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Lee, Celia

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The Leadership of Balancing Control and Autonomy in Public Sector Networks: The Case of Singapore

LEE, Celia

Nanyang Centre for Public Administration

Nanyang Technological University

50 Nanyang Avenue S.32-B4 Singapore 639798

kplee@ntu.edu.sg

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INTRODUCTION

Governments around the world increasingly view public sector innovation as a tool for solving pressing governance problems (Bourgon, 2011). Such innovation that involves formulation, realization and diffusion of public policies and services, will require collaboration between interdependent actors. Networks have since assumed a place of prominence in public governing structures as hierarchies and markets are supplemented by networks to address complex problems, share scarce resources, and achieve collective goals (Weber & Khademian, 2008; Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Powell 1990). The reliance on inter-organizational collaborations led to public managers being entangled in both horizontal and vertical structures (Lai 2012; Ho, 2012; Agranoff & McGuire, 2003).

The Singapore government first learnt the value of inter-organizational networks when severe acute respiratory syndrome (“SARS”) hit the city-state in 2003. Through a well-coordinated, ministerial led whole-of-government (“WOG”) effort in the planning and implementation of controls and monitoring measurements, the crisis was contained within two months (Lai & Tan, 2012; Lai, 2012). Realizing that a single agency may no longer be adequate to implement the needed policies or programs in silo, *“new structures and processes are required for synergizing across many agencies to achieve integrated policy outcomes.”* (Neo & Chen 2007:413). Inter-ministerial committees or inter-organizational networks are formed to address wicked problems which include climate change, aging society, population growth, counter-terrorism efforts and various social issues (Ho, 2012; Neo & Chen, 2007). These horizontal structures leverage on the diverse strengths, expertise and resources of multiple agencies towards specific purpose for a stated period of time and were disbanded once the issue was solved or may be long-term as they relate to long term issues such as national security or environmental issues (Ho, 2012).

Functioning in a highly bureaucratic environment, these horizontal networks are governed within vertical top-down hierarchical structures backed by ministers or public sector leaders who provide strategic direction. Such high level of support adds to the legitimacy of the networks, but also generate power dynamics that could undermine the spirit of collaboration (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Therefore it is necessary for network leaders to develop strategies to neutralize the effects of control by allowing all members to have autonomy to shape the network agenda.

Given the inherent difficulties in managing collaborative networks, the issue of leadership seems highly relevant, (Huxham & Vangen, 2005) challenging and difficult (Provan & Lemaire, 2012); (Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010). I will document how network leaders of two inter-organizational collaborative networks, Singapore 2010 (“S2010) and Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders Network (“CARE”) adopted leadership activities from two opposing spectrums i.e. “*in the spirit of collaboration*” and “*towards collaborative thuggery*” (Vangen & Huxham, 2003) addressing control and autonomy within the inherently paradoxical nature of networks to advance scholarly interest in the relationship between collaborative work and paradox (Connely, Zhang & Faerman, 2008). The findings are part of a larger study which examines leadership within the context of structures and processes of four inter-organizational networks. As studying leadership by looking at individuals in positions of power is not sufficient to understand leadership as a set of activities and interactions that occurred within the network context, there has been an increased call for reconceptualization of traditional leadership models to suit the network paradigm (Provan & Kenis, 2008; Agranoff & McGuire, 2003). By focusing on structure and process (Miller & Miller, 2007; Huxham & Vangen 2000; Chrislip & Larson 1994), leadership is studied by linking the behaviours of leaders to the collective constructions that emerge and lead to action in pursuit of the network’s agenda and reconciling competing needs (Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2010).

Building on Vangen and Huxham (2003) action research on enacting leadership for collaborative advantage, I show how network managers of the coordinating units drove network agenda while advancing the collaboration through two opposing perspectives of leadership activities. Providing equal attention to the inward work and outward work between network and external actors, network leaders confronted the tensions associated with competing network agenda as necessary conditions. These tensions are defined as paradoxes by Management scholars (Erez 2013; Smith & Lewis, 2011) and network scholars have begun to embrace the paradoxical nature of networks rather than suppress paradoxes and tensions (Winchester & Vangen 2012; Sydow et al., 2011; Ospina & Saz-Carranza 2010). Empirical knowledge is uneven and systematic empirical attention to the role of paradox in inter-organizational collaboration is scant (Connelly et al., 2008). This study address this gap by exploring interplay of leadership as key in addressing the network paradox between controlled coordination and allowed members' autonomy.

This paper aims to contribute to the network leadership and public sector leadership literature by exploring leadership within the context of structures and processes to illuminate how network activities that have been empirically identified before (Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; Agranoff & Mcguire, 2001; Vangen & Huxham 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000) are leadership responses to paradoxes and tensions in inter-organizational collaboration. Studying Singapore is relevant as it represents one of the most successful countries in Southeast Asia in the study of reforms in governance and public sector administration (Politt, 2011; Haque, 2009). Moreover public sector officers in Singapore are used to function under a pragmatic command and control environment compared to a more facilitative and consultative network environment, therefore it will offer a new perspective. The rest of this paper is structured as follow: First I review the development of literature on network leadership and discuss the relevance of my research within the existing empirical work linking between collaboration and paradox. Next I

describe the methodology and provide a narrative of the two networks i.e. Singapore 2010 (S2010) and Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders (CARE) Network. This is followed by findings of leadership activities from two spectrums, then a discussion on the significance of network leaders especially within the context of Singapore public sector and end with a conclusion which highlights the significance of linking collaboration and paradox to understand leadership in network context.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP IN NETWORK LITERATURE

