

# INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Theoretical framework

EN

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Inclusive Leadership – the new attitude towards the reinforcement and the development of the members of disadvantaged groups.

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# Introduction



This handbook is intended to be an inspirational source on the topic of inclusive leadership for practitioners who are working alongside or leading others at risk of being excluded from society.

Current concepts of inclusive leadership focus on very broad and diverse target groups. The term is used to include 'everyone' – people with different cultural backgrounds, experiences and ways of working, ages, sexual orientations or genders, physical abilities etc.

This handbook focuses on individuals and organisations and includes those at risk of being excluded from society because:

- ◆ They have some form of disability
- ◆ They have a migrant or refugee background or
- ◆ They have less access to information and facilities because they live in remote areas

This does not mean that the knowledge and practices proposed in this handbook cannot be applied to other people or in other contexts. This only means that the knowledge and practices proposed in this handbook focus on the target group mentioned above and that the leaders working with individuals at risk of exclusion were actively involved in the development of the handbook. All of the examples in the handbook stem from the target group mentioned above.

The inclusive leadership approach presented in this manual is based on the human rights laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, since this forms the basis for any human interaction. Furthermore, this approach builds on the belief that everything is connected and that inclusive leaders need to be aware of the world in which they live and its resources.

Practising inclusive leadership can contribute towards solving both small and big challenges in our complex world today. Inclusive leaders appreciate everybody's contribution and inspire innovation by involving people at risk of being excluded from society. They are prepared to give up power, share responsibility and tap into the

*„Inclusive leaders appreciate everybody's contribution and inspire innovation by involving people at risk of being excluded from society.“*

wisdom of the group in order to benefit everyone - the leader, the follower and the society.

Inclusive leadership means having the courage to take conscious steps to break down barriers for people at risk of being excluded from society.

Inclusive leaders embody a leadership approach that appreciates diversity, invites and welcomes everyone's individual contribution, and encourages full engagement with the processes of decision-making and shaping reality.

The aim of inclusive leadership is to create, change and innovate whilst balancing everybody's needs.

The key areas of development for inclusive leaders are practicing self-awareness, living a shared vision, building relationships and creating change by valuing the world they live in.

The content of this handbook is the result of a 17 month EU project (2016-2018) which brought together three organisations active in adult education. The partners involved were:

- ◆ School for Leaders Foundation from Poland
- ◆ Alp – activating leadership potential from Austria and
- ◆ EU-Fundraising Association e.V. from Germany.

This handbook is accompanied by a second manual for trainers and educators, where one can find the training outline and practical tools for increasing knowledge and skills and experience inclusive leadership. Further an online-tool has been created, where individuals can discover their current standing in terms of inclusive leadership through a self assessment.

# Leadership through the Ages





Leadership, whether supportive or dictatorial, has existed ever since humans first began to interact. However, the need for leadership, combined with an increased focus on leadership, has developed significantly in tandem with rapid technological, cultural and demographic progress. Alongside this, changes in communication have forced organisations, leaders and followers always to be aware of and to improve their interaction in order to attain common goals. The values and intentions behind leadership behaviour are the main reasons for constantly evolving leadership theories and the models and tools related to this.

This chapter is intended to illustrate how time, global and/or private interests, events and human relationships have influenced the ongoing evolution of leadership theories and leadership models. These typically focus either on the leader, the task, the environment, the follower(s) or the team members in a rather complex combination of post-modern systemic and relational leadership facets.

As an abstract term, leadership is not used exclusively in the context of paid work. However, the evolution of the working environment has dominated the way in which relations between decision-makers and their followers, volunteers, professionals and even family hierarchies have been shaped.

In the **pre-industrial era**, leadership centred around the leader and related values such as honour, prestige and authority: qualities which were not open to debate. Good followers were to be obedient and the focus was

primarily on **WHAT** people worked on, often to the extent that they were named after their profession: Smith, Miller, etc. The goal during this period was the survival and success of mankind.

### Focus on task and production

Once the industrial era had begun, workers started to create more of a distinction between work and leisure time, dividing their duties from their interests. This meant that motivation became an important concern for leaders. World War I and the recession in the late 1920s, combined with the technological development of automatisisation, signalled the beginning of a new era in which an awareness about leadership was a source of considerable interest. Ford introduced the assembly belt and the piece rate for motivating employees in order to speed up the production of automobiles, without giving much thought to the social and physical repercussions. Leadership values were displayed by productivity, quantity, speed and economy. Goals were related to growth and economic prosperity. The main theories at this period focused on **HOW** people work.

During World War II the need for factory employees drew more women into paid work. Once the war had ended, many new innovations made the world focus even more on improving productivity in

factories, offices and even between people. Mercantile jobs increased with supermarkets, global brands and as marketing increasingly influenced the public opinion.

*„In the pre-industrial era, leadership centred around the leader and related values such as honour, prestige and authority: qualities which were not open to debate.“*





## Focus on the person

The start of the **modern leadership era** focused on interpersonal dynamics and psychology, although the focus was still on the perspective of the leader or the organisation rather than on the influence on the follower. The key psychological theories were the X and Y humanity perspective<sup>1</sup>, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs<sup>2</sup> and Herzberg's Motivational Theory<sup>3</sup>, all of which primarily focus on **WHY** people work. The goals of many organisations still centred around growth and wealth, but increasingly there was a willingness for the global distribution of ideas and the improvement of the quality of life. Goals were generally related to the quality of products, services and life in general.

As technological innovation continues to increase and IT solutions and robots take over many demanding jobs, the focus is now shifting to an awareness of continually improving efficiency, whilst at the same time minimising the consumption of global natural resources and the breakdown of human physical and mental resources. Fewer people work in production and more and more work in the services or care sector. The care sector, as part of the 'health industry', brings the requirement for a more motivational and appreciative way of leading people. Communication has become essential for leadership and goals are now related to diversity, inclusion and mutual understanding.

*„The focus has shifted from the perspective of a single leader to the interaction between those involved in a given task in a wider context as an organisation.“*

## Global communication

The internet speed up global communication and opened the door for the management of people and production from a distance. Communication binds people and production in a living, 24/7 global network. Leading means being aware that one individual cannot handle everything alone, even when multitasking. Leaders must show faith in their team members and need to communicate in order to motivate and to optimise productivity and efficiency. The oil crisis in the 1970s and the recession at the start of this century forced organisations to optimise and analyse traditional ways of working. This has led to an explosion in models and theories about how to make the world work that focus on tasks, processes, people and even the relations between the stakeholders in a task. Since a leader does not manage all duties, shared leadership or leadership teams that consist of people with complementary skills and delegated responsibilities have become increasingly common. An awareness of the similarities and differences in competences and needs is now essential. The knowledge and overview of overlapping systems within a working community has become a must for those involved. Leadership is now '(leader)team-ship'.

- 1 X and Y are human theories on motivation and management by Douglas McGregor. Theory X stresses the importance of strict supervision, external rewards and penalties. Theory Y highlights the motivational role of job satisfaction and encourages workers to approach tasks without direct supervision.
- 2 Abraham Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' uses the terms physiological, safety, belonging, love, esteem, self-actualisation and self-transcendence to describe the pattern through which human motivations generally move. The goal of Maslow's Theory is to attain the sixth level of stage: self-transcendence.
- 3 Frederick Herzberg developed a theory on motivation based on two factors: at the workplace there are certain factors that cause job satisfaction (motivators), while a separate set of factors cause dissatisfaction (hygiene factors).



## Self-leadership

Our world today is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA). Economic turmoil, environmental disasters, conflict and the resulting mass migration are just some of the issues which lead to continuous change. The concept of systemic thinking highlights the complexity that people are living in.

Many leadership models are developed on the basis of research about how people can carry out tasks healthily and efficiently. Theories focus on self leadership; distant/remote leadership; trust and faith; delegation; motivation; and resonant leadership<sup>4</sup>. The focus has shifted from the perspective of a single leader to the interaction between those involved in a given task in a wider context as an organisation. This means that each stakeholder is fully responsible for his or her share of the task, for the group and/or for the whole organisation.

Stress management, mindfulness, coaching and meditation are frequently mentioned as ways to handle complexity, uncertainty and imperfections in reality. Theorists and organisational developers include these trends and are thinking of new theories and methods to support those facing the challenges of today in order to be ready for the world of tomorrow. 'Resonant Leadership' by Daniel Goleman and 'Theory U' by C. Otto Scharmer have dominated the worlds of both change management and personal development. In his book 'Reinventing Organisations', Frédéric Laloux gives examples of non-hierarchical organisations around the globe where leadership is a shared responsibility.

