Disciplines: sociology, management, political science, international studies

Throughout history, cultural and political conflicts around the world have politicized grievances, attempting to activate human agency through social movements. Movements form in response to perceived oppression and claims of injustices endured by marginalized groups. Movements attempt to bring together segments of people with shared interests who seek to act for the same cause. Moving beyond grievances and mobilizing around shared values to produce results for change entails important elements such as participation, organization and leadership. Leaders in social movements such as Nelson Mandela, Frantz Fanon and Martin Luther King are applauded for their charisma and ability to empower people, leading to movement victories such as liberation, policy change and/or rights acquisitions. Whether during the genesis or at the revelation of these movements, the role of movement leaders is important to understanding the process of connection, unification, mobilization and ultimate commitment to the cause for movement continuity. However, very little scholarship has been devoted to attributing different movement dynamics/outcomes to different tactical leadership styles (types/roles). Moreover, social movement theory offers limited leadership categorizations which fall short of accounting for leadership styles (types and roles) that can explain variation in movement dynamics and/or outcomes. Aminzade et al (2001) asserts the need to transition from the deduction of leaders as acting as intermediaries, facilitators, and motivators to independent shapers of the course and outcomes of contention.

Social science disciplines have relied on Weber's charismatic leadership as the baseline for defining leadership styles across movements. Morris and Staggenborg (2004) define movement leaders as strategic decision makers who inspire and organize others to participate in socialist movements. McCarthy and Mario (1992) define social movements as a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity. By taking movement leaders into account we can explore practices to improve insights of types and roles of leaders and its effects on key movement processes (dynamics and continuity). The same principles that make social and political movements successful are the same principles attributed to corporate and organizational transformational successes such as participation, continuity, and commitment. Thus, the literature on leadership in management that offers definitions/categorizations of leaders can offer a framework in which to analyze and more accurately categorize movement leaders, beyond vaguely or solely charismatic. This can create a common language for change for social movements, whose processes resemble those of organizations.

Nepstad and Bob (2006) coined the concept of “leadership capital”, a synthetic approach to leadership to debunk structural orientation theories where “leaders may appear to be epiphenomena of larger structures and forces, little more than surfers riding irrepressible social waves”. They assert that individuals endowed with leadership capital can play key autonomous roles in animating those waves, augmenting their popular support, and changing their structure and direction. While they find that leadership capital can allow movements to compensate for a lack of traditional material resources, for a dearth of political opportunities and for a deficit in organizational structures, they vaguely differentiate various types or roles of leaders. It is important to sharpen these categories and identify others to explore the varying effect of leadership types and roles on the key issues of movement dynamics.

This paper argues for a new specification of leadership style (type and role), through a revitalized categorization offered in the management literature, specifically through the Wayfinding Leadership framework, a holistic approach to leadership based on ancient Polynesian navigation, designed for use across cultures in a complex world. Social movement development places significance on collective identity formation and shared goal orientation and has conceptualized movement leadership as accepting responsibility to enable others to achieve
shared purpose. (Ganz and McKenna, 2019) Related to this concept, wayfinding identifies the key role of leaders as fostering a shared sense of becoming, a process Maori call tupu, “to unfold one’s nature”, this means developing people so they express their true nature and fulfill their potential, individually and collectively. (Spiller, 2016) Both concepts place the leadership practice of relationship building at the center by which individual and collective identities are crafted. While these concepts can seemingly inform each other, Wayfinding extends its narrative framework to the practice of leadership in cultural pockets around the world including to Inuits who read the snow, Australian Aboriginals who track the desert, Bedouin nomads who traverse the sand dunes and Polynesian voyagers who navigate the oceans. This further incentivizes its potential for informing and categorizing Palestinian movement leaders, as wayfinders, who track, traverse and navigate the tumultuously complex and uncertain social, political and economically divided land of Israel/Palestine.

This line of inquiry uses the most recent theoretical framework for the study of social movement leadership as an analytical dimension to differentiate various types or roles of leaders. Ganz and McKenna (2019) theory of leadership practice is based on three interdependent propositions: (1) that movement leadership can be conceptualized as accepting responsibility to enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty, (2) that leadership work is most evident in moments of encounter with uncertainty: a new threat, a natural disaster, a critical dilemma, a consequential election, or a sudden opportunity, and (3) that the capacity to turn such moments of uncertainty – and potential agency – into constructive purpose by responding as opposed to reacting is rooted in the cultivation of five leadership practices: (1) relationship building; (2) storytelling; (3) strategizing; (4) structuring; and (5) action. This framework will be used to analyze the practice of movement leaders in the Great Return March in Palestine to align their practices with wayfinding principles. Wayfinding Leadership offers a holistic approach to leadership based on the principle of mana: the ability to unlock the potential in others, collectively having alertness of the mind, wakefulness of the heart, being attuned in the spirit and grounded in the belly. The five waypoints are: (1) orientation on how to lead, (2) Implementing Values, (3) Human Dynamics, (4) Deepening practices, (5) Exploring and Discovering Destinations. The four main themes underpin the wayfinding and leading system are (1) Mana, (2) Mauri Ora, (3) Philosophy of Recognition and (4) Sphere Intelligence. The Wayfinding leadership style/type exudes responsive, detailed and disciplined engagement with an unfolding and continuously changing environment, which accurately describes the terrains of social movements. The new leader categorization will then be used to study the varying effects of this leader style (type/role) on the key practices identified in the Great Return March in Palestine.

By utilizing Ganz and McKenna’s practice of leadership alternative theoretical framework and by drawing on wayfinding principles to categorize leader type/role based on these practices, we can explore the effects of leader role/type on movement dynamics, which guides our understanding beyond the practice of leadership to the spirit of leadership. Arriving at an understanding of the spirit of leadership where leaders transition individuals’ interests to shared values, transform grievances to actions, transcend uncertainty and complexities and ultimately “call the island” / “call the movement” to them, can aid exploring the role of leaders in actualizing social movements for change.

1. What types of leaders have led movements in Palestine?
2. What role have leaders played in social movements in Palestine?
3. Based on the five leadership practices offered “Practice of Leadership” theoretical framework, how has leadership been practiced in social movements in Palestine?
4. What effects have these practices had on social movements in Palestine?
5. How can the use of the Wayfinding leadership framework identify and categorize leadership style/roles in social movements based on their practices?
6. What categorization of leadership types/roles identified in the Wayfinding leadership explains the practices of movement leaders in Palestine?
7. Based on these new leader types/roles, how does the leadership type/role impact social movements in Palestine?
8. How and why were leaders successful or not at actualizing movement goals?
9. How can identifying new categorizations of leader types/roles and its effects on social movements help in explaining the variation in movement dynamics?
10. What leadership styles (type/role) are best suited for actualizing social movements for social/policy change?