Collaborations require new leadership, management and governance structures that distribute power, authority and responsibility across the group, foster shared commitments, resolve conflicts, facilitate lasting relationships and stimulate effective action (Provan & Lemaire, 2012; Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2011; Milward & Provan, 2006). Given this, the three key interlocking themes being discussed widely in network management are network governance, structures and leadership. Research interest in these themes is growing in the public sector along with the awareness of the need for empirical research (Moynihan, 2009; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Rhodes et. al., 2007). Leadership in collaboration is an understudied area in public and non-profit sectors (Isett et al., 2011; Isett & Provan, 2005), especially very rare in the Asian context. Most studies focus on those in positions of formal authority which is limiting as it overemphasizes on the individual. Leadership defined as the *“process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives”* (Yukl, 2006 pp. 8), is in congruent to Vangen and Huxham’s (2003) definition of leadership in network settings. From this perspective, leadership in collaborations is not only enacted by participants involved, but also through the structure and processes to facilitate interaction and drive agendas for action

(Vangen & Huxham, 2003); (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). The examination of leadership focusing on structure and processes led to a rising interest to explore how individuals and organisations led in inter-organisational network context to support collaborative behaviours among network members (Provan & Lemaire, 2012; Ospina & Saz-Carranza 2010; Silvia & McGuire, 2009; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Agranoff & McGuire, 2003). Unlike traditional organizational structures, networks have no chain of command though literature suggests a key role for network leaders to establish a foundation upon which network participants can operate, while maintaining the flexibility and resiliency to accomplish network level tasks (Provan & Huang, 2012; Mandell & Keast, 2009; Huxham & Vangen 2003). This role is dedicated by the structure of the network, therefore the study of network structure has become pertinent to understanding leadership. Provan and Kenis (2008) described structure as *“the use of institutions and structures of authority and collaboration to allocate resources and to coordinate and control joint action across the network as a whole”* (pg 230). This refers to the governance structures which balances power and authority to support new mode of leadership that relies on the role of the facilitator or broker (Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Keast et. al, 2004).

There are three types of governance structures: shared, lead organization (“LO”) and network administrative organisation (“NAO”) (Provan & Lemaire, 2012; Provan & Kenis 2008; Milward & Provan, 2006). Networks in public sector often operate under a LO or NAO structures as agenda are externally imposed by policy makers or funders (Provan & Kenis, 2008). All activities and decision-making are coordinated through one single unit either set-up specifically for the purpose of the network or an existing lead agency that is already involved in the network agenda. This unit has the resources and legitimacy to play the leadership role and is responsible for the maintenance of existing internal relationships and development of external relationships (Provan & Kenis, 2008; Dhanarja & Parkhe, 2006). In Silvia and McGuire’s (2009) study which attempted to study the behaviours that public managers

displayed in their roles as network leaders in multi-actor settings and in their home organizations, found that when managers displayed a higher proportion of people oriented behaviours in networks while they displayed more task oriented behaviours in a single agency context. Leadership studies began to look at individuals exhibiting leadership roles in coordinating units, viewing leadership in collaborations as a system-based and collective process that involves systems design and role structures (Bolden, 2011), focusing on how it actually takes place or as “process catalyst” by which new learning occurs and new ways of behaving emerge (Mandell & Keast, 2009). It focuses on building trust and new ways of working together through collaborative processes (Saz-Carranza, 2010; Mandell & Keast, 2009). Processes that shape the directions of the collaboration are defined as the *“formal and informal instruments through which a collaboration’s communications take place”* (Huxham & Vangen 2000:1167) can either promote or hinder sharing of information (Huxham & Vangen, 2000), joint decision making (Provan & Kenis, 2008) or build trust among members (McGuire, 2006). This view encompasses all members of coordinating units who enact leadership through the processes to shape the directions of the collaboration (Saz-Carranza, 2010; Huxham & Vangen 2003). The primary obligation of the coordinating unit is to the network initiator and funder, while loyalties of members remained with the home organisations (Milward & Provan, 2006). Hence much can be learned by exploring how effective network leaders manage challenges associated with facilitating collaboration in a context full of complexity and tension.

TENSIONS AND PARADOX IN NETWORK MANAGEMENT

The recognition of public sector networks being difficult to manage because of the diverse partners’ conflicting priorities and values which were further hindered by structures, policies and cultures (Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010; Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Human &

Provan, 2000), pointed to tensions and paradoxes emerging as strong themes in network literature (Vangen & Winchester 2012; Vangen, 2012; Saz-Carranza, 2012). Tension arises when the leaders and members need to balance needs of their parent organisations and the needs of the network, especially on allocation of resources. Provan & Huang (2012) discouraged lead organisations to centralize the flow of all resources to enhance capacity of members while Provan and Milward (1995) found that centralization is consistent with network effectiveness. On the issue of accountability, emphasis on results is desired but how the results are achieved is equally important (Provan & Huang, 2012). Arising from this is the issue of control which needs to be managed in consideration of tensions and contradictions to theorize about collaborations to support practice (Vangen & Winchester, 2012). Provan and Kenis (2008) outlined three key tensions i.e. efficiency vs inclusiveness; internal legitimacy vs external legitimacy; flexibility vs stability, and how the selection of governance structure, can affect these tensions. LO and NAO structures prefer efficient administration, internal legitimacy and stability to maintain control, however this could weaken autonomy of network members. Saz-Carranza and Ospina (2010) further identify unity-diversity tension in their studies on immigrant networks and found that the NAOs spent considerable time managing the tension by nurturing unity (bringing the organizations together) and diversity (drawing out unique contributions). They cautioned that diversity and unity might lead to disunity and conformity if not managed well.

Collaborative advantage could be achieved through the synthesis of differences and requires working arrangements, simultaneously protect and integrate partners' uniquely different resources to further joint collaborative goals (Vangen, 2016; Vangen & Huxham, 2012; Saz-Carranza & Ospina 2010). In such interconnected contexts, autonomous organizational units deliver public services within traditional vertical relationships yet they participate in multiple horizontal collaborative network relationships that support the delivery of joint goals

(Ospina & Foldy, 2015). The autonomous hierarchical structures intertwined with collaborative arrangements give rise to the paradox of control and autonomy as it is recognized that collaborative contexts overlap hierarchies lead to competing structures and processes that are necessary to achieve desired outcomes (Vangen, 2016; Ospina and Foldy, 2015).