All of these theories value quality relations between the leaders themselves, those around them, and the world in which they live. They see individuals as competent and responsible in a local and a global context, both for today and tomorrow. Followers and leadership roles have become interchangeable, as described in the Catalyst<sup>5</sup> training manual: 'Followers are also leaders. The first follower turns a lone nut into a leader! Followers are leaders in their own right, and in fact, inclusive leaders make space for others to lead, by following them.'<sup>6</sup> This means that leaders encourage followers to seek their own leadership potential and are willing to create a culture of shared responsibility where everyone feels personally involved in what is at stake. This happens within an atmosphere of trust where people are valued for who they are and are able to express themselves. These theories require self-leadership, which means that self-awareness becomes a key tool, as well as mind for both the leader and the follower.

When looking back through history, the development of leadership can be seen as a spiral in which previous forms are repeatedly connected to modern contexts, building new experiences on top of older theories. This evolution of leadership centres around the elements WHAT, WHY and HOW; examining how people act, re-act and inter-act.

Inclusive leadership adds a further dimension to these concepts of leadership. It continues the trajectory of contemporary trends in leadership development by putting the focus directly on diverse groups and individuals.



4 Boyatzis, Richard (2013) In the book the authors argue that ,resonance is the reservoir of positivity that frees the best in people. At its root, then, the primal job of leadership is emotional.'

5 Catalyst is an NGO for researching and training in the area of diversity.

6 Catalyst (2017)

# Inclusive Leadership - a New Dimension in Leadership Theories





The terms 'inclusive leadership' and 'inclusive leader' are already being used by different researchers and practitioners, meaning that there are various different available definitions. What all definitions have in common, however, is that they centre around relationships and value personal differences. There are also other leadership theories that do not explicitly use the term 'inclusive', but still talk about co-leadership and value and foster diverse opinions and ways of contributing.

Below are some theories on inclusive leadership which were inspirational for the inclusive leadership approach developed within the current project and presented in this manual.

- ◆ Psychologist Edwin Hollander writes 'Inclusive leadership is about relationships that can accomplish things for mutual benefit. Reaching leadership at this next level means "doing things with people, rather than to people"'.<sup>7</sup> He explains further that this idea departs from the long-standing tradition of focusing on the leader's qualities instead of giving attention to the followers' needs and perceptions. He sees inclusive leadership as oriented significantly more towards the involvement rather than the manipulation of followers by those in power. Respect, recognition, responsiveness and responsibility are vital for the successful implementation of inclusive leadership.
- ◆ The concept of servant leadership was first mentioned by Robert K. Greenleaf, who put the individual human being at the centre, rather than

the means for achieving a goal. 'Servant leadership is not a concept, a method or technique – it is an attitude or philosophy, which protects growth of life and is going into all parts of life. It lays the basis for trust for personal and professional growth, efficient team work, responsibility and energy'.<sup>8</sup> In this concept, leadership must care for the welfare of the employees and partners which the organisation is serving. Greenleaf calls for a radical personal and corporate accountability, focused personal development and the development of skills such as system thinking, persuasion, intuition, foresight and listening with presence. In the US, about one third of all Fortune 100 companies this concept.<sup>9</sup>

- ◆ The author and consultant Frederic Laloux writes about a non-hierarchical system where structures and processes for self-management are set up. He describes the leader as someone who supports others in becoming leaders themselves and gaining autonomy. 'Empowerment means that someone at the top must be wise or noble enough to give away some of his power'.<sup>10</sup> Laloux believes that it is possible to create an organisation with no differentiation between those who are powerful and those who are powerless. He also claims that, since the world has become more complex, the 'predict and control system' should be replaced by a 'sense and respond' approach. Successful companies and organisations are those who submit to the evolutionary purpose of humanity by trusting that they themselves are living organisms



7 Edwin P. Hollander (2008) p. 3  
 8 Schnorrenberg (2007)  
 9 Ibid  
 10 Frederic Laloux (2014) p. 62

with a sense of direction and individual genius. To achieve this, Laloux claims that people should no longer wear a professional mask. Instead, they should be encouraged to pursue wholeness and nurture their spiritual and rational aspects. Laloux states that so many organisations today feel lifeless because very little life is injected into them. Soulful practices, he argues, could allow them to lower their masks and uncover their humanity.

- ◆ Otto Scharmer, an author and senior lecturer at MIT, describes leaders as those 'who engage in creating change and shaping their future, regardless of their formal positions.' He identifies a need to move from an ego-system-centric awareness of institutional decision-makers to an eco-system reality. 'Decision-makers across the institutions of a system have to go on a joint journey from seeing only their own viewpoint (ego-awareness) to experiencing the system from the perspective of the other players, particularly those, who are most marginalised. The goal must be to co-sense, co-inspire and co-create an emerging future for their system that values the well-being of all rather than just a few.'<sup>11</sup> With 'Theory U' he introduces a process to support companies and institutions in collaboratively progressing towards future possibilities and thereby bringing new things into the world in light of the future.

All of these theories refer to the concept of 'inclusiveness' in a very broad sense. They fundamentally have 'everybody' in mind, regardless of cultural background, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability, personality type, and ways of working etc. This way of seeing inclusiveness has also found its way into organisations and companies where principles of inclusive leadership have been developed and implemented. One example of this is Deloitte, who describe an inclusive leader as 'a person who actively creates a workplace in which diverse talent is fostered, whatever the packaging, and in which diverse teams operate to their maximum potential, and a person who understands the link between diversity, inclusion and higher business performance. [...] It is about intention, but it is also about understanding what influences inclusion (and exclusion) and how to create new habits of behaviour and work practices.'<sup>12</sup> They see a big shift in no longer leading not from the top but from the centre. For them, diversity means tapping into the wisdom of the crowd so that their leaders do not have to carry the burden alone.

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Catalyst sees inclusion as taking place when a person values both the differences between and the commonalities with others: 'Inclusive leadership positively impacts everyone – no matter whether you are a man or women, old or young, or of a particular race, colour or nationality. Anyone can be an inclusive leader, and everyone benefits from inclusion.'<sup>13</sup>

All of these leadership theories bring in the new dimension of diversity which can introduce innovation and provide answers for the challenges of today. They see that there is a need for leaders to be inclusive in order to strengthen team spirit and empower individuals to co-create.

Inclusive leadership, as outlined in this publication, focuses on the individuals at risk of exclusion by looking at their needs, aspirations and potential and empowering them to fully participate in society.

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11 Scharmer, C.O. (2013) p. 12

12 Deloitte (2012) p. 1

13 Catalyst: Course manual (2017)



# Needs and Barriers with Inclusive Leadership



With this project's target group in mind, the following motivations and requirements can be given for an inclusive leadership approach. First, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>14</sup> states that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights, and that everyone has the right to work and to favourable working conditions. This declaration should shape the fundamental attitudes of an inclusive leader.

Second, the declaration makes clear that 'social exclusion refers to ways in which individuals may become cut off from full involvement in the wider society. [...] It is different from poverty as such. It focuses attention on a broad range of factors that prevent individuals or groups from having opportunities open to the majority of the population.'<sup>15</sup> This can be access to work, housing or other essential goods and services such as transport. 'Social exclusion can take a number of forms, so that it may occur in isolated rural communities cut off from many services and opportunities, or in inner city neighbourhoods marked by high crime rates and substandard housing.'<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, 'belonging to groups is a primary need for each individual. It makes ourselves attached to an entity external to us. It is the consciousness to belong to something that makes us feeling comfortable and

part of the group.'<sup>17</sup> Most people want to become part of some form of community, whether a family, company, organisation or society. There exists a desire for their potential to be acknowledged. These needs became clear in a survey undertaken as part of developing the inclusive leadership approach.<sup>18</sup> One of the primary needs of individuals at risk of exclusion was 'to be accepted as they are' and to be regarded as an equal, able to contribute with all of their abilities.

*„Belonging to groups is a primary need for each individual. It makes ourselves attached to an entity external to us. It is the consciousness to belong to something that makes us feeling comfortable and part of the group“*

Migrants and refugees can face different barriers to social inclusion depending on the country that they come from. Caritas Europe<sup>19</sup> has identified cultural barriers (e.g. language, social life and religion), structural barriers (e.g. lack of legal documents for healthcare, bank accounts) and socio-economic barriers (employment, social participation) that can prevent migrants and refugees from feeling fully integrated. They see the need for an inclusive Europe which builds a trusting

environment and empowers migrants and refugees to participate fully in society. The experience of refugees indicates that 'hostile environments have much to do with the leadership in the country.'<sup>20</sup> Inclusive leadership is not, however, only necessary on a governmental level. It is also required in companies, organisations and in general from all individuals in society.

