

Optimizing Inclusive Leader Networks



Written with GMF Leadership Program Alumni and Stakeholders on the occasion of the inaugural

“Inclusive Leadership Summit” September 27–28, 2018 in Paris, France

G | M | F

The German Marshall Fund
of the United States

STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION



“GMF invests in inclusive leader networks because we believe in the power of rising diverse leaders on both sides of the Atlantic to grow in their leadership together and strengthen transatlantic relations into the future.”

- Karen Donfried, PhD, President, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, United States



“Today more than ever, we must ensure that tomorrow’s leaders conduct their missions in an inclusive and collaborative manner to fight against the fear of the unknown that leads to isolation and anger. Meridiam’s mission to invest for the community through long-term investment in infrastructure projects all over the planet has naturally led us to support inclusive leadership networks.”

- Thierry Déau, Chief Executive Officer, Meridiam Infrastructure, France

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The pictures in this publication are uncaptioned and drawn from GMF leadership events as well as events organized by GMF alumni through Alumni Leadership Action Projects. The intention is to highlight the spirit of text.

Introduction: Leadership Networks for the Future

GMF Team



Once you have founded or joined an inclusive leader network, how do you contribute to making it the best it can be?

Each writer featured here aims to inspire you toward this goal. The content contributed by GMF team members, alumni, and stakeholders is designed for leaders in the GMF family and beyond who are shaping inclusive leader networks; playing roles as catalysts, guides, and coaches; and growing such networks for the future. We invest in inclusive leader networks in the context of rapid demographic change on both sides of the Atlantic. Aging of long-standing majority populations continues across the region. Some European countries are experiencing extensive out-migration; others are seeing close to half of urban school children of migration background. Despite shifts in policies, the United States remains on track to become “majority minority” in less than three decades. Migration across borders and to cities continues. The fact that many are “left behind” also accentuates the need to include voices beyond global cities in national conversations. New knowledge about the value of diversity in the workplace, the negative consequences of inequity, women’s advancement in leadership, inclusion regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, and a growing commitment to access for our increasing populations with disability, are further aspects of diversity coming to the fore in leadership learning. For our societies to continue to outperform in business and innovation, we must prepare leaders who are inclusive in their approach, reaching across diversity factors, bridging cultures, geographies, and generations.

Required at this time are networks that: engage, empower, and connect emerging leaders from diverse backgrounds; connect these emerging leaders across a wide range of affinities, as well as with those in senior leadership positions.

Required at this time are networks that: engage, empower, and connect emerging leaders from diverse backgrounds and connect these emerging leaders across a wide range of affinities, as well as with those in senior leadership positions. Rising diverse leaders must weave strategic networks to gain support, be uplifted, and discover the impetus to overcome societal barriers. As network entrepreneurs, growing networks that create pathways for diverse talent into leadership roles, we also become more effective leaders ourselves. In the transatlantic context, with swift demographic change and increasing numbers of young people in both the United States and Europe who no longer trace their roots to Europe, intentional work is needed to connect rising diverse generations to transatlantic opportunities and the wealth of the transatlantic relationship. The resulting connections yield great innovation, harnessing transatlantic energy for the network. The direct can-do approach and civil rights grounding of young U.S. leaders can prove of particular inspiration for European counterparts, while Americans gain insight into the extraordinary diversity and conceptual grounding of Europe's rising leaders.

When highlighting demographic trends, an unintended consequence can be to trigger fear of change. We must, therefore, thoughtfully frame accurate reflections on aging heritage populations and increasingly diverse younger generations with this in mind: to communicate and inspire trust in a world where all our talents can be brought to the fore, making our countries and the transatlantic alliance stronger. No one is meant to be excluded. The concept is to move beyond the limited imagination of a zero sum game, approach policymaking as an inclusive endeavor, and increase the total pool of power in our nations toward greater well being and prosperity.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Through your messaging, inspire trust in a world where all our talents can contribute.

The GMF Experience: Growing Inclusive Leadership Networks

Kevin Cottrell (MMF '08), Guido Goldman Director of Transatlantic Leadership Initiatives, GMF

We founded the Transatlantic Inclusion Leaders Network (TILN) in 2012 with like-minded partners as a commitment to connect traditionally underrepresented political leaders to transatlantic relations and raise awareness about the value of inclusive leadership as a 21st century leadership skill.

We expected to create opportunity and support for these leaders and to widen their influence in the halls of power. The backdrop has shifted as nationalist agendas again rise to remind us that we have a more urgent responsibility: We must ensure that diverse leaders have the skills and networks to combat racism, hate, and xenophobia that still infuse transatlantic societies. The upside is that we have built the network and honed a curriculum that empowers rising leaders to be effective in this new environment. Alumni are also founding further leadership networks on both sides of the Atlantic; the circle continues to grow.



Affinity networks for people who are members of underrepresented groups are essential because we do identify with those who have shared experiences, particularly regarding diversity and inclusivity, as we often share the experience of exclusion, having been viewed as being on the margins of society. Not by choice, we have an enduring awareness of our difference. Camaraderie strengthens us and we can have candid, safe conversations within the affinity group about leading to benefit our group.

The optimal inclusive leadership network is a living laboratory about how to practically advance inclusivity in our societies.

Talking with peers about greater leadership roles also allows us to bring the knowledge from within our affinity group across multiple communities, minority and majority. We begin to bridge networks and to build inclusive networks as well. The affinity group is not the end point but part of our process, where we draw strength, create perspective, develop confidence, and gain the backing of influential people. As we bring the experiences of our marginalization to a broader understanding reaching across barriers, we can educate the public to these realities and experiences, grow our relevance, and become accepted as equal partners across all issue areas, such as politics, the economy, and beyond.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Build networks of purpose; achieve measurable outcomes; ensure the network regenerates.