Vangen (2016) suggested that *“the application of a paradox lens entails examining how multiple, seemingly contradictory forces coexist and what the implications are for managing these simultaneously”* (pp.265). The two conflicting perspectives on leadership activities i.e. “in the spirit of collaboration” and “towards collaborative thuggery” (Vangen & Huxham, 2003) could be the answers to examine network leadership through a paradoxical lens. These activities deal with actors, resources and interaction to ensure commitment and advancement of the collaboration as well as capitalizing on the resources and managing differences in influence among participants. Leadership activities in the spirit of collaboration are largely facilitative (Miller & Miller, 2007; Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006) aims to give freedom to members to shape the agenda by embracing, empowering, involving and mobilizing towards “building trust, managing power relations, facilitating communication and resolving conflicting interests among different members” (Vangen & Huxham, 2003 pp.65). Activities towards collaborative thuggery are viewed as manipulative or even likened to “playing the politics” as network leaders control and influence the members’ agenda.

Relationship between paradoxes and network management have emerged as a strong theme (Vangen, 2016; Provan & Lemaire, 2012; Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2010). However there remains little empirical research that explore how network activities are managed and coordinated (Vangen, 2012; Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010; Provan & Kenis, 2008; McGuire, 2006).

METHOD

This study used narrative inductive inquiry to answer the question, “*How do network leaders manage collaboration to achieve network agenda?*” Given the complex and dynamic nature of inter-organizational networks, an in-depth qualitative study is the most appropriate research methodology. In addition, leadership in inter-organisational collaborative context is not yet extensively researched on as well as its potential variation in contexts across organisations, their communities and partners (Vangen, 2012; Provan & Lemaire, 2012; Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010). Scant empirical evidence in the literature too indicated an exploratory inquiry that offers cross-comparisons and in-depth exploration of the leadership activities in each network context (Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2010).

Cases

The two networks represent the prominent ones based on the level of public awareness and media reports. They are comparable along two key dimensions: multiple members’ involvement and active role of the coordinating unit. Both are medium to large-scale inter-organizational collaborations that include several organisations in the public, private and people sectors, hence equalizes the level of complexity. Singapore 2010 (“S2010”) is a WOG collaboration that involved multiple public sector organizations and Care Network (“CARE”) is a large-scale community based network that involved multiple organisations in the government, research and community sectors. Each network has a core coordinating unit (NAO or lead agency) acting as a secretariat accountable to a steering committee or inter-ministerial committee with membership representation. There are also key differences between the networks in terms of policy domains (S2010: Sports, CARE: Aftercare), budget size (S2010: around S\$290 million based on the total Games budget spent, CARE: around S\$2 million based on funds disbursed from Yellow Ribbon Fund in 2016) and main funding source (S2010: directly funded from Ministry of Finance, CARE: mostly from donations and funds raising). In addition, S2010 is a temporary network which was set up for 2.5 years to oversee the planning

and organizing the Youth Olympic Games which was hosted by Singapore in 2010 while CARE which is still active today, has been around for 17 years.

Data collection and analysis

The findings were derived from interview transcripts/ field notes (for unrecorded interviews) through in-depth semi-structured interviews with managers of the coordinating unit as well as members and volunteers of each network. Interview protocols around relevant dimensions of the network's work elicited stories about how the networks achieved successful milestones as well as instances of conflicts, obstacles and challenges. The interviews followed a narrative, interpretive technique, allowing participants to describe their experiences freely through story-telling. The semi-structured interviews were conducted within a period of two and a half year from November 2011 to May 2013. During this period, S2010 was dissolved few months ago but some of the network members were still involved in the dissolution process while CARE is still active today. The respondents related their experiences by recalling activities and interactions still fresh in their memories. Each interview lasted between thirty minutes to two hours, were conducted in English either face-to-face or via phone conversations. In total, 30 interviews were conducted (including 2 follow-ups) with 11 network managers; 5 staff members from the coordinating units; 11 agency members; 2 volunteers and 1 consultant. Besides interviews, secondary data was collected from observation and documentation to obtain richer data and validate the interviews.

The analytic focus of this study was on the overall pattern of variables within each case as well as across the cases. Coordinating unit as the unit of analysis to compare these variables and examine the inter-relationships among the variables. Data collection and analysis focused on organizational strategies and activities revealed in the stories, including evidence of challenges to collaboration. NVivo software was used to categorize and code to broad dimensions associated with the study of networks such as governance structure, membership,

roles and responsibilities, trust and relationship building, funding etc. In stage two, each case's main categories were compared to explore how different contexts and processes varied across the cases. During this phase, the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes were used to sift through remaining data thereby creating themes. Some of these themes were topical in nature, helping to organize the various activities and processes the participants were involved in. Others were conceptual, such as the identification of potential arguments or tensions emerging. At the final stage of cross-case analysis, findings were refined to uncover inherent tensions which had emerged from the analysis, new codes were developed based on Vangen and Huxham's (2003) two perspectives of leadership activities.

Building on the existing literature discussed previously, the following provides an account of each network concentrating on broad themes such as the origin, governance structure, membership and terms of reference, agenda setting, funding mechanism, communications and performance management.

S2010

This is a WOG collaboration to plan and organize the inaugural Youth Olympic Games (YOG). The YOG is an international multi-sport event for youths, similar to the Olympic Games format but intentionally made smaller than the Olympics, to allow for smaller cities to host. Singapore won the bid to host the first Youth Summer Olympic Games in August 2010. The success of YOG will raise the profile of Singapore, strengthen local sporting culture and grow the sports industry. Instead of the usual 7 years of preparation period, the country was only given 2.5 years to plan and organize the international Games. The inaugural Games was successfully hosted and IOC conferred upon then President S.R. Nathan and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong the Gold Olympic Order.