A video produced by an organisation that works alongside those who have Down Syndrome explains 'We don't have special needs, but just have human needs. [...] What we really need is education, jobs, opportunities, friends and some love. Just like everybody else. Nothing special about.'<sup>21</sup> Inclusive leadership meets these needs. It is an approach that avoids the trap of labelling people on the basis of a single deficit or disability, for example being in a wheelchair. 'We have to shift from seeing the deficit to seeing the resources and qualities individuals have' explained Stephan, a social entrepreneur from Germany who has a visual impairment himself. Autistic people often have exceptional skills in areas such as mathematics or computer science, but they can lack certain social or communicative skills.<sup>22</sup> In such a case, an interviewer may simply focus on behavioural and the social abilities in a job interview, thereby missing out on the most important qualities.

14 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

15 Anthony Giddens (2001) p. 323

16 Ibid

17 Citizenship in Youth Work (2017)

18 Survey: 40 people from Germany, Austria and Poland leading individuals at risk of exclusion answered an online questionnaire about their needs, practices and behaviour in daily life.

19 Caritas Europe (2016)

20 Ibid

21 <https://www.facebook.com/Inclusive-Leadership-1856863731251628/>

22 The UK National Autistic Society



One of the biggest factors in the area of rural exclusion is limited access to transport. 'People who do not have access to their own transport are dependent on public transport and in country areas such services are limited. Some villages might be serviced by bus only a few times a day, with reduced schedules on weekends and holidays, and no services later in the evening.'<sup>23</sup> In a professional context this means that the selection of jobs or further educational courses depends on which transport is available. This also has an impact on the availability of medical services or schools and nurseries for children. Inclusion can be supported in these cases by introducing flexible working hours and creating schedules that fit the needs of all individuals.



### At eye level

'A social worker from a facility for homeless women in Vienna explained what was most important for her when working with these women: 'I view my clients as neighbours. Whenever a new woman moves in, I try to establish first a relationship and build trust. I take the time to sit and have a chat with her. She needs to feel that I am interacting with her as an equal. I offer my help and accept and respect the decisions she makes for her own life. I think authenticity plays an important role in building this trust.'

These women are socially excluded because they have lost their homes, an event which can often result in a vicious circle of losing their jobs and contact with others etc. This social worker is trying to establish a relationship and empower these women so that they can be reintegrated into society.

23 Anthony Giddens (2001) p. 328



# Benefits of Inclusive Leadership





Based on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the needs, aspirations and potential of people at risk of being socially excluded, inclusive leadership seeks to value the intrinsic dignity of every individual by recognising their needs and acting accordingly.

This can positively influence everyone involved in this process. On one hand, the individual who is being lead feels valued as a human being and empowered to attain his or her full potential. On the other hand, leaders who work with motivated individuals can meet daily challenges with the help of the diverse abilities of their followers. Furthermore, inclusive leaders share their responsibility, meaning that they are also released from the burden of liability and obligations they may be carrying.

*„Inclusive leadership can provide answers to global challenges in a time of economic disparity, climate change and the unequal distribution of resources“*

On a broader organisational level, inclusive leaders can be seen as farmers, planting seeds which will grow and lead to more inclusive actions. This can lead to an organisational culture that consistently produces results which benefit all stakeholders by embracing the diversities brought by various individuals.

For a company or organisation, the ability to act as an inclusive leader and allow diversity to flourish can lead

*„They act as role models whom others will follow to create similarly inclusive surroundings.“*

to further innovation. In our globalised world ‘innovation provides the seeds for economic and society growth, and for innovation to happen depends as much on collective difference as on aggregate ability. If people think alike then no matter how smart they are, they most likely will get stuck at the same locally optimal solutions. Finding new and better solutions, innovating, requires thinking differently. That’s why diversity powers innovation.’<sup>24</sup>

Allowing this diversity and innovation to take place can also help to benefit the whole company or organisation, including through improved performance, success, competitiveness, sustainability and resilience.

Last but not least, inclusive leadership can provide answers to global challenges in a time of economic disparity, climate change and the unequal

distribution of resources. In a world where globalisation has increased the interaction between individuals, companies and national governments, inclusive leadership focuses on consciously including and appreciating the contributions of all stakeholders in a community or organisation. The aim of the individual, both on an organisational and global level, is to bring change and innovation whilst balancing everybody’s needs.



24 Page Scott E. (2008)

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# The Foundations of the Inclusive Leadership Approach





Creating change and shaping the future is at the heart of every leadership activity, and inclusive leadership is no exception. It includes constructing a shared vision, valuing the world we live in and building relationships whilst bearing the authentic self in mind. The following definition for inclusive leadership builds on the foundation given so far in this handbook:

*Inclusive leadership means having the courage to take conscious steps to break down barriers for people at risk of being excluded from society.*

*Inclusive leaders embody a leadership approach that appreciates diversity, invites and welcomes everyone's individual contribution, and encourages full engagement with the processes of decision-making and shaping reality.*

*The aim of inclusive leadership is to create, change and innovate whilst balancing everybody's needs.*

In order for this to happen, inclusive leadership calls for certain preconditions to enable openness and inclusion:

1. The acknowledgement and value of everybody's inherent worth
2. An approach based on human rights
3. Awareness of interconnection
4. The role of power in inclusive leadership
5. Courage to share and take over responsibility

### Ad 1) The acknowledgement and value of everybody's inherent worth

The first and most important element is acknowledging and valuing everybody's inherent worth. This means a shift in focus from seeing people's deficits to looking at their resources and qualities. Brené Brown,<sup>25</sup> a researcher on vulnerability and authenticity, explains that feeling a sense of worthiness actually enhances an individual's sense of belonging. On the other hand, the fear of not being good enough keeps people from making connections, thus leaving them divided and excluded. The more people feel like they belong, the more they are willing to contribute. This is the virtuous action spiral, based on the core dynamic of a 'contributing-belonging' cycle.

Inclusive leaders stimulate this sense of belonging. They make people feel valued for their unique identities, perspectives and talents. 'The need for uniqueness goes hand in hand with the need of belonging.'<sup>26</sup>

Inclusive leadership is about fully accepting others as they are and for what they are in their authentic essence by looking at them on an eye-to-eye level. This requires openness and the suspension of judgment. It also necessitates a trust that others are governed by positive intentions. This trust-based relationship is the foundation on which inclusive leaders can create a psychologically safe working environment where everyone can speak freely. The freedom to express oneself authentically leads to a positive state of mind and to empowerment and engagement.

### Ad 2) An approach based on human rights

The main foundation for the way in which inclusive leadership takes into account the inherent worth of all individuals, irrespective of diversity, is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that we are all equally entitled to human rights without discrimination. These rights are universal, interrelated, interdependent and indivisible 'whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law and freedom of expression; economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to work, social security and education, or collective rights, such as the rights to development and self-determination'<sup>27</sup> and they form the basic values underpinning inclusive leadership. In its drive to see each individual as a whole, inclusive leadership strives towards the common good of humankind, and it thus naturally follows that there is a consideration of everyone's dignity and worth.

<sup>25</sup> Brown (2010)

<sup>26</sup> Brewer (1991): People have two opposing needs in group settings: the need to belong and the need to be unique. When people feel too similar to the other members of a group, they try to set themselves apart in order to feel unique. When people feel too different from the other members of a group, they feel as if they don't belong and may try to assimilate by becoming more similar.

<sup>27</sup> Office of the High Commissioner

The human rights based approach of inclusive leadership fosters attitudes and actions which ensure that the human rights criteria (availability, accessibility, quality, affordability, acceptability) and principles (non-discrimination, participation, access to information, accountability and sustainability) are taken into account throughout the process.

Two additional sources which foster human rights specifically for the target group of this project are the ‚Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities‘ and the ‚International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families‘. The essence of these two conventions is to view these individuals not as objects of a charity or work-force but as full and equal members of society with human rights that need to be respected.