Three strategies I recommend for network building are: build networks of purpose; achieve measurable outcomes; ensure the network regenerates. Aspire beyond the network's social value for the individual in the moment, to create a network of purpose with a shared mission of positive change in the world. Be explicit in stating this purpose. It is not enough just to talk together and hold events; the network must be a space to strategize, develop skills, and move projects forward with measurable outcomes. The optimal inclusive leadership network is a living laboratory about how practically to advance inclusivity in our societies. Inside the network, we think about how to do this best; we practice, and then leave the protective space of the network with increased power and a shared sense of purpose.

Yet this is not enough. We must further ensure that our networks are regenerative: We circle back to the network, report on our action and learning, regenerate, reaffirm our affinity with others of varying levels of experience, and serve as a resource. Then we head out again to advance at increasingly higher levels of leadership across communities, networks, and borders. We build strength in one another, renew, and deploy our strengths in a process that can be lifelong.

Leading 21st Century Networks for Change

Lora Berg, Counselor for Inclusive Leadership, GMF

In 1950, when Danish chief engineer Hildaur Neilsen teamed up at Zephyr American with U.S. businessman Arnold Neustadter to invent the path-breaking networking tool called the Rolodex, little could this transatlantic duo have predicted the momentum of inventions about to exponentially increase our networking capacity — so much so that we are currently said to live in the networked age.

An advantage for us in this period of technological advance is the opportunity to tap into new research about leadership networks and the conditions that make them most effective. New tech tools allow us to visualize our networks and to consider adjustments. Taking the time to assess and rebalance our leadership networks is therefore a valuable strategic investment, and even more essential in a period of rapid demographic change when we must build social capital beyond habitual circles, expanding our access to information and increasing our capacity to innovate. What steps can transatlantic leaders take to meet this growing potential to network, leveraging advances

Creative ideas, essential leads, and innovations often come from outside one's primary network, meaning that it is necessary to cultivate both strong and weak links in a successful networking strategy.

in research and tech? These three strategies offer a start: First, research demonstrates that decentralized and self-organizing networks outperform and bring greater satisfaction than hierarchical networks. Consider “the starfish model,” through which we rely on peer relationships and independent circles of activity linked by shared values and sparked by individuals and ideas that serve as catalysts throughout the system. This is in contrast to the hierarchical approach to networking. We can take the time to consider how to make the activity of our networks less hierarchical and more decentralized. This may seem to create some tension with maintaining brand control and quality, but the benefits outweigh the risks.



Second, creative ideas, essential leads, and innovations often come from outside one's primary network, meaning that it is necessary to cultivate both strong and weak links in a successful networking strategy. Strong links in networking terminology mean those with whom we have the most intensive contact, while weak links are those with whom we interact more rarely. When we take the time to visualize our networks, we are able to

identify strong and weak nodes, meaning where interaction is intensive and where it is less frequent. Information flows into and out of our networks via bridges that connect our core networks to those on our periphery. Innovation is sparked by serendipitous interactions with people we contact less frequently, allowing us to access the knowledge of their core networks as well. For example, most leads on job opportunities come from people we network with less frequently. This means that we must strive to develop bridges to other networks, increasing our social capital. These bridges allow us to enrich our understanding of the world and of the particular issue sets we work to solve.

Third, research is underway about global action networks, and how such multi-stakeholder networks spanning countries and sectors can bring about systemic change by creating collective understanding and discovering unexpected solutions. As we work across borders, we can bridge to a broader range of networks, ensuring that our stakeholders are drawn from across sectors, in order to create collective understanding of our causes.

As we put these three strategies into place, we can also measure the effectiveness of our networks, assess how active and dynamic the different independent circles of activity are, how effectively we are innovating, and how new ideas and inspiration are traveling through the system. Successful networks thrive within an ecosystem of all the other networks to which members are connected, widening the circle of impact and exchange of ideas.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Decentralized and self-organizing networks outperform.

What Does it Actually Mean to Be an Inclusive Leader?

Nou Yang (MMF '11), Leadership Consultant, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, United States



Is inclusive leadership a necessary trait and practice for leaders?

I would argue yes. Too often, leaders focus on their agendas and efficiently achieving their outcomes. This means relying on experts, following work plan timelines, and having a sense of urgency and focus toward the goal. Little attention and effort is given to engaging the people who are most impacted. Furthermore, leaders do not always consider inclusion as an important component to the final outcome. Oftentimes, it is the communities being studied or impacted themselves that end up demanding the voice and opportunity to be involved in the process.

In my 17 years as a leader, I have been at all points of the continuum of engagement, from collecting feedback to co-creation. I have come to believe that being inclusive is necessary in working with people who have different working styles, come from different cultural backgrounds, and have different perspectives. It is also essential in order to be an effective leader who is responsive and relevant.