The organizing committee of the Singapore Youth Olympic Games (“SYOGOC”) was constituted and administered as a new division under the former Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports (MCYS) to oversee the planning. Similar to the setup of a typical statutory board in Singapore¹, SYOGOC operated on separate budget with a dedicated management team and staff seconded from different government agencies. The SYOGOC board was led by a Chairman and consisted of 25 senior management members from government agencies and organizations from other sectors to provide oversight and direction. The SYOGOC was also aided by an Inter-Ministerial Committee and a panel of advisors which composed of cabinet ministers.

The WOG network which included several government agencies and non-governmental organizations was known as the S2010 and the SYOGOC was mandated to take lead in the governing and managing of the large-scale collaboration. As the NAO, the SYOGOC provided administration for the network, facilitated activities of the network and coordinated all major network-level activities and key decisions.

[insert figure 1]

Within S2010, each member agency could be involved in more than one functional working group (figure 1). Each of the functional group was co-chaired by 1 divisional director from SYOGOC and 1 director from the leading agency in charge of the domain and relevant agencies were selected as working members. For example in the Environment working Group, the director of Corporate Planning of the Executive Group co-chaired with the Director from the Ministry of Environment and Water and the partnering members were National Environment Agency, Public Utilities Board and National Parks. The roles of member agencies and the deliverables in each of the S2010 functional working groups were confirmed in the terms of reference at the first meeting. Network manager described the selection of members, “*The*

¹ Autonomous organisations set up under a parent ministry to perform an operational function

agencies were pre-selected based on importance of their contribution and involvement to ensure that the working committee had the right group of members from the essential agencies.” The proposed terms of reference were circulated to the invited agencies before the meeting so that respective agencies could select their representatives to plan beforehand, and present their plans at the meeting.

At the first meeting, the network leaders helped their members link their respective agencies’ objectives to the network agenda by positioning the value and potential of the collaboration to ensure their commitment as follow, *“So the way we described to people was that the YOG was this wonderful canvas or platform for each of us to come and build our own dreams on.”* The terms was also necessary for the committee to fulfil their contractual obligations to the IOC under the terms and conditions of the City by establishing key milestones to be achieved by respective functional teams.

The budget for organizing the Games was allocated by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and centrally administered by the NAO. Each component of the budget was determined and approved by respective agency in the respective domain e.g. IT budget was determined by IDA, the authority of the country’s and government IT matters, security budget decided by MHA. Members were required to chip in when the budget was insufficient to cover all expenditure, e.g. using their budget to cover their expenditure, seconding staff to the NAO and sending staff as volunteers. The network was also the biggest beneficiary of corporate sponsorships from the official Olympic sponsors as well as from other international and local suppliers.

To ensure key milestones were achieved, meeting schedules and agenda were pre-planned to monitor progress of members. The agenda of these meetings were distributed to the members via email to set direction and avoid *“meaningless long meetings”*. Minutes were recorded at the meeting and disseminated to all members for records and follow-ups. These meetings were not always chaired by the network managers, depending on the topic of

discussion, the meetings were co-chaired with relevant expert agency member. Besides formal meetings and forums, informal communications through emails and phone-call were more spontaneous for the members to seek clarifications and resolve urgent issues. These informal communications helped to keep the members up-to-date on the progress. In event of conflicts, the NAO sought to resolve with members rather than escalation.

Functional forums were planned every two to three months to monitor milestones and ensure alignment among the various functional groups and explained by one of the manager was to *“level up everybody knowledge and keep plans aligned.”* Trainings and briefings to volunteers were also provided to volunteers from the member agencies nearer to the Games and towards implementation of the plans. Simulations and readiness preparation exercises e.g. the Friendship Camp, Venuization Day, Stay and Play at the Youth Olympics Village were platforms to test out the plans.

CARE

Aftercare refers to the support and supervision provided to the prisoner or drug addict after he/she has been released from the prisons to help them sustain positive changes. There were many different organisations working with different groups of ex-offenders in the aftercare sector involved in either penal or drug related offences. These organisations can be categorized into two categories; secular and religious. With 10,000 inmates being released from prison each year, the government realized the difficulties faced by the ex-offenders, caused by the stigmatism of their status. Many could not integrate back into the community successfully and even revert to committing other offences ultimately they ended up back in the prison. Co-chaired by the Singapore Prisons Service (“SPS”) and the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (“SCORE”), CARE was set up in 2000 as the first formal structure that brings community and government agencies together to co-ordinate and improve the

effectiveness of the efforts of different agencies involved in rehabilitative works for ex-offenders in Singapore.

SCORE was appointed as the coordinating unit. SCORE is a statutory board under the Ministry of Home Affairs which provides rehabilitation and aftercare services to inmates and ex-offenders. SCORE not only brought all the members of the network together on common dialogue platforms to share information, discuss issues and explore areas to enhance the aftercare and rehabilitation sector, it also pulled all the resources together by leveraging on different strengths of each agency to integrate different services and different expertise as part of the master plan to strengthen the aftercare infrastructure. As SCORE oversees the rehabilitation of inmates as part of the Singapore correctional system, it provided strategic direction at ministries and statutory board levels on the aftercare policies, advocate best practices and provide funding to some of the programmes within the CARE network.

CARE is a grouping of public and non-government agencies from the aftercare sector. Due to the sensitivity of racial and religious issues, it was decided that only the secular organisations were to be invited into the network as core partners with the government agencies.

[insert figure 2]

The members' roles were based on the different interactions each agency had with the ex-convicts or their families, their roles and involvement in the network (figure 2). For example as a social Co-operative for the ex-convicts, the main role of ISCOS in supporting the network was to develop the skills of ex-convicts and provide them with job opportunities by connecting them with prospective employers supportive of giving them a second chance. There were other 100 partners from public, private and people sectors including voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) and religious groups working closely with the CARE Network.