### Ad 3) Awareness of interconnection

One of the main leadership challenges in today’s environment is about being able to see the full picture or to consider the effects produced by a leader’s actions, whether on others or in a wider context, including on distant communities and on our planet with all its resources. An awareness of the interconnectedness is what supports an inclusive leadership practice. This awareness of interdependency is the path to a systemic and holistic view. Peter Wuffli argues that leaders are called to address challenges that are increasingly interdependent. For this reason inclusiveness is essential for bringing together the experience and understanding of all sectors (business, government, civic).<sup>28</sup>

As our work and lives become more interconnected and the outcomes of individual actions are increasingly unpredictable, simply thinking and acting upon what we already know is no longer sufficient. In order to meet the challenges of this century and build a world that is more resilient, intentional, inclusive and aware, inclusive leaders need to shift from an ‘ego-systemic’ view that focuses entirely on the well-being of themselves and those around them to an eco-systemic awareness that emphasises the well-being of everyone, including themselves. ‚Today’s economic reality is embedded in a global eco-system of environmental, social, political, and cultural contexts that are highly intertwined and that evolve in uncertain, complex, and volatile ways. These conditions require a mind-set of decision-makers that is more open, attentive, adaptive, and tuned in to emerging changes. Instead, what we often observe in current reality is a disconnect between reality and awareness.’<sup>29</sup> The result is a continuous internal conflict which leads to rivalry, marginalisation, exclusion, disconnection, isolation and an overuse of scarce resources.

Inclusive leadership shifts from seeing only one individual’s viewpoint ‘to experiencing the system from the perspective of others, particularly those who are most marginalised. The goal must be to co-sense, co-inspire, and co-create an emerging future for their system that values the well-being of all rather than just a few. This is not just an ethical but an economic imperative’<sup>30</sup>

### Ad 4) The role of power in inclusive leadership

The author Lisa Vene Klasen makes a clear distinction between ‚power within‘, ‚power-over‘ and ‚power-with‘ in her writings. In the first case, action proceeds from the ‚**power within**‘, the energy, strength and conviction that move individuals and groups from the inside. ‚This kind of power has to do with a person’s sense of self-worth and self-knowledge; it includes an ability to recognise individual differences while respecting others. ‚Power within‘ is the capacity to imagine and have hope; it affirms the common human search for dignity and fulfilment.’<sup>31</sup>

In the second case, action proceeds from the ‚**power-over**‘, meaning that one person or party exercises control over another person through the use of formal authority, position and the allocation of rewards and punishments. Here, power is seen as a win-lose kind of relationship. Having power involves taking it from someone else and then using it to dominate and prevent others from gaining power themselves. This raises the question whether there is a place for inclusive leadership in hierarchical contexts. Although this kind of structure makes it more challenging to practice an inclusive leadership approach, in such a case power could be used to support individual dignity by empowering others rather than making them powerless. ‚Power is an individual, collective and political force that can either undermine or empower citizens and their organisations. It is a force that alternatively can facilitate, hasten or halt the process of change”.

28 Peter A. Wuffli Inclusive Leadership: A Framework for the Global Era – Springer (2015)

29 Scharmer, C. Otto, Kaufer K. (2013)

30 Ibid

31 Vene Klasen Lisa; Miller Valeries (2007)



When exercising inclusive leadership, power should be considered as the vital energy that drives each person to act and enact a change in their direct environment. This affects the leader as well as the follower. Power refers to the unique potential of individuals to shape their life and world. When based on mutual support, this opens up the possibility of joint action or **'power with'**<sup>32</sup>. Power with has to do with finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength. Based on mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, power will multiply individual talents and knowledge. „Power with” can help build bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations.<sup>33</sup>

Inclusive leadership is based on the assumption that each individual has the power to make a difference and that, powerlessness is the most dangerous state that we can ever experience. It leads to violence, isolation, shame,

self-harm<sup>34</sup>. Disempowering people who have great ideas, experiences and energy to contribute might lead to missed opportunities that could have a significant impact on the positive and long-term results of any changes.

Power can be considered as the engine of leadership: it can potentially be present in everyone involved, whether leader or follower. From this perspective, inclusive leadership ignites a circular function of co-leading, where individuals are able to simultaneously lead each other through very small actions. Inclusive leadership enables everybody to tap into the wealth of their resources, creativity, ideas and motivation to move forward, thus fully enabling both individual and group potential to flourish and to be expressed.



## Being an inclusive leader means challenging and empowering

In a company there was a staff member with psychosis. Her manager learned that he needed to treat her in a strict way when she was experiencing a negative mood, or else she would simply build up negative emotions. One day the weather was not very nice and the staff member was already nervous about leaving the office to go to the post-office. Although he was aware of this, the manager told her strictly that it was her responsibility to go. Five minutes after she had gone, a heavy thunderstorm started and the manager began to feel very guilty for sending her out. 10 minutes later she came back, totally wet but laughing loudly. She said “I'd made of tougher stuff!”

In this example the manager applied an inclusive leadership approach. He took into account his knowledge of her psychosis and that he had to be strict due to her personality. Inclusive leadership does not mean pampering others, rather it involves challenging and empowering within their possibilities. The manager used his 'power with' to support her in keeping her responsibilities and going a step beyond. He cared for her by catching up with her when she returned. In the end, the experience was beneficial for her because the manager had made her go beyond her comfort zone and thereby develop a new capacity.

32 Ibid

33 Ibid

34 Brené Brown (2013)

## Ad 5) Courage to share and take over responsibility

Despite the formal responsibility that the different roles require in an organisation or society, the goal for both leaders and followers is to be fully engaged, accountable and responsible for the actions that they organise and carry out. In this regard, leaders and followers are at the same level because they are both responsible for constructing a unified purpose that prompts unified actions.

Inclusive leadership means that everyone takes responsibility for the inclusion, culture and success of their organisation or society as a whole, not just for their own role or area of work. Leadership works best when it is provided by teams of gifted leaders serving together in pursuit of a clear and compelling vision<sup>35</sup> Inclusive leaders should invite team members to take up responsibility so that everybody can feel part of the entire process. They should empower team members by valuing their potential and motivate them to go out of their comfort zones. This kind of responsibility promotes everybody's leadership potential.

This sharing of responsibility takes courage from both sides. Leaders need to be courageous in letting go of their authority and their power in that they welcome others into the virtuous cycle of shared leadership. Followers show courage by letting go of their fears of being vulnerable and by stepping out into the unknown. This does not mean they are taking up a leadership role, rather they are critically choosing what actions to be involved in. Courage then becomes the great balancer of power in relationships. An individual who is not afraid

to speak and act on the truth as she perceives it, despite external inequities in a relationship, is a force to be reckoned with.<sup>36</sup>

It might be argued that there are people who feel perfectly satisfied and comfortable in following rather than making decisions themselves. In this case, practicing inclusive leadership means exploring the reason why people are unwilling to express themselves and challenging them to go beyond of their comfort zones. Inclusive leaders support individuals by acknowledging and valuing their personal resources. Through reflection,

they can empower and facilitate the self awareness of all those who are involved. Dynamic followers recognise their own aspirations in the leader's vision. They follow their own light, which the leader intensifies. They give 110%, not because the leader "motivates them" but because they are inspired - the spirit of the activity is within them. They are interdependent with, not dependent on, the leader. They add value to both themselves and the leader through this relationship.<sup>37</sup>