What does it actually mean to be an inclusive leader? As a practitioner, I have learned that “how” we as leaders engage others matters. There are 15 key principles to being an inclusive leader:

1. Being authentic and able to be vulnerable
2. Ensuring mutual benefit for all
3. Building relationships toward friendship
4. Demonstrating self-awareness of one's own worldview, biases, and work style
5. Shifting from perfectionism to allowing mistakes
6. Fostering an environment of curiosity, learning, and constant improvement
7. Letting go of control and moving toward shared power and decision-making
8. Trusting the community to know what it needs
9. Valuing and leveraging the skills of others
10. Acknowledging that one person doesn't have all the answers
11. Practicing transparency about processes
12. Asking for feedback
13. Allowing multiple truths to coexist
14. Paying attention to process and practice hosting, rather than delegation
15. Applying an equity and social justice lens

Although inclusive leadership takes more time, these practices and ways of being over time produce higher quality results, community buy-in, and lead to more self-sustaining results in the long run. Being inclusive and engaging those we work with and for requires thoughtful planning, community engagement as an ongoing strategy, letting go of the sense of urgency, flexibility, and willingness to collaborate and if necessary change course.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

It is only through new behaviors, experiences, and practices that our own worldviews can be challenged, opening us up to learn new perspectives and new ways of leading.

A Network Must Never Be Silent

Abdelkarim Bellafkih (TILN '18), President, Federation of Moroccan Organizations, Belgium



A leadership network strengthens its members in order to achieve a certain goal. For example, that goal may be to strengthen a minority within a society and bring their story to policymakers, the media, and the public. The idea to create a network arises to address a need, but how do you transform this idea into action?

Forming a group with a shared concern is not enough. A network succeeds only if there is added value for each member. This added value is almost never financial, and may rather be the opportunity to make an impact, social connectedness, cultural enrichment, career and development opportunities, access to experience and knowledge, leadership growth, and potential to contribute to the network.

A network requires a dedicated core group within its wider community. This group should sense and recognize the needs of all members. Therefore a bottom-up strategy is needed, carried out by empathetic members who are also trend watchers, able to analyze what opinionmakers say. These members serve not only as facilitators, but also initiators, coaches, and feedback receivers. The more diverse the core group, the more variety in specific qualities that come together within the network. A strong core group should share some core values, regardless of the underlying theme and the technical knowledge needed for a network. The core group is not about numbers, but about talents. One person can possess several of these talents. Then you also need people with leadership qualities who are able to recognize, utilize, and empower these talents.

Forming a group with a shared concern is not enough. A network succeeds only if there is added value for each member. This added value is almost never financial, and may rather be the opportunity to make an impact.

Don't forget, a healthy network grows over time. It is more effective to join an existing network with your talents and contacts than to start a new network to do the same, in cases where there is already a network with the same purpose active in the same domain. A network can grow by maintaining two important principles: transparency and realistic steps. Members are reinforced even by modest achievements toward a higher purpose combined with open communication and trust.

Foremost, a network must never be silent, internally or externally. A network strengthens the signals of individual members and of society. Returning to the example of a network oriented around an ethnicity: It is important to continue listening to the sensitivities within the network. These are themes that also can play an important

role in societal debate and discourse. If the network is listening to its members, then it will detect a social problem much faster, before it becomes a social necessity. At the same time, elevating the network toward external stakeholders is important. If the reason for the existence of the network, such as the identity of its members, is being devalued in the public sphere, then the network must provide a counter-narrative and bring nuance into the public debate. This will help to raise awareness, and the members of the network will also gain a sense of support and recognition.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

A network requires a dedicated core group, needs to grow over time, and must never be silent, internally or externally.

Leveraging Tech for Inclusive Leadership Networks

Haikel Drine (TILN '16), IT Consultant and Deputy Mayor for Digital Affairs in Blanc Mesnil, Ile de France Region, France

How do we utilize tech to enhance self-organization, increase the heterogeneity of information resources, and capture the potential of network members to contribute and to thrive?

Foremost, we must understand the role of technology before we make decisions about it. Tech is simple and based on three values: communication, connection, and collaboration. “Connecting” is about understanding your needs, determining the most effective tech strategy to satisfy those needs, and finding the right partner to help meet those needs. “Communication” is the vehicle for establishing information flow. Disclosing your needs, providing others with feedback, and listening to their needs and feedback not only builds trust but also allows a clear understanding of how you can help each other be successful, which leads to collaboration. Achieving “collaboration” is the result of connecting and communicating. After finding the right partner, communicating your needs, establishing mutual benefits and trust, the stage is set for collaboration. Collaboration works when people feel safe to share information and ideas, and when they are unrestrained by fear of technology.

Focus on creating an inviting digital workplace that supports your network’s effectiveness and efficiency. This should consist of a platform, tools, and environments for work delivered in a usable, coherent, and productive way. In the case of GMF’s leadership programs, the team opted to develop the GMFConnect app which will connect a substantial family of alumni and create space for collaboration. In my case, I multitask in numerous leadership roles across many networks. I use two tech tools for networks I engage and guide. The first is “WIMI,”

We must understand the role of technology before we make decisions about it. Tech is simple and based on three values: communication, connection, and collaboration.

a multi-project manager. It allows me to work efficiently each day. It organizes my projects and I can easily share information while managing the access rights of each collaborator. WIMI compiles data from a range of different communication outlets (mobile, cloud, social media). The second tech tool I use often for networks are mobile apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram. These applications simplify and reinforce the mode of communication. There is a



fluidity of exchanges and an instantaneous sharing of information. I am connected around the world with our different networks and these applications allow me to travel virtually.

Too often in today's world, we prefer to interact with a computer screen or mobile phone rather than with each other directly. There is no doubt technologies serve us, providing new avenues for networking, leadership, business, and empowerment. However, face-to-face communication remains most effective. In my travels, I meet with people in person, ask questions, and listen to their concerns. These interactions build trust, understanding, and a real sense of shared connection, and this has made all the difference for me. Tech does not evoke the same level of emotional attachment, which is why direct interaction is still vital in guiding our networks and in shaping the experience of network members.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

First conduct your needs assessment; then choose tech for your network that addresses those needs, enhancing your ability to connect, communicate, and collaborate.