A steering committee consisted of senior management from the respective organizations was formed to provide direction and set the network agenda. The committee set plan for the

year and ensure resources were sufficient to carry out activities and initiatives. All activities and schemes of the network were self-funded by the members. The Case Management Framework Programme (“CMF”) launched by CARE in 2001 offering assistance to ex-offenders in dealing with their integration issues such as family, financial, accommodation, employment, was funded by SCORE, SPS and NCSS (Chua, 2012). To ensure commitment to the CMF, the NGOs funded 10% of the assistance. Shortfall in budget to carry out activities was raised through fund-raising activities initiated by the network by setting up the Yellow Ribbon Fund (“YRF”). The YRF administered funding to the development and implementation of reintegration programmes for inmates and ex-offenders and family support programmes (Chua, 2012). Members took turns to host the fund raising activities e.g. Yellow Ribbon Prison Run.

There were two formal yearly meeting platforms, one at the steering committee level and another at the supporting team level. The steering committee met at CARE Network dialogues held annually or bi-annually, to discuss annual plans and obtain updates on the direction of the aftercare sector. SCORE coordinated with respective members to set the schedules and consolidate the presentations. The support team meeting took place prior to the dialogue to plan and organize. During such meetings, the supporting team took the opportunity to discuss issues and problems encountered and also shared on the best practices in the social service sector. The members also communicated among themselves informally via calls, face-to-face meetings and emails especially to resolve issues and obtain updates on latest policy changes. Trainings by NCSS were also conducted frequently to share best practices with the NGO members to better equip them with knowledge that is important to fulfil the network agenda.

There was no formal performance management mechanism to monitor performance of members however as 90% of the funding for CMF comes from SPS, SCORE and NCSS, there was assessment criteria to monitor the performance of SACA and SANA (as service providers).

Funding was not provided upfront, but reimbursed on a per client basis based on the criteria achieved. Full funding was awarded if the client completed the programme successfully and achieved all the criteria. Each agency has separate monitoring format, reporting frequency and focus. Over the years, there has also been a shift from output based indicators to outcome based indicators that are catered to each ex-offender's needs.

FINDINGS: ADDRESSING THE PARADOX OF CONTROL AND AUTONOMY WITHIN LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The leadership activities are distinguished by two opposing spectrums “in the spirit of collaboration” and “towards collaborative thuggery” (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Leadership activities in the spirit of collaboration refers to the inward work of network leaders towards building trust and nurturing relationships with network members while leadership activities towards collaborative thuggery refers to the outward task-oriented work. Networks defined as interdependent set of independent organisations that required centralised coordination of necessarily autonomous organisations. Therefore inter-organisational network scholars highlighted this causes tensions within networks (Provan & Lemaire, 2012; Vangen & Winchester, 2012; Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010). Unlike hierarchies that favour control and command or markets that prefer freedom, networks have elements of both (Powell, 1990).

This inductive inquiry showed how leaders of S2010 and CARE managed to address control and autonomy within the two spectrums of leadership activities as outlined in figure 3.

[insert figure 3 here]

As members rarely referred to the managers of the coordinating units as leaders and generally viewed the entire management team as a collective “leadership team”, leadership activities

were to be collectively exhibited by the different managers from the coordinating units (to be referred collectively as “network leaders” from this point onwards).

Inward Work from the Spirit of Collaboration

Facilitative activities i.e. embracing, empowering, involving and mobilizing to build internal community with the members (Saz-Carranza, 2012; Vangen & Huxham, 2003) sought to allow more autonomy to members. However findings revealed the network leaders also maintained control over the network agenda.

Embracing the “Right Members”

In both cases, control over the membership ensured recruiting only relevant valuable partners who could contribute to the network but freedom was given to members to come willingly on board. Therefore members who shared similar interests and common goals with the resources and expertise were invited to participate: “.....*because you have to be willing, you had to decide you wanted to be part of this and if you wanted to be part of this, then the Youth Olympics became your project too.*” (S2010) “.....*it was more of “By invitation only”. So people who was not considered in the initial stage, they probably would not sort of be brought into the picture..... Obviously the main actors, you have the PRISONS, the MHA, NCSS, and SCORE, MCYS.....There needed to be community agencies because C in Care stands for community action.*” (CARE)

Although S2010 was a WOG collaboration, not all agencies were included. The agencies were pre-selected based on the importance of their contribution and involvement in the relevant domains essential to the planning and delivery of the Games. In CARE, it was decided that only “likeminded” secular organizations and no religious organizations were to be included to avoid the minefield of unfair representation of religions.

Though members were not allowed to self-select/deselect themselves into the networks, but they were free to appoint representatives. Most representatives agreed to participate so that they could obtain higher rating during performance appraisal (Poocharoen & Lee, 2013). This could lead to little commitment from the representatives, therefore at first meetings network leaders convinced them of being able to benefit from the network and shape the network agenda on behalf of the agencies they represented. There was a general sense of prestige for being selected especially in the case of S2010, the representatives were *“proud to be part of a once in a lifetime event.”* In CARE, representatives were more driven by their passion to help the rehabilitation of ex-convicts.

Empowering Members to Shape the Network Agenda

Members in both networks were made clear of their roles and responsibilities either expressed in terms of reference (S2010) or implied by their interactions with the targeted clientele (CARE), to enable them to be active. Establishing roles enabled network leaders to have oversight over the members' responsibilities but members shape their roles within their expertise and resources to exert adequate influence over the network agenda. Empowering members in the decision making process heightened commitment and relevance of their involvement as described by SACA from CARE, *“I think we have punched a hole, we have been able to shape things.”* In S2010, the deliberate co-chairing of functional teams with members allowed members to take lead in issues they specialized in.