35 Barna George (2001)

36 Ira Chaleff (2009)

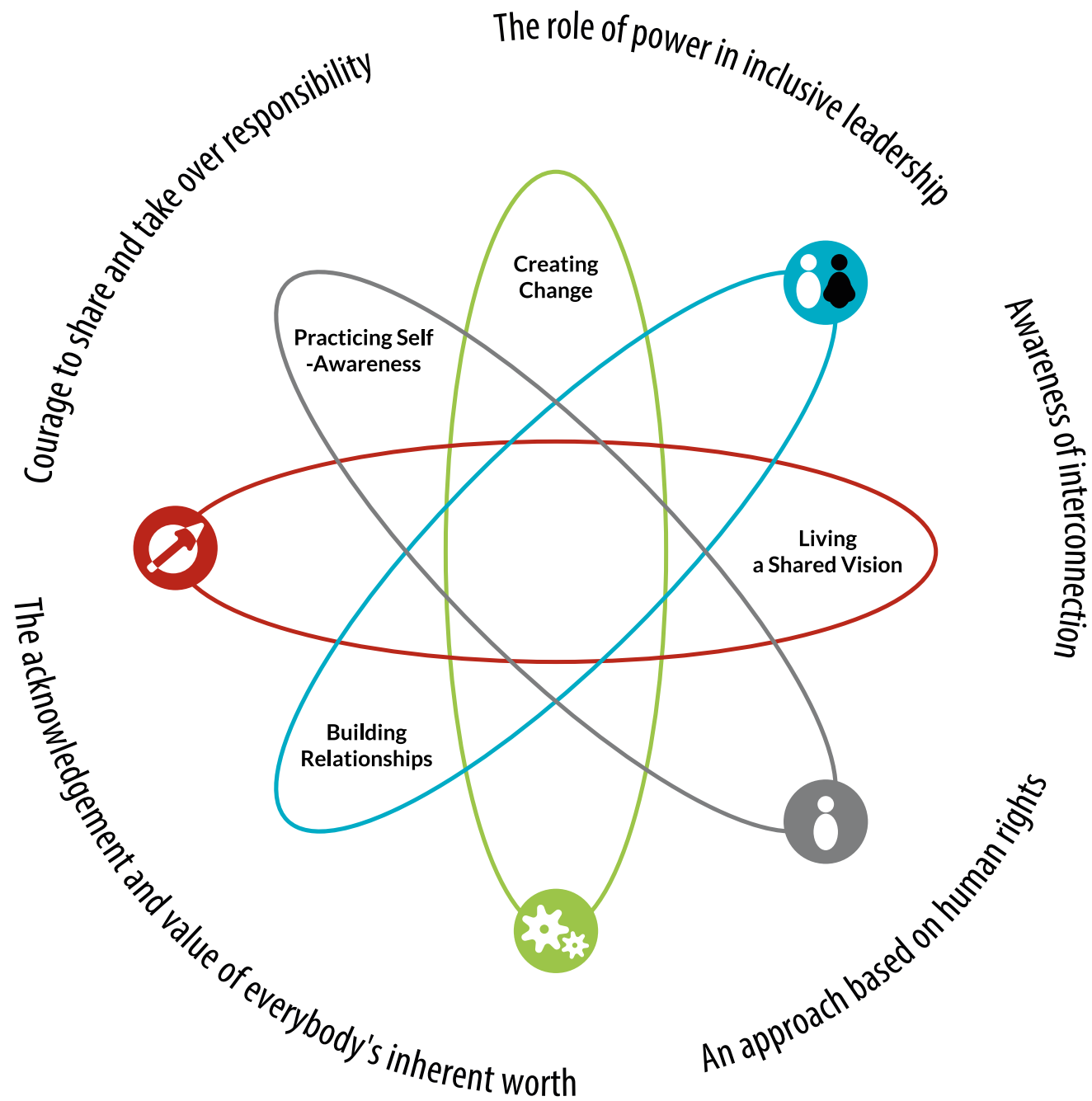
37 Ibid



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# The Inclusive Leadership Approach







Building on the foundation outlined in the previous chapter, including:

- ◆ Acknowledging everybody's inherent worth
- ◆ A human rights based approach
- ◆ An awareness of interconnection

And understanding the relationship between:

- ◆ The role of power and
- ◆ Responsibility

In connection with inclusive leadership there are four development areas for learning or improving inclusive leadership.

In their daily routine, inclusive leaders should:

- ◆ Practice self-awareness
- ◆ Live a shared vision
- ◆ Build relationships and
- ◆ Create change

Each development area was chosen with the aim of having an ongoing process, where inclusive leaders can develop gradually.

All four areas are interconnected and exert an influence on each other.

Communication is the overarching topic which plays an important role in each of the four areas, and also connects them to each other. This includes being able to listen to others within the organisation and to all affected stakeholders, as well as being able to listen to one's own senses at a given moment. This also includes the skill of being able to communicate a vision and other ideas to all

individuals involved in a project or process.

Each area includes a list of qualities that characterise a leader. These are easily identifiable behaviours, abilities and skills for individuals adopting an inclusive leadership approach.

These qualities support individuals in becoming inclusive leaders in each specific area. The list is non-exhaustive and is meant to indicate a general direction.

Many of the qualities are behaviours or skills that can be found across different leadership concepts. The combination of all these qualities is pivotal for an inclusive leadership approach. As a starting point it can be helpful for leaders to practice the qualities that come more naturally to them and those that are intimately connected with their personal vision.





# The Development Areas for Inclusive Leadership







## Development Area 1: Practising Self-Awareness

In this area, the inclusive leaders themselves are in the spotlight. Practising self-awareness is a process of personal development that aims towards becoming or improving as an inclusive leader. It is about having an open mind and learning or unlearning in order to act in an authentic way. This includes knowing individual strengths, values and convictions, as well as limitations, fears, stereotypes and prejudices. It also means being aware that these are not static and are constantly developing and changing due to internal and external changes.

Practicing self-awareness includes an acceptance of one's true self and corresponding action. Brené Brown describes authenticity as 'the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are. [...] I'm referring to that gentle wonderful way of showing up in the world exactly the way you are without trying to hinder other people, but at the same time without changing, who you are to fit into some pattern set for you.'<sup>38</sup> It is about respecting your own real nature, since this is a step towards accepting others for who they truly are. It is because of this that self-acceptance is a key quality in allowing inclusion to take place, since it also allows others truly to be themselves.

Inclusive leaders are clear and transparent about their own convictions and motivations, and they act

consistently with these communicated views. They recognise that they are role models and consciously undertake this duty. They understand that mechanisms of power, are part of reality and know how to use them responsibly. They are willing to balance power inequality through empowerment.

*„Being aware of oneself is the basis for future actions. Leaders who know their personal patterns of behaviour can more easily adapt to new challenges.“*

Showing your own authentic self to others, including your emotions, can make leaders feel insecure. Vulnerability means admitting personal mistakes when you are heading in the wrong direction or failing. Catalyst<sup>39</sup> describes this as one of the successful patterns of behaviour for inclusive leaders: 'You admit mistakes; you accept and learn from criticism and different points of view; you seek contributions of others to overcome limitations.'<sup>40</sup> This ability to be open, e.g. apologising when you made a mistake, requires the courage to overcome personal stereotypes, prejudice, judgements and fears.

## Why is it relevant for inclusive leaders to practice self-awareness?

Being aware of oneself is the basis for future actions. Leaders who know their personal patterns of behaviour can more easily adapt to new challenges. Self-awareness empowers individuals to be ready internally<sup>41</sup> to live up to their potential in a specific time and place. Being able to consciously live in the here-and-now means learning how to connect the present context to their previous habits and abilities. This, in turn, means being more inclined to adapt to a changing world.

Feeling secure<sup>42</sup> plays an important role in any working environment. For the target group of disadvantaged individuals this becomes even more important. Being authentic in a leadership role means being open and transparent when acting according to the communicated views, e.g. stating the same opinion to different stakeholders. Showing integrity will build up trust with other individuals and groups and will create a safe working environment. It will also contribute to individual well-being.

For leaders, to be authentic and to allow themselves to display weakness takes pressure off them and everybody else. This allows them to be truly themselves, to make mistakes and to be imperfect (just like everybody else). Additionally, not having to fill a certain perhaps unnatural role can help to reduce the stress level.

<sup>38</sup> Brown Brené (2014)

<sup>39</sup> Catalyst is a non-profit organisation that conducts research on the topic of the inclusion of women

<sup>40</sup> Catalyst (2017)

<sup>41</sup> Reflect (2016)

<sup>42</sup> SHRM-study (2016)

## Being an anchor in their new world

Maria works with two young migrants from Afghanistan as a volunteer. She understands her role as being available for these young people and leading them when necessary. This is not without friction or misunderstanding. It was important for Maria to reflect on the conversations or 'non-conversations' and not to take them personally. She regularly let the young people know that they were welcome to come and see her and her door was open so that they could approach her with any topic. One day, after several months of non-openness, one of the young migrants came to talk about his challenges with the residence permit. It was important that Maria was reachable for him like an anchor. He himself took an active part in finding a solution for this threatening situation, but she was approachable and always by his side like a sparring partner.





## Qualities that help individuals to be inclusive leaders

The following qualities describe what it means for you to become an inclusive leader in this specific area. These qualities can be knowledge, skills, attitudes, practices,

behaviours etc. The list is non-exhaustive and is meant to indicate a general trajectory. Some of these qualities may appeal to you more than others.

**Example:** Constantly challenging your personal stereotypes and prejudices about inclusion is not only a decision you take. It is a process that requires

knowledge, skills and practice, all of which can be acquired through many different techniques and methods. Ongoing reflection is also essential in order to continuously improve and develop any of the qualities below.

## YOU practise inclusive leadership when YOU:

1. Accept that imperfection is a part of reality
2. Are aware of the processes behind stereotypes
3. Constantly challenge your personal stereotypes and prejudices about inclusion
4. Admit personal mistakes and show vulnerability
5. Ask for and listen to feedback
6. Practice self-reflection
7. Practice mindfulness<sup>43</sup>
8. Have empathy with yourself
9. Are approachable
10. Know and act to your personal strengths
11. Are able to interact with your limitations
12. Know and act according to your personal values
13. Know how to use your power with responsibility
14. Understand the interdependence between people and circumstances
15. Have a desire to learn and unlearn

## Questions for personal reflection

- ◆ How would you describe yourself as a leader? What is your personal headline?
- ◆ Where do you see your personal strengths and limitations?
- ◆ What core values and convictions do you build your leadership role on? How do they affect your daily actions?