Engaging Community Toward Action

Nou Yang (MMF '11), Leadership Consultant, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, United States

Engaging community toward action sounds easy but it is quite complex.

There are many things that hold people back from taking action. Young people report that what stops them from leading are limiting beliefs, lack of opportunities, adults' belief that they know best for young people, people viewing young people as insignificant and lacking wisdom, a lack of desire to authentically listen to young people, and other people's fear and desire to protect young people from harm. Non-traditional voters and residents report that what keeps them from taking action are negative past experiences, feeling like they do not have the skills, lack of time and resources, conflicting priorities, and lack of experience and understanding of how to take action.

In my experience of community engagement and leadership development, I have learned that the key ingredients to inspire people to action are: internal motivation; reframing who is a leader; developing a sense of purpose; tapping into core values; learning specific skills and knowledge; hearing and seeing ordinary people take action; and the practice of actually taking action oneself. A core philosophy of mine is that we all have the potential to lead. In fact, we have been leading every day of our lives with the decisions we make with our family members, with our peers, at school, and in the community. An important part of



engaging community toward action is helping to demystify the notion of who is, and what it means to be, a leader. Being a leader is not dependent on having a formal position of leadership or education. Being a leader is not only when others follow you. Being a leader is having passion for issues you care about and having the desire to improve the community. Once someone buys into this notion that anyone can be a leader, even themselves, then they can actually consider putting into action the new skills learned.

Next, it is critical to give people space to examine who they are and who they want to be, the issues they care about, their skills and talents, and what holds them back from leading. This combination to include naming limiting beliefs can be a powerful recognition of strengths and challenges, and propel people toward focusing on who they want to be in community. Hearing stories from existing leaders about their journey into leadership will inspire community members to put their leadership potential into action. This sets the stage nicely for learning about specific content and building specific skills.

The last stage is to give community members an opportunity to practice skills in real life situations. I have done this in the form of giving participants a community project to design, implement, and report about in public. Whether they experience success is secondary to helping them reflect on leadership lessons learned through the process, especially the realization that they were in fact leading in community. Other important aspects to inspire people into action are:

For the facilitator:

- Valuing and living out a “nothing about us, without us” philosophy
- Using experiential learning methodologies and concepts of play to create learning environments
- Shifting your paradigm from seeing yourself as the expert. Be in the role of facilitator rather than teacher.
- Elevating community voices and experiences
- Being relevant and responsive
- Being your authentic self — vulnerability is OK
- Recognizing your own biases

For the community member:

- Being encouraged to be your authentic leader self
- Receiving affirmations from peers
- Reflecting on personal growth

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Many factors hold people back from taking action, but these can be overcome. We all have the potential to lead in our communities.

What Powers Inclusive Networks

Ajenai Clemmons (TILN '15, MMF '16, U.S.), PhD Candidate in Public Policy, Duke University, Served 12 years as government official/advisor, United States



Too often, minorities are uninvested in another minority group's struggle.

The Transatlantic Inclusion Leaders Network (TILN or The Network) yanks us out of that mode of thinking and being. It connects minority leaders, so we can learn about each other's challenges, especially the ways we experience prejudice and discrimination. TILN heightens our sensitivity to each others' needs. It also allows us to learn what others have achieved, and to exchange ideas. Ultimately, The Network enables us to become stronger because, instead of toiling separately, we unite to advance our goals.

Prior to my participating in TILN in 2015, I worked in a national coalition of African American, Native American, Asian American, and Hispanic state legislators. Over three years, we methodically studied barriers of structural racism that keep each group's children and families in poverty. We focused on education, health, juvenile justice, and economic security. Our goals were two-fold: first, to learn about the barriers our society places in front of each other's groups, which would equip us to advocate more effectively on each other's behalf, and, second, to

understand our common obstacles in order to form a collective policy agenda for demolishing them. After my transformative experience in TILN, burrowing into a transatlantic struggle for equity seemed the next logical stage of my activism.

Over the past two years, I have assisted an expanding and diverse group of Italians* in cultivating an Italian national network of leaders dedicated to inclusion. Our success in large part is due to the nourishing environment we transplanted from TILN. The idea was to extract the following essential ingredients from TILN in order to lay fertile soil in Italy for a similarly rich network to grow:

- We exchange ideas and best practices.
- We train together to place ourselves at the cutting edge of political advancement and policymaking that builds and binds our communities.
- We provide each other emotional support in a pursuit that is sometimes despairing and sometimes exhausting.
- We encourage one another, teach one another, lean on one another, learn from one another, strengthen each other, and protect each other to the best of our ability.
- We connect each other to opportunity.
- We celebrate each others' victories personally and professionally.
- We believe that success for one of us means for success for all of us. So, when we applaud each other, we are genuinely applauding ourselves.
- You may have heard of the Latin phrase “E pluribus unum” — out of many, one. We come from different nationalities, cultures, races, ethnicities, religions, abilities, and orientations. But, make no mistake we are united for one cause ... each other's.

Caring for one another and developing strong ties makes us more likely to act when called upon. Thus, I believe there are two reasons this “TILN extract” serves as an essential nutrient to our budding Italian network. In the first year of our project, we re-created healthy conditions that increased the likelihood of recruits wanting to remain part of the network. In the second year, we reached out to already intact, mini networks that had long taken root. In other words, we invited pre-existing networks — in which these TILN-like healthy behaviors were already present — into our fledgling organization, thereby raising the likelihood that they would accept the invitation to join us. To be clear, we did not invite individual representatives of vibrant networks; rather, we made space for pre-existing network clusters. This is key because we can consciously or unconsciously shy away from inviting groups with pre-existing close ties into our organizations, concerned that they will be cliquish, and hold asymmetrical social power or cause fracturing. Here are some of lessons we learned and would offer up as considerations:

1. First, when building our inclusive leaders networks, we should take seriously the catalyzing potential of inviting intact groups, relationships, and/or successful partnerships.