Maintaining open and frequent communications were also an important aspect of empowerment to help members to make informed decisions. A network manager from S2010 elaborated on this point, *“You keep them in the loop and inform them that you are doing somethingnot treat them as outsiders and only go to them when you need help.”* Through these communications, network leaders uncovered underlying causes that prevented them from participating and at times it could be competency or knowledge gap. Members' competencies

were built through training and sharing platforms to level up skills and knowledge enabled them to continue to be active in the network. For example, the Care Network learning journeys and Care Network attachment program in the case of CARE enabled NGOs to better understand about their public agencies counterparts and also provide opportunities for them to clarify.

Involving all Members as Equal Partners

Inequality arises due to some members being more central in the collaborations than others and when some members have more power as they act as network leaders in the collaboration. In CARE, SPS had more power over other members because of its higher contribution (50%) to the CMF and in S2010, the NAO was perceived to be able to influence and dominate the members because it administered the Games budget even though each component was decided by respective member. Funding and resource allocation was the most challenging task faced by network leaders due to the potential of causing inequality among members. Network leaders had to control resource allocation and maximized contribution from members but also allowed autonomy for members to decide their contributions and allocations. To equalize the status of members, attempts were made from both cases to initiate co-contribution of resources. Such arrangements not only applied to the “wealthier” members but the “smaller” agencies or “poorer” NGOs contributed their shares too. A NGO member from CARE shared that such arrangement enhanced their role, *“As limited our resources are.....To play a role not only as volunteers, but also to contribute financially.”*

However it did not consider resource constraint faced by some members. For example in S2010, one member was asked to made concessions to coincide with final preparation led to the member bearing additional charges which impacted his other projects. In CARE, members had to raise funds through charitable events which were time-consuming to plan. Network leaders explained on the importance to convince members that their contributions aligned to their organizational objectives, *“If we could convince people, then resources are unlocked for*

us.” In addition, donations and sponsorships were also initiated by the network leaders to defray the additional costs and avoid over-contribution by the “richer” members.

Mobilizing Members to Move the Agenda Forward

Fulfilling the initial promises made to their members towards fulfilling their obligations as employees of the agencies was critical or else they would no longer be as committed, “*such a waste of time, we meet them every 2 months and then the working groups will meet almost once or twice a month.*” Representatives were part-time volunteers in the network but full time employees in their respective agencies. It was noted though the network leaders allowed members to achieve their individual goals, they ensured activities benefited the networks as a whole.

CMF was an initiative as a result of CARE. To achieve bigger impact, the Yellow Ribbon Project was initiated to embark in public outreach and awareness programmes. “*We wanted to do something bigger, to have larger group to benefit.*” The successful outreach aligned to the objectives of all members sustained the network from its inception until today. In S2010, to ensure representatives that their parent agencies were aware of their work in the network, the senior management members from the agencies were invited to celebrate milestones achieved.

Roadblocks and conflicts stalled progress, platforms at senior level to address these were available in both networks. Network leaders cautioned of escalating issues to a higher level, unless necessary as it hurt relationships and trust. They sought to resolve within themselves first. A manager of S2010 recalled an incident where two members were at deadlock with each other during a team meeting. He had to intervene and arrange for a separate meeting for them to discuss the issues by understanding each agency’s difficulties and finally they came up with

new solution, *“we would probably been stone-walled. But by treating it as a professional problem, we solved it.”*

Outward Work towards Collaborative Thuggery

Outward focused task-oriented activities were inconsistent with the spirit of collaboration but necessary to maintain credibility of the networks (Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2010). Network leaders manipulated members to conform and negotiated on behalf of members with external institutions agreeing on terms that might not favour the members. These activities likened to “playing politics” as political manoeuvring is a strong feature in public sector collaborations (Vangen & Huxham, 2003).

Manipulation of Members’ Agenda

Network leaders exerted indirect and unintended influence over the members when they push the agenda forward. Members were often manipulated into accepting certain conditions even if they did not fully understand or fully accept the terms. Network leaders explained that it was necessary to force the members to compromise or else the objectives would not be met, *“If we followed everything to the T for everything, we will never make it in 2.5 years.”* However this caused unhappiness as described by members, *“We had to make concessions”; “costs a lot of money and is not according to our procedures.”* Network leaders hence made sure members function within their ability and comfort level. They helped the members to plan so that changes/adjustments would not add costs and could benefit their agencies, e.g. changing schedules for plant pruning or inspection of buildings to be nearer to the time of the Games so that no additional work was required.

In CARE, funding of CMF was regulated with monitoring and auditing, which suggested that funders had control over the performance of the NGOs and could influence their directions. In addition NCSS as the governing body that oversee activities of the NGOs inevitably has power to perform checks, *“NCSS has an on-site assurance team, to do random*

checking on the accounts just to ensure that things are submitted correctly.” NGOs were treated as contractors of services and not members as the rehabilitation tasks were outsourced to them and closely monitored. Such stigma could undermine the NGOs’ status and ability to contribute as members. Moreover as one member pointed out, *“For that small funding, we have to do more work.”* Although the NGOs were allowed time and flexibility to carry out the work as funding was not provided upfront and on reimbursement basis, they were required to report to funders.

Negotiation with External Institutions

Negotiations carried out by the network leaders were necessary to garner additional support and resources for the network. Network leaders from S2010 clarified they constantly negotiated with external institutions on behalf of the network to get more manpower, *“Whole-of-government has to imply flexibility to reallocate manpower as opportunities come out. But actually we don’t have that, it is very difficult to switch people, to reallocate people, to take people, to reduce services or performance in a particular area in order to accommodate a new opportunity. It is extremely hard to negotiate with the parent ministry and the budgets also reflect that.”* During the negotiation processes, the network leaders agreed to conditions and criteria stipulated by the external institutions without collective consultation.

