs & services that bring about societal equity



Source: E Garilao

Faculties and capacities for bridging leaders

- A systems thinking approach
- Working with complexity
- Deep listening (with head and heart)
- Ability to map and track diverse stakeholders and interests
- Self-awareness of our own character, world view and values

Faculties and capacities for bridging leaders

- Ability to 'own' the inequity and our role in the system
- A strong sense of purpose – and knowing where that passion comes from
- Capacity to build trust and relationships
- Ability to work across social divides with a large range of people and institutions
- Convening multi-stakeholder dialogue

Faculties and capacities for bridging leaders

- Network and coalition building
- Group and process facilitation skills
- Negotiation, mediation and conflict management
- A culture and practice of inclusive participation
- Tapping into indigenous knowledge and collective wisdom of communities
- Community organizing

Faculties and capacities for bridging leaders

- Connecting with, and building on, deep-rooted patterns of mutual aid, self-help and community solidarity
- Poverty and root cause analysis
- A practice of 'acute observation'
- Effective communication and advocacy
- Encouraging experimentation and innovation

Faculties and capacities for bridging leaders

- Creating spaces for reflection, learning and leadership renewal
- A practice of accountability and continual review of performance against social objectives
- An 'asset-based' approach to development
- Nurturing new generations of leadership and long-term assets for social change

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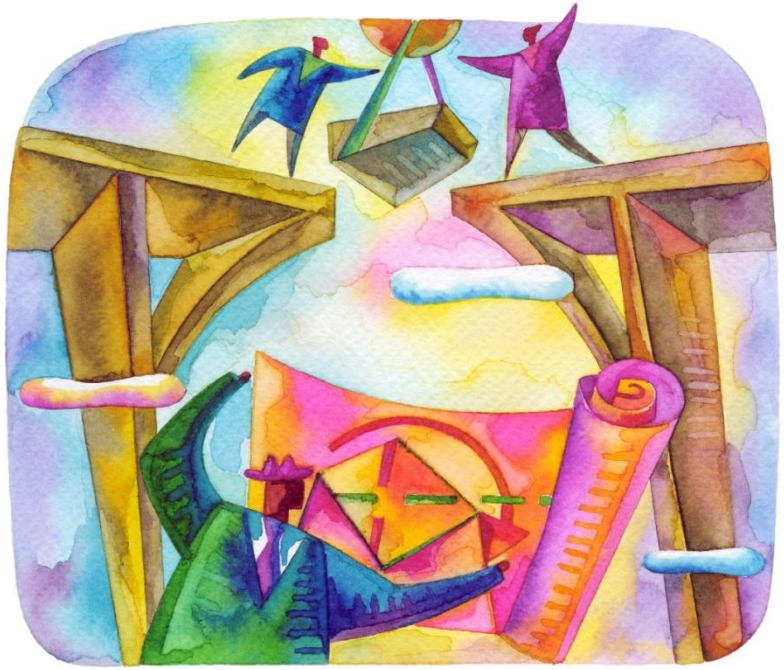
- To make change, we need vibrant social movements
- To build more sustainable social movements, we need 'bridging leaders'
- *And* we need a stronger movement for philanthropy in Africa
- The African Grantmakers Network has a critical role to play on all counts!