My notes:

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<sup>43</sup> Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. Mindfulness is a very simple form of meditation practice that starts by focusing one's full attention on the breath as it flows in and out of the body. It allows one to observe thoughts as they arise in one's mind and, little by little, to stop struggling with them.



## Development Area 2: Living a Shared Vision

This area is about creating and living a common vision. Inclusive leaders question the current reality and thereby enable a vision to emerge. Ideally, this is done through a process of co-creation where everybody can contribute their own knowledge and experiences. In order to develop a vision to be shared with and taken up by all stakeholders, as many and as diverse people and interest groups as possible must be involved in the development and subsequent advancement of this vision. This applies both to groups with a high level of attention and a strong voice in any given context, as well as to other groups which receive little to no attention.<sup>44</sup> This contributes a broader picture of the reality individuals experience and live in to the developing process. In order to allow individuals to contribute and to bring in their ideas, Otto Scharmer suggests loosening your own idea without necessarily giving it up: 'You lead by painting a picture that is intentionally incomplete; you make a few strokes; and you leave lots of blank space that others can add to and participate in. By operating this way, you shift the power dynamics from ownership to belonging.'<sup>45</sup>

Inclusive leaders are ready to take risks and have the courage to think big in order to create a vision that can benefit all connected individuals, groups and the system as a whole. This also means that leaders should have

the ability to look beyond daily business operations and communicate the bigger picture.

This also requires courage to follow a vision and to take up the responsibility for implementing this vision for change. To this end, inclusive leaders need to understand the systems in, for and with which they are working and should be aware of the specifics, potentials, problems and needs of these systems. They must have the ability to communicate: 'Innovation in complex systems requires us to be multilingual, to connect to the various stakeholders about the issues that matter to them. Complex problems require complex solutions. That means that single-focus approaches are almost certain to fail. Instead, we need to master the art of broadening and deepening the definition of the problem to get all of the relevant parties [...] committed to participate.'<sup>46</sup> In communicating, they keep an open mind in order to adopt or change the vision if this is necessary in light of emerging realities. Thus inclusive leaders also need the courage to let go of the past in order to create space for the future to develop. Inclusive leadership 'responds to the current waves of disruptive change from a deep place that connects us to the emerging future rather than by reacting against the patterns of the past, which usually means perpetuating them.'<sup>47</sup>

## Why is it relevant for inclusive leaders to live a shared vision?

Inclusive leaders create or co-create a common vision by allowing a set of practices that enable this kind of deep seeing, 'sensing', to happen collectively and across boundaries. When sensing takes place, the group as a whole can see the emerging opportunities and the key systemic forces at stake.<sup>48</sup> They create the space to imagine a better reality and allow others to paint a picture of the expected and desired future for everybody, something which benefits everyone. This vision leads the way and allows everybody to play a part and contribute in accordance with individual abilities and strengths. Having a clear understanding of the vision and mission of an organisation where people are working is, according to a study conducted by SHRM,<sup>49</sup> one of the drivers for higher job satisfaction and increased engagement. It gives individuals a sense of purpose and promotes their wellbeing.

For any company or organisation it is their vision that leads the way. This will support the right people working there and detect the right stakeholders to support the vision. Furthermore, it will keep the company or organisation on track to reach their vision.

<sup>44</sup> In a project management context this is referred to as 'user representation'. See AXELOS (2009) p. 65 and European Commission (2016) p. 136.

<sup>45</sup> Otto Scharmer (2009) p. 384

<sup>46</sup> Scharmer (2013) p. 171

<sup>47</sup> Scharmer, C.O., Kaufer K. (2013)

<sup>48</sup> Scharmer, C.O. (2016)

<sup>49</sup> SHRM-study (2016)



### Creating a shared vision:

One volunteer working with migrants in an asylum centre explained: 'We were sitting in a circle, all of us who spend time here in the asylum centre. We came together to create a common vision about how we could be a positive influence here. Through talking about and listening to each other's dreams, somehow a community feeling began to grow between us. We got to know each other in a different way and heard each other's needs and hopes. It was beautiful and at the end it was easy for each of us to commit to our dream asylum centre and to make it come true together.'

This method of sharing their dreams helped a diverse group of people to understand the needs of the other individuals and to get to know the others. Step by step their vision became clearer. Through this process, everybody was committed to this vision and to making a change.



## Qualities that help individuals to be inclusive leaders

The following qualities describe what it means for you to become an inclusive leader in this specific area. These

qualities can be knowledge, skills, attitudes, practices, behaviours etc. The list is non-exhaustive and is meant to indicate a general trajectory. Some of these qualities may appeal to you more than others.

**Example:** 'Courageously going in new directions' is not only a decision you take. It is a process that requires knowledge, skills and practice, all of which can be acquired through many different techniques and methods.

## YOU practise inclusive leadership when YOU:

1. Have both a 'functional' goal and a 'social' goal
2. Check if the vision is benefitting the whole system
3. Continuously build up knowledge about the different areas where you work
4. Courageously pursue new and unexplored paths or solutions
5. Are able to identify resistance
6. Are prepared to handle resistance
7. Are prepared to take responsibility for creating change
8. Invite others to dream with you and to start moving in a common direction
9. Are able to question the current situation
10. Are able to facilitate the development of a vision
11. Are able to communicate a vision to different stakeholders
12. Are able to develop a clear picture of the change that needs to occur
13. Strive to see the whole picture both inside and outside of the organisation
14. Understand that you will never be able to see the whole picture by yourself
15. Keep an open mind to allow the vision to be adapted or changed

## Questions for personal reflection

- ◆ What makes you feel a part of your company or organisation?
- ◆ How are you developing your vision in the team? Who is involved in the process? Who could still be included?
- ◆ Where can you take a step forward in 'courageously going in new directions'?

My notes:

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## Development area 3: Building Relationships

One of the skills that every leader needs is to be able to build bridges within and between different teams and groups. They should be able to invite and unite through dialogue and generative relations people from all different stakeholder groups in order to bring a vision to life. Building relationships is particularly relevant within two main groups: the people you closely work with and the wider internal and external network of people who are also linked to your success.

*„Inclusive leaders create a safe working environment. They build an atmosphere of trust and acceptance where people are not labelled.“*

Inclusive leaders focus on creating and promoting authentic relations among their team members whilst being aware of potential barriers for people who are at risk of being excluded. They strive to empower each individual and support self-reliance by sharing responsibilities and developing the competences of each individual. This can be done through the means of small drivers: ‘Leadership requires simple action that anyone can do – e.g. be willing to stand out from the crowd, or support a new idea, or ask a difficult question when no one else is asking.’<sup>50</sup>

Empowerment also includes valuing everybody’s worth. This means looking at the qualities each individual has

rather than focusing on their deficits, e.g. a person who has a visual impairment or a migrant who is not yet able to speak the language well. Inclusive leaders will strive to be aware of any barriers that could prevent others from active participation, e.g. in the case of a migrant they could ask everybody to speak slower, or for a persons with visual impairment they could use facilitation methods that are not paper based, or for someone from a rural area they could organise the meeting for a time when they are available. Inclusive leaders will value the contribution of all individuals involved and accept their different ways and different timings for accomplishing tasks.

Inclusive leaders have the ability to create a sense of belonging for the individuals involved, especially for those who are at risk of exclusion. ‘It requires an explicit openness to diversity regardless of cultural, geographical or law established borders.

It also requires the capacity to deal with emotions by taking them into account and to provide spaces for emotions to be peacefully expressed and shared.’<sup>51</sup> Individual and group reflection are important elements throughout this process for staying in touch with reality.

Inclusive leaders create a safe working environment. They build an atmosphere of trust and acceptance where people are not labelled. They allow others to bring their energy, passion and creativity into their work. Laloux suggests starting by raising awareness about the words and actions that can create or undermine a safe working environment. Ground rules can include unacceptable patterns of behaviour or expressions: ‘Behaviours

## Shift the focus from seeing deficits to seeing the strengths in others

Stephan is visually impaired himself and has had various experiences throughout his career that were the complete opposite of inclusive leadership. He explains: “As a manager with a handicap, I know both my strengths and my weaknesses very well, making me particularly sensitive to the needs of my colleagues.