Network leaders also explained that decentralizing budget components was to avoid confrontations, *“..... If the police tell me that this is going to cost \$10million, its complete nonsense for me to tell the police that I don’t believe that it will cost \$10million. But this happened very often in the lead agency kind of model where the lead agency is squabbling with the supporting agencies about how much budget they really need..... if the agency said that it cost this much so it must be right..”* While network leaders wanted to give members more flexibility to plan with the right budget, members felt that they were made accountable when the total budget exceeded. Furthermore, network leaders communicated with international

institutions on behalf of the members to minimize conflicts as a result of cultural differences. Especially in countries that were not familiar with the Singapore government and were suspicious of the motives. Misunderstanding due to member's unfamiliarity to the countries' cultures and political concerns would cause delays and even damage diplomatic ties. This was beneficial to the network, but it excluded members in the process.

In CARE, recognition from the government opened access to information previously unavailable to the network through the formation of the taskforce on drugs in 2011. Although this taskforce was independent from the network, it was formed due to the heightened awareness of rehabilitation advocated by the network. Network leaders leveraged on this to negotiate for more resources from the government and the CMF was made mandatory for high-risk offenders to be enrolled (previously enrolment was based on voluntary basis). However the formalization stipulated more conditions on the members and was draining on the lean manpower when the NGOs had to assign more staff to work in the CMF programme.

DISCUSSION: NETWORK LEADERS AS KEY TO MANAGE PARADOX OF CONTROL AND AUTONOMY

Emerging from the above findings, network leadership as revealed by the structures and process is summarised in table 4:

[insert table 1]

Vertical accountability structure existed between the coordinating units and initiators of the networks. Similar to intra-organizational setting, it was hierarchical based with established chain of command and agenda was decided from the top with/without budget allocated accordingly. However such structure was not applicable to the coordinating units and network members (Vangen & Siv, 2012; Provan 2008; Milward & Provan, 2006). Hence a facilitative

leadership model that focused more on the processes and activities was more suitable to establish trust and distribute power (Mandell & Keast, 2009; Chrislip & Larson, 1994). However exhibiting only facilitative leadership without control would not produce results. The paradox of control and autonomy is not framed as oppositions but rather to accept that they have to co-exist to build trust and groom relationships while achieving outcomes. Network leaders to control over the network agenda while members had autonomy to shape the agenda in accordance to their goals.

Findings confirmed the network leaders' constant need to balance control and autonomy and this is summarized in table 2.

[insert table 2]

Despite the initial intention to study leadership within structures and processes, it was undeniable managers from the coordinating units played the roles of leaders performed the leadership. Although network literature emphasized that “there is no positional leader” (Silvia & McGuire, 2009), “collaborative leaders have no formal power or authority” (Vangen & Siv, 2012; Chrislip & Larson, 1994), members looked to them for leadership. The success of the two networks was largely due to the selection of network leaders. In Singapore, there was a strong belief of grooming administrative officers and high potentials by putting them in-charge of high profile projects (Poocharoen & Lee, 2013). Ministers or public sector leaders would handpick those whom they wished to groom to lead these networks to get them ready for next level promotion. It was easy to place whom they like to work with in Singapore compared to other countries because of the single direct administration relationship. Network leaders were pre-selected based on their potential, experience, track records and most importantly they shared the same values. The Chief Executive of SYOGOC was selected because of his experience in organizing large scale events such as the National Day Parade. The senior management members used to be colleagues and served together in same military camp. In CARE, “like-

mindfulness” was the main criteria to choose the network leaders. Though the network was conceptualized by SPS, it was decided that SCORE would be appointed as the lead agency as the CEOs of SPS and SCORE shared similar values. The deliberate placement of “like-minded” and familiar network leaders ensured steering of the network in the direction they wanted.

CONCLUSION

In this era of increasing expectations to govern and drive networks as a collective response to address wicked problems (Ho, 2012); (Brookes & Grint, 2010), it is expected of public sector managers to transform vision into reality by marshalling all the resources, resourcefulness and power vested in them through well-coordinated network structures and processes. Networks are inherently difficult to manage, nevertheless has become a popular mechanism in public sector to deliver public services. The managerial challenges associated with their sustainability and effectiveness are increasingly of interest for both theoretical and practical purposes. This paper intended to contribute to the network management literature, may also contribute to the capacity building of public sector managers and leaders more generally. Although the research was based on studying of leadership in network context, but with the increasing need for public sector to work across-agencies, sectors and boundaries to enhance service delivery to the citizens, public sector administrators should be equipped with these network management capabilities.

This study has also uncovered similarities with many network activities previously identified in the literature especially it builds on the two opposing spectrums of leadership activities and also address the relevance of embracing paradox in network management (Vangen, 2016; Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2010). My contribution here lies in providing further empirical evidence to illuminate the importance of addressing the paradox of control and autonomy within leadership activities is key to effective network management. It is reassuring that paradox in the

context of network management that addresses complex issues has theoretical relevance, based on received knowledge about collaborative governance now being revealed by scholars (Vangen, 2016; Saz-Carranza, 2012; Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2010; O’Leary & Bingham, 2007). The leadership activities identified as ways that enable network leaders address the paradoxical demands of control and autonomy add nuance to the literature and help to better understand the nature of what the existing literature refers to as leadership activities (Vangen & Huxham, 2003; Agranoff & McGuire, 2001; Huxham, 2000).

As this study focused only on networks in the public sector therefore it is unable to address the understanding of network leadership fully. More empirical research should be conducted to explore networks in different sectors especially those under shared governance structures. Moreover the contexts unique to the Singapore public sector might not be present in other countries. Nevertheless I believe that it is a step further towards understanding leadership in network context.