This applies, for example, in coalition-building when we err in believing that it is good enough to invite a single representative of a network. On the other end of the spectrum, this could apply in outreach for an event when we get comprehensive lists making sure to include every last soul in our calls. It could be both more efficient and effective to think about clusters of people to bring in.

2. Second, it is critical that we tend to the networks we have, rather than constantly looking to expand.

We can make our networks more robust by pursuing deeper relationships with those we already know. Actions that nurture trust, such as investing more quality time, getting to know each other personally, checking in with one another, or even checking on each other will be time well spent.

This is neither to endorse replicating “good ol’ boy clubs” within minority networks, nor to criticize our commitment to inclusive methods of distributing information and opportunity. My point is that targeted, strategic growth of our networks can call upon us to delicately balance tensions between pursuing depth and breadth.

A seductive idea current in today’s networking culture is that a network facilitated by social rank and happy-hour-lubricated chit-chat will sustain our upward trajectories. But, we cannot sustain ourselves or the movements we seek to create by adopting a once-and-done approach to connection-making. Sustenance calls for substance. It is in repeated, quality interaction that meaningful relationships and, indeed, powerful networks become embedded. For those of us who labor in and on the national and transnational battlefields of equity and inclusion, that is power we entirely control.

**Italian Seble Woldeghiorghis shared with me her idea of launching an Italian network in 2016. Claudio Tocchi and Simone Mangili secured support from the City of Torino to host our meetings and ensured all went smoothly. Abderrahmane Amajou (TILN ’18) and Anass Hanafi participated in the 2017 event, then co-led the 2018 event. We thank GMF for the [Alumni Leadership Action Grant](#).*

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

It is in repeated, quality interactions that meaningful relationships and, indeed, powerful networks become embedded.

Bridging Generations – Leaders Present and Future

Muddassar Ahmed, GMF Fellow, Founder and Managing Partner, UNITAS Communications, United Kingdom

Inclusive leadership networks create environments where young people can exercise their power and talents with each other and also in interaction with elders. One goal of these networks is for young people to gain voice so that their leadership, needs, and perspectives can take a prominent place in policymaking, as young people are our future.



Learning across generations flows from young leaders to elders, as from elders to those who are young. Creating a welcoming and safe space for interaction across generations is one essential role of inclusive leadership networks. An example in practice is joint immersive learning experiences where leaders of different ages learn together. Both structured and unstructured opportunities for interaction across generations of leaders can prove effective.

Seeing ourselves as “we” across generations and having the ability to work in multigenerational contexts is one key to solving the challenges of our time. Our era is observed to be the first that can bring together five generations simultaneously in the workplace. Our leadership networks can help us to gain the skills to work across generations, regardless of our ages at a given point in time.

The conventional framing of intergenerational learning through the mentor-protégé relationship pairs the wisdom and experience of older generations with the vigor, enthusiasm, and innovation of youth. While the mentor and protégé may be a tried and tested engagement, the rapid pace of change we are experiencing also requires reverse mentoring where the young can guide their elders. Three ideas for building intergenerational competency in our inclusive leader networks include:

1. Initiate a personal narrative workshop. One powerful tool of understanding is storytelling. The most effective starting point is one's own story, but narrative skill requires development. An intergenerational personal narrative workshop brings senior and rising leaders together to hone their storytelling. Participants have the opportunity to build trust, share vulnerability, and exercise candor. And they not only learn to craft a succinct, compelling, and effective personal narrative, but also learn from each other the similarities and differences of stories based on generation, perspective, and experience.
2. Share contacts and wider networks. Even the best ideas face the ultimate paradox: young, emerging innovators often cannot reach people in power to help them grow their ideas, and ideas cannot emerge to give visibility to their creators without being known to those who can provide backing. Mentors bring experience and a well-cultivated network. Protégés bring passion and innovative thinking that seeks to deploy, particularly through new technologies with which they have considerable expertise. Mentors can facilitate the connection and engagement of protégés to transform ideas into action.
3. Take joint action. Join in conceptualizing and carrying out leadership action projects together across generations. As networks grow over time, multiple generations of leaders are present in the network and can form teams to address specific challenges in any sector. Working together, the team members will best understand the strengths that leaders of different ages offer.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Intergenerational teams bring nuanced thinking to address contemporary challenges. We strengthen the intergenerational competency of all network members by exchanging our stories, sharing contacts, and engaging in learning and action together.

Inspire Young Leaders to Lead, and They Will Lead

Simon Woolley (TILN co-founder), Founder, Operation Black Vote, United Kingdom



My simple message to rising diverse young leaders is: now it's your turn, and I along with your own communities "are not asking for your success, but demanding it."

I first shared these words at one of the early Transatlantic Inclusion Leaders Network (TILN) workshops in Brussels. I informed this young group that the men and women who changed their world during the Civil Rights movement were also young. Some, I suggested, such as Reverend Jesse Jackson, were even younger than these TILN leaders when they joined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A few weeks later, two of the young participants, Daniel Gyamerah and Gün Tank, called me and said, "Simon, we heard you, and we're going to act. We are going to unite and nurture minority Germans in the way you spoke about. And of course, we want you to be there." How could I say no? So I headed to Berlin, to the iconic building where John F. Kennedy gave his "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech. There Daniel and Gün had gathered two dozen dynamic individuals from minority communities to talk politics, leadership, and political empowerment. Today their project leads the way in Germany.