This allows me to start with people where they are and to shape professional procedures in such a way that everyone can work well - obviously whilst maintaining a clear sense of the optimal procedures from an economic perspective. The real skill is to be able to keep an eye on both the employees with their individual strengths and the company’s profitability. To be very practical: sending a colleague like myself with impaired vision to make photocopies or asking them to create a presentation would be a waste of time. But making use of me as a creative and commercially-minded individual by involving me in the development of a new product makes a lot of sense. For us, inclusive leadership means being open to supporting the talents of our employees. Within the realm of their responsibility, they are expected to do what they’re good at. Both the employees and the company profit from this.”

50 Catalyst: Training manual (2017)

51 Council of Europe (2017)

include, but are not limited to, name-calling, ridicule, sarcasm, or other actions which “put down” people.<sup>52</sup> Laloux is not suggesting that conflict is inevitable, but he recognises that hostile behaviour is always a possibility.

Further Inclusive leaders will build trust and cooperation within the organisation and with all relevant external stakeholders. Inclusive leaders practice listening at an empathic and generative level, especially in contexts where people are challenged more because of their specific diversities. This can lead to teams coming up with a wide range of solutions to meet their challenges. Listening with genuine interest and maintaining a truly open mind can also help when connecting with others: ‘If you want to change others (other stakeholders), you need to be open to changing yourself first. If you need to change the system, but you cannot use hierarchy to do it, then the main leverage you have is the quality of your relationships with the other stakeholders. That’s what you must build and strengthen. And that means to be open to change yourself first.’<sup>53</sup>

## Why is it relevant for inclusive leaders to build relationships?

All types of communication that involve actively listening with your full body and making a real effort to understand the other’s world will help you connect with individuals and are a good starting point for equality. They will open the door for ‘favourable working

conditions’<sup>54</sup> and are an important element for being inclusive.

Studies have further demonstrated that ‘followers’ needs are satisfied not only by tangible ways, but also through such intangible rewards as support, fairness and being heard.<sup>55</sup> Building authentic and open relationships supports a safe environment where everybody can participate freely and where these intangible needs can be met.

Additionally, building relationships creates and strengthens team-spirit. Studies show that a positive

team spirit increases performance. Catalyst found out that in six countries, the more included employees felt, the more prepared they were to engage in team dynamic behaviours - going above and beyond the ‘call of duty’ to help other team members and meet group working objectives. Furthermore, ‘in all six countries, the more included employees felt, the more innovative they reported being in their jobs.’<sup>56</sup>

For the inclusive leader, building relations can release pressure as they work alongside other motivated individuals who are willing to accept their responsibilities and to contribute with all of their strength and energy.



52 Frederic Laloux (2014) p. 153

53 Scharmer (2013) p. 171

54 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

55 Hollander Edwin (2008)

56 Prime Janine, Salib Elisabeth R. (2014)



## Qualities that help individuals to be inclusive leaders

The following qualities describe what it means for you to become an inclusive leader in this specific area.

These qualities can be knowledge, skills, attitudes,

practices, behaviours etc. The list is non-exhaustive and is meant to indicate a general trajectory. Some of these qualities may appeal to you more than others.

**Example:** 'Seeing the resources and qualities in others' is not only a decision you take. It is a process that requires knowledge, skills and practice, all of which

can be acquired through many different techniques and methods. Ongoing reflection is also essential in order to continuously improve and develop any of the qualities below.

## YOU practise inclusive leadership when YOU:

1. Shift the focus from seeing deficits to seeing resources and qualities in others
2. Value everybody's inherent worth
3. Establish a two-way communication across boundaries
4. Are willing to trust others and share responsibility
5. Value the contribution of others
6. Accept different ways of acting
7. Are able to see and reduce barriers
8. Aim for others to become self-reliant and self-confident
9. Create an safe environment that allows everybody present to participate freely
10. Recognise the needs of individuals and of the team
11. Recognise that there is diversity within each diversity<sup>57</sup>
12. Support others in growing, improving and attaining their goals
13. Intentionally connect (with) people and groups
14. Listen with genuine interest
15. Are aware that you are a role-model and act as a role-model

## Questions for personal reflection

- ◆ How do you empower your team members?
- ◆ In what way can you create a safe environment for your team so that everybody can contribute?
- ◆ Who are your most important stakeholder groups? How do you keep in contact with them?

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<sup>57</sup> Example: Every migrant is unique. They come from different countries and have different languages, levels of education, knowledge and experiences.



## Development Area 4: Creating Change

This area is about making change happen and managing projects in order to achieve your vision. Inclusive leaders will create the conditions for change by co-building a strategy for implementation (e.g. setting goals, planning steps) and by finding the necessary resources. Knowledge and skills regarding project management tools are helpful at this stage, but this knowledge can also come from team members. The inclusive leader will focus equally on people, products and procedures whilst remaining flexible. 'Inclusive leadership looks at what is needed in the context to help in such way as improving problem solving and attaining mutual goals.'<sup>58</sup>

Inclusive leadership 'involves much more than direction of activity, but requires informing and supporting followers and their necessary activities, as well as representing and standing up fairly for their interest.'<sup>59</sup> Inclusive leaders will set goals together with their team members, just like other leaders. They will, however, take particular care to foster the talents of each person in their team. They carry forward the decisions taken by their team into any internal or external structures.

Inclusive leaders are aware of their global context. They know about the different situations in the world and are able to deal

with insecurity. 'Leading change requires courage most of all: the courage to go to the edge and leap into the unknown.'<sup>60</sup> This means that they allow for moments of uncertainty and that they are prepared to be surprised and to change their strategy in accordance with their current situation.

Inclusive leaders are willing to share responsibility and make every effort to value the strengths and contributions of every individual. Within the complexity of the 21st century Fredmund Malik, a researcher and author in the area of management, sees the need for new ways of thinking and working. For him the basic principle of good management is being able to organise a complex system that can widely regulate itself and which can continuously renew and evolve itself.<sup>61</sup> For inclusive leadership that means that 'the heart of the matter is that workers and employers are seen as reasonable people that can be trusted to do the right thing. With that premise, very few rules and control mechanisms are needed.'<sup>62</sup>

*„Inclusive leaders allow for moments of uncertainty and that they are prepared to be surprised and to change their strategy in accordance with their current situation.“*

## Why is it relevant for inclusive leaders to create change?

Creating change is the essence of leadership and it is therefore also the essence of inclusive leadership. Scharmer describes leaders as 'all people, who engage in creating change or shaping their future, regardless of their formal positions.'<sup>63</sup> They are willing to look at the bigger picture in the world and want to become active in driving change for a better future. Fredmund Malik<sup>64</sup> highlights the fact that leadership is not only about characteristics and personality traits. More importantly, it is about taking actions, implementing goals and generally managing in order to reach results. In this sense inclusive leaders are taking actions or creating change with their teams in order to fulfil their collective vision, whilst ensuring that people at risk of exclusion are taken into consideration.

58 Hollander (2008) p. 7

59 Hollander (2008) p. 8

60 Scharmer (2013). p. 172

61 Malik (2014)

62 Laloux (2014) p.80

63 Scharmer (2009) p. 5

64 Malik (2014) p. 33



## Creating change

A student named Ania worked in two organisations in Poland: the students' union and the disabled students' association. She realised that these organisations did not know each other although they had similar goals in terms of working for students and for their rights. Ania's vision was to connect these groups better. She invited two students with hearing difficulties to run a sign language course for students and academic teachers over the course of several weeks. The course became very popular in the academic environment and it was finally even included in the regular pedagogic programme. This course raised awareness for the needs of people with disabilities and it led to the students' union appointing a new student representative for other students with disabilities.

Ania saw the challenges of not communicating between the 2 organisations. She became active and created this learning opportunity for students (making a change). For the students it was a safe environment to learn the new language which led to more contacts between students with and without hearing difficulties, even outside of the course.



## Qualities that help individuals to be inclusive leaders

The following qualities describe what it means for you to become an inclusive leader in this specific area. These qualities can be knowledge, skills, attitudes, practices,

behaviours etc. The list is non-exhaustive and is meant to indicate a general trajectory. Some of these qualities may appeal to you more than others.

**Example:** 'Setting goals together and making arrangements based on what people are able to do' is not only a decision you take. It is a process that

requires knowledge, skills and practice, all of which can be acquired through many different techniques and methods. Ongoing reflection is also essential in order to continuously improve and develop any of the qualities below.