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Figures

Figure 1: Working groups within S2010

Working Group	Members	Working Group	Members	Working Group	Members
Arrival and Departure Operations	CAAS, ICA, Customs	Dignitary Management	MFA	MOE-CEP Steering	MOE
City Dressing/ City Experience	STB, MICA, CAAS, HDB, ICA, LTA, NAC, NHB, NParks, PA, SCC, SLA, URA	Environment	MEWR, NEA, PUB, NParks	Inter-Agency Taskforce for Graciousness	MICA, PMO, MCYS, MOE, LTA, HDB, NEA, PA, STB, WDA
City Operations	BCA, HDB, LTA, SLA, TP, URA	Freight forwarding / Customs	Customs, ICA, SPF, HAS, IDA	Safety and Security	
Cleaning & Waste Management	NEA	Finance	MOF, IRAS	Transport Management Committee	MINDEF, LTA, TP
		Torch Relay	CDCs, PA, SPF, TP, MFA, LTA, OSU, SCDF, SA, STB, URA	MOH-YOG Medical Services Com	MOH
		Marina Bay Coordination	URA, NParks, MINDEF		

Figure 2: Members' roles in CARE
(Source: CARE official website www.carenetwork.org.sg)

Members	Roles
Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)	Provide the guidance and leadership of Singapore Prison Service "Prisons" which is a uniformed organisation under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports (MCYS)	Work with youth delinquents to prevent young offenders from graduating into our prison system.
Singapore Prison Service (SPS)	Key partner in criminal justice involved in the safe custody and rehabilitation of offenders.
Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE)	Enhances employability through training programmes and job placements for ex-offenders. Currently, SCORE is also acting as the secretariat of the network.
National Council of Social Services (NCSS)	Overlooks the entire social services sector in Singapore and plays an important role as a consultant to advice on best practices and provide training courses in social services.
Industrial & Services Co-Operative Society Ltd (ISCOS)	Guide ex-offenders towards economic independence such as through employment and social enterprise.
Singapore After-Care Association (SACA)	Run the Case Management Framework that aims to provide a through-care approach from in-care to aftercare. Individual needs of clients are assessed and linked with necessary support services for successful reintegration into the society.
Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA)	

Figure 3: Addressing Control and Autonomy within Leadership Activities

Tables

Table 1: Interplay of leadership within the context of structures and processes

Leadership Paradigm Between Parent Ministry and Network Manager	Leadership Paradigm Between Network Manager and Member
Hierarchical-based vertical governance structures with oversight by minister/ Head of Ministry and advised by a panel of Steering Committee/ Inter-ministerial Committee	Flat, horizontal structure that cut across specialisations/ tasks/ domains regardless of ranks and designations
Centralised lead agency or NAO appointed/ set-up to oversee and co-ordinate network activities	Co-chairing of working groups/ sub-committees by staff member of Lead agency/ NAO and agency member based on level of expertise
Main network agenda driven top-down by lead agency or NAO (usually from directions by Minister/ Head of Ministry)	Network initiatives/ projects/ yearly direction discussed and deliberated to reach a common goal
Pre-determined membership of key members to be included in the network	Selection of original members by lead agency/NAO. Members are free to extend network membership to include partners from other sectors
Budget of lead agency/ NAO centrally administered by parent Ministry	Promote co-funding, garner sponsorships and incentives to fund network initiatives/ projects
Performance monitoring mechanisms with established targets in place to track performance of lead agency or NAO	Trust-based milestone tracking approach through formal and informal communications more predominant, however when funding is concerned, there will be established set of criteria and targets for members to report at regular intervals

Table 2: Addressing control and autonomy within the two spectrums of leadership activities

Leadership Activities “In the Spirit of Collaboration”	Control vs Autonomy
Embracing: Enrolling “right” members plays an important role of ensuring the right membership who shared similar interests and common goal with the resources, interests and expertise to be able to participate and contribute. Although diversity is encouraged in networks, members are more willing to commit and support the agenda of the collaboration if they see “What is in it for me?” and perceive the possibility of being able to benefit from their membership.	Network leaders have control over membership, so more effort needed to enhance members’ autonomy by convincing them to want to be in the network by linking their agenda to the network agenda
Empowering: Every members to play active roles in the network regardless of the differences in their skill levels was done by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each member. When members are clear what was expected from them and what they can expect (support and funding) from others, they will be willing to contribute their time and resources to the network.	Members have more autonomy to decide how they can contribute according to their expertise and domain, so network leaders need to establish agreed roles and responsibilities to main oversight and step in to help inactive members
Involving: All members treated as equal partners to balance power among members as well as between members and coordinating units. Power can either hinder or facilitate action (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003) and it especially lies in the control of resources. Hence when control is distributed among members, equality can then be achieved.	Network leaders in public sector have more control over resource reallocation and can determine members’ contribution, so need to ensure autonomy given to members to decide how much should be allocated to them by stipulating reasonable conditions and also initiate co-sharing of resources, obtain external funding (sponsorships & donations) to equalize status of members
Mobilizing: Moving agenda forward is the ultimate goal of network management to achieve outcomes. This involves ensuring that all members are moving in tandem and removing any obstacles in their ways.	Members have autonomy to decide if they want to stay committed to the network as their primary loyalty is with their home agencies and to engage in activities that only benefit themselves. Therefore network leaders need to initiate activities at early stage of network to sustain membership, network leaders need to control activities to ensure they benefit the network as a whole
Leadership Activities “Towards Collaboration Thuggery”	Control vs Autonomy
Manipulating: Convincing members to adhere to certain plans or terms which might not be most beneficial to them. Although the agenda might seemed to link to the partner agencies’ objectives but they would need to contribute more resources within the network then individually as an agency in order to obtain the same results.	Members have more autonomy to decide whether to proceed with the network agenda if it cost more resources to them then achieving it alone. Therefore network leaders need to control the members’ contribution within their limits and ability while stipulating certain conditions to ensure commitment

Negotiating:

Negotiating on behalf of members with external institutions to obtain more resources which involved playing politics as there are multiple competing agendas to be satisfied especially in the distribution of the limited resources among networks.

Network leaders have more control over their relationships with external institutions by preventing members to interact with them. Therefore flexibility and more resources should be provided to members to enable them to have the autonomy to achieve more for their organizations