Since then, there have been offshoots from TILN in countries as diverse as Bosnia, the Netherlands, France, Italy, the United States, and U.K. The young leaders return home from Brussels to lead in their own countries, bringing new talent into their orbit. A key element is that alumni stay connected, including by social media. So for example, a Roma activist heading for New York will drop a line on social media, and the family of minority leaders springs into action, saying "yes we'll see you soon, and connect you with some activists and politicians here." When an alumnus/a gets elected to higher office, the network sends encouragement. These well connected young leaders, who are passionate for change, strengthen one another. When I speak with fellow founders, we are amazed this powerful network keeps growing. And then I am reminded: If you inspire young people to lead, they will lead.

Youth Empowerment to Catalyze Your Network

Kamilla Sultanova, Consultant on education export, D&I; Finland Chair for Global Dignity (TILN '12, Finland)

In my current work with the youth empowerment network Global Dignity, I coach teens to volunteer and to focus on their capacity to empower others.

We channel young people beginning with simple encouragement and giving life skills they can use to grow their character, such as critical thinking, teamwork, and self-awareness.

Based on this experience, I encourage inclusive leader networks to also include members under the age of 24. The mentoring that results can prove valuable for all in navigating and distilling the distorted reality we live in, especially now when we are isolated from one another by our social media habits, and where anxiety and polarization are taking a toll. Making connections across age groups and diverse backgrounds, we form nontraditional partnerships that can transform understanding and bring about lasting change.

I was still an international exchange student in Denmark when I joined TILN. This platform has served me in gaining awareness of my personal agency, allowing me to test ideas with doers, and give and receive mentorship. This is why I encouraged TILN to accept an 18-year-old participant who founded her own political party in Finland, and she proved to be a highly effective network member. For me, the TILN network has provided a unique community of soul sisters and brothers across Europe and the United States. The network connects like-minded people and gives a sense of personal as well as group agency to address both individual growth needs and societal challenges. It is a network with participants who have the drive, desire, and determination to make inclusion tangible. For young people trying to gain the belief that “I matter and my voice matters” and to find their own path to leadership, inclusive leader networks can be a determining factor. Finding the courage to engage in civic work and to join such a network is an important step on the journey.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Leadership does not have an age.

Your Empowerment Effect: First Encounters and Ongoing Engagement

GMF Team

As the founder of the TF1 Foundation in France that broke through in bringing diverse young talent into one of France's leading public television stations, Samira Djouadi notes, "Staying among yourselves is one of the greatest dangers. It isn't about dinner parties ... It is about building."

Here are strategic questions to optimize first experiences with your network:

How do future members learn about and enter your network?

What is unique and empowering in their first experience with the network?

How do you connect new and existing members to strengthen a sense of belonging?

Are you building in sufficient time on the front end to create a safe space for members to get to know each other?

How do you model the inclusivity you aim to bring about in the wider world?

And here are some questions for ongoing engagement:

Are you nurturing a rich mix of close intensive ties as well as connections to new members and to wider networks that add vitality, allowing you to keep your creative edge?

In addition to intimate discussions, are you offering any larger-scale, memorable events and opportunities such as immersive learning, thinking big?

Have you considered the network's potential role to generate new knowledge and developing members as thought leaders?

Do you have opportunities for members to act and have genuine impact?

Do you offer pathways for members to commit their time and other resources, so the network can thrive?

Are you allowing space and resources for decentralized interactions to allow for creativity, such as alumni led actions?

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Our networks can embrace paradox: exclusive and inclusive, intimate yet with the ability to act on a big stage and have a large impact.

Addressing Network Paradoxes: An Interview with Ahmed Larouz

There are two salient paradoxes for inclusive leadership networks: First, leadership networks are often exclusive, with barriers to entry and benefits of membership. Yet our networks also aim to be inclusive, featuring diverse voices and a strength-based approach to problem solving. Second, we aim to create intimacy and yet to think and act ‘big.’ For strategies to address these paradoxes, we interviewed

Ahmed Larouz, (MMF '08), Chief Executive Officer @Bridgizz, Dutch Moroccan, Entrepreneur, Speaker, Social Innovator, Co-Founder and Author #180Amsterdammers, Co-Founder #Incleaders, Netherlands

Q: GMF: How do you manage the Exclusive/Inclusive paradox?

A: AHMED LAROUZ: Think inclusively but work exclusively. Yes, while creating these networks, you do create exclusivity, because you want to target and attract certain groups that are not reached by other networks. It is necessary to have a goal that is inclusive, but your approach and process can be exclusive. You need to have a very clear vision (inclusive networks and inclusive leaders), but the approach and the operating process should be exclusive; otherwise you will appear to be like the other networks, and it will be difficult to attract your target groups. Therefore, your work should be exclusive but at the same time, always with an inclusive mindset.

A network must be unique — if a person has a choice to affiliate between two networks, the choice will often be made for the one that feels more exclusive. What makes a person join and invest in this network, rather than another? There is a brand component and logic to network building: the network must be attractive whether it is a business, political, or grassroots leaders’ network. This looks a lot like marketing and it is not something to shy away from; you can have the same product for different target groups but if you do not market in a very exclusive way and build the network’s image through substance, leaders will not subscribe.

Q: How do you create an intimate, safe space and still think/act big?

A: When you are an exclusive organization with an inclusive mindset, what you want is to change the mindset of others and bring about paradigm shifts. Always put your principles forward, and that will attract people to be a part of your network and your vision.