## YOU practise inclusive leadership when YOU:

1. Trust that everybody is acting with good intentions
2. Create a safe working environment that allows space for everyone to display innovation and creativity
3. Find the right place for each person based on their talents in order to achieve specific results
4. Courageously stand up for the others
5. Create a sense of belonging for others
6. Accept imperfect results
7. Stay in touch with reality ('real-life check')
8. Set goals together and making arrangements based on what people are able to do
9. Carry forward decisions made by the team
10. Are able to predict risks and explain these to the team
11. Allow for reflection during each step of the process
12. Allow for flexibility when designing the process
13. Focus on taking care of the big goals and on the overall quality
14. Encourage creativity and responsibility
15. Are prepared to be surprised

## Questions for personal reflection

- ◆ Does your everyday work include carrying forward decisions made by the team?
- ◆ How would you define a safe environment that promotes innovation and creativity?
- ◆ What is the first action you could make to be more inclusive when creating change?

My notes:

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# Impact of Inclusive Leadership



Inclusive leadership is an inspirational approach for practitioners who are working with or leading others who are at risk of being excluded from society. The theoretical difference between leadership and inclusive leadership may appear to be small, however a change or variation in your attitude, behaviour and knowledge can make a significant and visible difference. This might mean, for example, listening to others with genuine interest, having the courage to speak up on behalf of someone else, or breaking down invisible barriers for a particular individual. The impact of this can be seen on different levels:

### Personal level:

Inclusive leaders benefit from being self-aware and knowing and understanding their own strengths and weaknesses. This can contribute towards:

- ◆ bringing who you are to how you lead;
- ◆ acting consciously rather than reacting passively, being driven by habits or patterns of behaviour that are neither useful nor effective;
- ◆ being in good psychological health since you can sincerely accept who you are, thereby aligning your mind, heart and body;
- ◆ having a positive outlook on life, as imperfections and failures are seen as the inevitable imperfections in life that become essential elements from which you can learn how to do things differently in the future;
- ◆ being more compassionate to yourself and to others.

Moreover, in many situations implementing inclusive leadership can allow the leader to no longer be alone

when facing challenges, since groups, individuals and teams share in the leader's power and responsibility for realising their vision and creating change.

### Relational and organisational level:

Inclusive leadership is based on the assumption that all individuals have equal worth and that they can express themselves freely, thereby enjoying authentic relationships. In teams, companies and organisations, this open and trustful environment can contribute towards:

- ◆ higher levels of commitment and satisfaction;
- ◆ improved ethics, a sense of collective wellbeing and psychological safety;
- ◆ being better able to resolve interpersonal conflicts and being more satisfied as a result of having effectively worked through conflicts;
- ◆ having a lower turnover since people no longer suffer from emotional exhaustion, e.g. because they can be themselves and openly express different opinions.
- ◆ improved professional and team engagement and performance;
- ◆ greater creativity and innovation, which naturally lead to better results
- ◆ increased competitiveness and resilience within systems and organisations.

### Societal and environmental level:

The influence of inclusive leadership even goes beyond the personal, relational and organisational

dimension. Ideally, inclusive leaders shift the attention from themselves (ego), as an individual focused on their own benefits or in the best case on the benefit of the organisation in which they operate, onto the eco system. This means that inclusive leaders have a wider perspective which takes into account the effects produced by their actions on a larger scale. This leadership focuses equally on the micro and the macro levels and makes every effort to create sustainable changes that 'meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'





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# Conclusion



This handbook is intended to be an inspirational source for individuals who want to make the move towards inclusive leadership. It is also for practitioners who are already working with or leading people at risk of being excluded from society and who would like to challenge themselves in their personal role as a leader.

Becoming an inclusive leader is not about completing a to-do-list. It is an invitation to develop an attitude that fully accepts others with all their strengths and weaknesses, thereby empowering them to take a step forward. Inclusive leaders make their journey one step at a time by taking actions, observing and sensing the context around them and reflecting on the different decisions that have been made. They are willing to learn and challenge themselves to go the extra mile to become inclusive. This is an ongoing journey that requires small steps and time to be achieved.

The learning journey to inclusive leadership is supported by two additional tools. In the manual 'Inclusive Leadership - Manual for Trainers', leaders can find activities to support others in nurturing and developing the qualities that listed in the 4 areas above: practicing self-awareness, living a shared vision, building relationships and creating change. In the online tool QuickCheck on Inclusive Leadership ([www.inclusiveleadership.eu](http://www.inclusiveleadership.eu)), leaders can complete a self-assessment and discover where they stand in terms of inclusive leadership.

The impact of making the journey towards inclusive leadership can be minor or major, depending on where you currently stand in your leadership role and what approach you take. On the personal level this can lead to the empowerment of individuals by challenging them to go beyond their comfort zone. On an organisational level this can help you create an open atmosphere that allows

your company or organisation to grow by taking the strengths of all individuals into account.

Last but not least, inclusive leaders can exert a greater influence on a social and environmental level by acknowledging and taking into account the interconnectedness of the various systems around them. Ideally, this means that inclusive leaders are able to fulfil the goals of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: 'to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

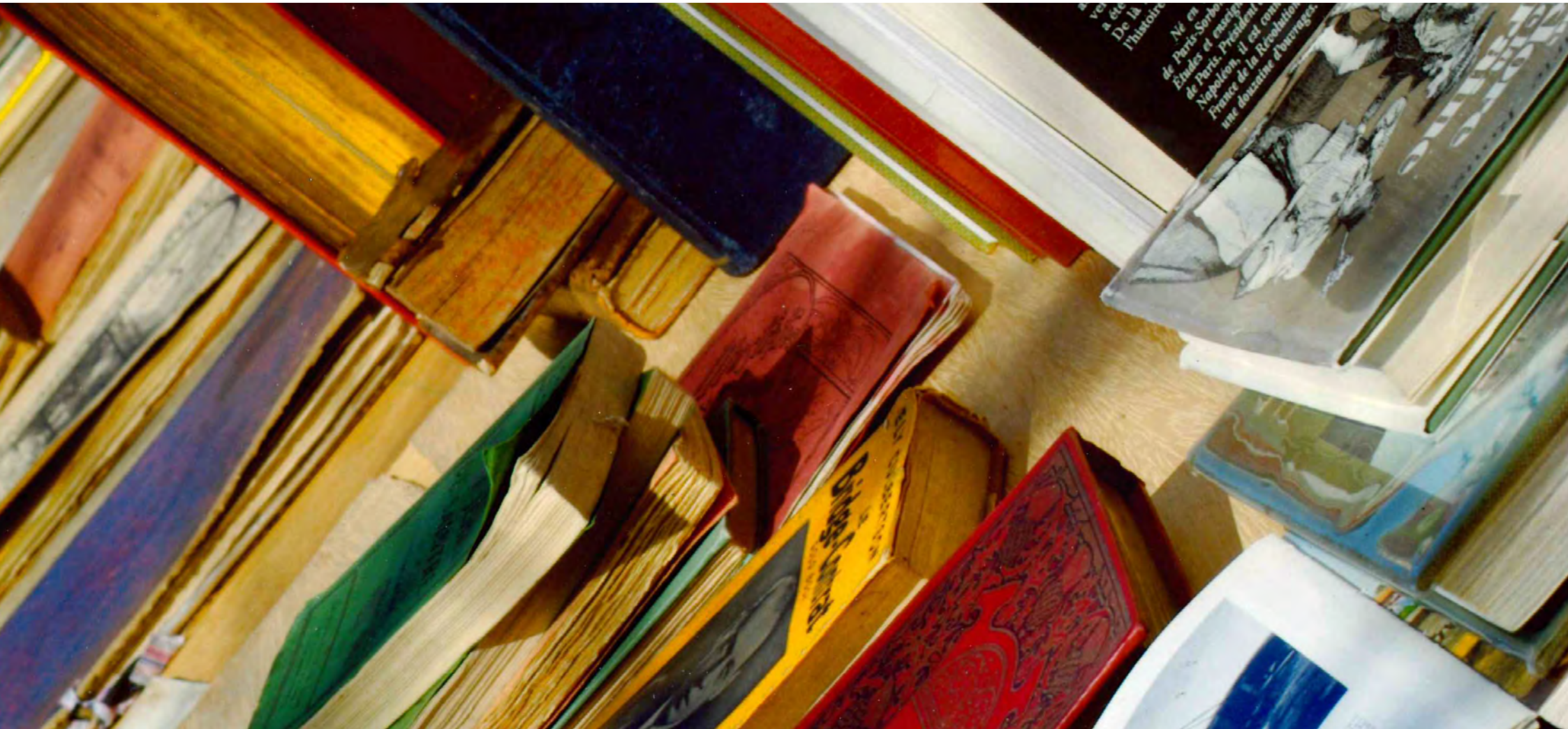
**Wishing you an exiting and safe journey on your path to inclusive leadership!**

*„The impact of making the journey towards inclusive leadership can be minor or major, depending on where you currently stand in your leadership role and what approach you take.“*





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