When you start a revolution in thinking and approach, it always starts with a vision, but it never starts as something big. Rather, it starts with a smaller group of people who believe they need to integrate their vision into a larger group. But remember that even if you do become bigger, you should always protect your vision. Always keep your vision as a guiding force in everything you execute.

To anybody who is trying to set up a network, I would say: think BIG. If you think bigger, you will have a larger impact. You will attract funding, gain influence, and engage people. People will be inspired by the work you do, and once they are inspired, they will help you to expand your network. In this way, your network can be at the heart of a movement. When you start a movement, you should not keep it for yourself. You must make space for others to join. But always protect your vision, your principles, and attract members aligned with those principles.

Catharsis and Solidarity

Sayu Bhojwani (TILN Mentor), President and Founder, New American Leaders, United States

My first experience of the Transatlantic Inclusive Leaders Network began on a sleepy afternoon, following a flight from New York to Brussels.

Although I was in Europe, the room TILN had created resembled those we create in the United States, through New American Leaders (NAL), the organization I founded to prepare immigrants to run for office. Multiracial, young, and committed to a democracy that works for all — that is what the TILN and NAL cohorts share.



Over a period of five days, I joined the TILN cohort in experiences that included presentations from local groups, informal dinners with sponsors, and an off-program dancing expedition. Being outside their hometown and away from the pressures of their day jobs, these leaders were able to find catharsis and solidarity. We began lifelong friendships, like the ones I developed with Ponka-We Victors, a state representative in Kansas, and Carlos Menchaca, a city councilmember in Brooklyn, New York. I learned from Mpanzu Bamenga, a councilor in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, how U.S. immigration policy transformed his life even though he has never lived in the United States.

As networks, TILN and NAL are successful for three reasons: they provide access to resources and relationships that individual members would not easily be able to access on their own; they create opportunities for formal and informal interaction among members; and they offer continued opportunities for engagement. By offering

By offering skills-building and opportunities to meet influencers, networks help build social and political capital, which is critical especially among members of marginalized communities, who otherwise have limited access to such opportunities.

skills-building and opportunities to meet influencers, networks help build social and political capital, which is critical especially among members of marginalized communities, who otherwise have limited access to such opportunities. By allowing for both structured sessions and sidebar conversations over meals and walks, networks are catalysts for new relationships among their members. And finally, by creating opportunities for members to meet regularly, networks help to strengthen bonds among their members.

The power of networks is hard to quantify. TILN and NAL are no different in that way. What makes these networks unique is the careful curating of like-minded people with unparalleled passion to build democracies. Since my first experience, the TILN and NAL relationship has grown to include several shared alumni. Three of these leaders — Carlos Menchaca, Detroit City Councilmember Raquel Castaneda-Lopez, and Arizona State Representative Athena Salman — are featured in my book, *People Like Us: The New Wave of Candidates Knocking at Democracy's Door*. I imagine that other TILN members will see their stories in Athena, Carlos, and Raquel and find comfort in knowing that they are part of a network that is making our governments more inclusive and representative.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Safe space is key for inclusive leader networks; sufficient time is needed to create this space.

Achieving Sustainability

Gun Tank (TILN '14) and Daniel Gyamerah (TILN '14), Co-Founders of Network Inclusion Leaders, Germany

We met through TILN and were empowered and inspired by the training, methods and networking opportunities.

On our way home from Brussels we realized that there was not a single leadership program for People of Color in Germany. Our goal was to apply lessons from TILN to the German context, adapt this to local necessities and build a network of emerging leaders from diverse communities who could support each other over the long run. This is how the Network Inclusion Leaders (NILE) was born. A specific focus of our selection is to seek change agents from grassroots movements who might be reluctant about the notion of leadership, as they truly serve their communities and do not see themselves as leaders in the sense of being interested in their individual careers. These are the perfect candidates who need access to core- and bridging- networks, resources, and transformative training.

Two forces are at the core of sustainability for NILE. First, we are specific regarding our target group: All participants are united by a collective experience of racism. This is based on the lesson of the German women's rights movement that taught us women need women's spaces to exchange strategies, access, and experiences. Second, we make sure that during the training there is space for authenticity and sharing experiences of marginalization. This space of healing and being strengthens



connection among participants and fosters their intrinsic motivation to stay connected over time. Still, we must also admit that there is by far not enough funding for networks that inherently confirm that racism is a dominant force in our societies — even though we are strong in communicating that our participants share a vision of an inclusive society that very much depends on the contributions of all.

To keep NILE and other inclusive leader networks growing and vibrant:

- Accept new cohorts regularly — new people, new energy.
- Involve alumni in building the network and welcoming new members; communicate the responsibility of members to keep the work going as the founders cannot sustain this alone.
- Seek and get in-kind support as well as funds to pay speakers and if possible yourself or at least assistants; without funds, the network will not be sustainable long term.
- Stay independent with regards to the agenda and selection process.
- Make sure you have speakers who will inspire your target group and teach skills and perspectives they would not access otherwise (for example, NILE and TILN benefit from Simon Woolley's uplifting engagement, founder of Operation Black Vote in the U.K.).
- Do not do it alone. "Inclusion Leader Networks" are good for business, and yet must not be reduced to a business idea. We need to make lasting change to address the many challenges of our time, and need many strong shoulders to lean on.
- Make a solid succession plan for leadership in your network, rather than relying on a single charismatic individual.
- Networks have their own lifecycles, and need to change and recalibrate over time. Allow your network to be adaptive, even while staying strongly aligned with core values.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Lean on strong shoulders, and provide strong shoulders to lean on. Sustainability requires partnership — the active engagement of multiple network members and stakeholders.

Staying the Course: Essential Work in Challenging Times

Mischa Thompson, PhD (TILN Co-Founder), Policy Advisor, U.S. Helsinki Commission

“Staying the course” is a term often used to describe what drivers should do when navigating a difficult road — e.g., if you see a bump, a hill, or an object in your path, you need to determine how you will go around, up, over, or in some cases even through the object to get where you need to go. During challenging times, the object or objects may seem so difficult that you can forget what path you were even on, be steered down a different path, or even decide that the journey is too difficult and simply give up or turn back.

Leaders often face many objects in their paths, from losing an election to campaigns counter to their cause, waning resources, and even threats of violence in person or via social media. These are all things that help one to learn, grow, and prepare successful strategies that can be used for the future. They are also life lessons that help us make decisions about how best to navigate a difficult environment. Is it time to fight? If so, how should I fight? Is it better to wait? If I wait, what am I waiting for? Should I quit? If I quit, who or what will be lost?

Do not take the path alone. True leaders inform and inspire others to take the journey with them by growing their networks and connecting talent across generations, backgrounds, and beliefs. Along the way they empower and nurture those with them so that they too can navigate the objects in their path.

The goal is never to arrive alone.

The answer to these questions and the key to successfully navigating challenges is first having a true vision — in other words, know what you are working toward. Second, is recognizing the path to get there, but knowing that it may not be a straight route. Third, do not take the path alone. True leaders inform and inspire others to take the journey with them by growing their networks and connecting talent across generations, backgrounds, and beliefs. Along the way they empower and nurture those with them so that they too can navigate the objects in their path. The goal is never to arrive alone.

As many of our societies undergo transition, we must be ever mindful of the value and worth of every human life and what we lose every time a life is lost, a person is unable to contribute to our societies because they lack the same access and opportunity as others — because we have yet to reach equity and full representation in our societies. The 2016 film *Hidden Figures* documenting how African-American women mathematicians were key to the United States reaching space not only demonstrates the power of inclusion, but how far our societies and the human race could go if we could simply embrace the concepts of valuing one another and working toward a shared future.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Be true to your vision; stay the course and never arrive alone.



Art of Leadership

Whether a leadership network is working in the area of disability rights, women's rights, LGBTQI rights, racial equity, poverty, or climate change, all share the struggle of getting others to understand their experience and point-of-view.

In honor of the Inclusive Leadership Summit taking place in Paris, France, a city shaped by creative talent, we include a reflection on the importance of art, imagination, and creativity for inclusive leader networks.

When asked about key qualities of leaders, people often prioritize qualities other than art, imagination, and creativity. Yet during this era of intense innovation, those who can generate the best ideas take the lead, and it is critical for contemporary leaders to imagine, to create, and to bring out the creativity in others.



Tapping Into Art as a Pathway for Inclusive Leader Networks

Kerry Thompson (MMF '14), Program Associate, Disability Rights Fund, and Founder of Silent Rhythms, United States

A key challenge facing leaders with an inclusive and human rights oriented focus is getting society to care and act on issues, especially if society feels those issues do not relate to them.

Whether a leadership network is working in the area of disability rights, women's rights, LGBTQI rights, racial equity, poverty or climate change, all share the struggle of getting others to understand their experience and point-of-view.

Leaders looking to inspire change and gain momentum must often explore innovative ways to capture the public's attention, and one such way is through the arts. The arts have the capacity to change lives, challenge perceptions, create dialogue, and most critically, get a wide range of communities to care.

As a global disability rights leader and a DeafBlind woman, my greatest challenge is to get people to see the world through my eyes. Legislations, policies, and awareness-raising workshops can only do so much. Inclusion of people with disabilities could not happen if people without disabilities did not care. Often, people without disabilities "do not know that they do not know" the challenges people with disabilities face. The most innovative way I bring people to care about disability rights is to dance with them. Being a salsa dancer and teacher gives me a platform or rather a dance floor so that those I dance with see me as a human being. We are drawn to dialogue through our bond in the love of dance.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

Tap into your own creativity and the arts to capture the interest of the public toward your network's goals.

CONCLUSION: COLLECTED LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

Lean on strong shoulders, and provide strong shoulders to lean on. Sustainability requires partnership — the active engagement of multiple network members and stakeholders.

Leadership does not have an age.

Tap into your own creativity and the arts to capture the interest of the public toward your network's goals.

Decentralized and self-organizing networks outperform.

Intergenerational teams bring nuanced thinking to address contemporary challenges. We strengthen the intergenerational competency of all network members by exchanging our stories, sharing contacts, and engaging in learning and action together.

Many factors hold people back from taking action, but these can be overcome. We all have the potential to lead in our communities.

Through your messaging, inspire trust in a world where all our talents can contribute.

A network requires a dedicated core group, needs to grow over time, and must never be silent, internally or externally.

First do your needs assessment; then choose tech for your network that addresses those needs, enhancing your ability to connect, communicate, and collaborate.

Build networks of purpose; achieve measurable outcomes; ensure the network regenerates.

Safe space is key for inclusive leader networks; sufficient time is needed to create this space.

Our networks can embrace paradox: exclusive and inclusive, intimate yet with the ability to act on a big stage and have a large impact.

It is in repeated, quality interactions that meaningful relationships and, indeed, powerful networks become embedded.

It is only through new behaviors, experiences, and practices that our own worldviews can be challenged, opening us up to learn new perspectives and new ways of leading.

Be true to your vision; stay the course and never arrive alone.

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