

# Creative Leadership

Contexts and Prospects

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## 2 On the Relationship Between Creative Leadership and Contextual Variability

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### Introduction

Twelve years ago, Porter and McLaughlin (2006: 559) revisited a long-standing question about research on leadership in organizations:

Leadership in organizations does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place in organizational contexts. The key issue, therefore, is whether, and to what extent, the organizational context has been front and center in recent leadership literature. That is, does a relative void still exist in the research literature on the impact of the organizational context on leadership?

Searching for an empirical answer, Porter and McLaughlin analyzed 373 articles about leadership published in 21 major journals between 1990 and 2005. They measured organizational context as a constellation of elements, such as culture/climate; goals, strategies, and missions of individuals, teams, and organizations; demographic and capability features of people; organizational states and conditions (e.g., stability, crisis, resources); size, shape, type, and elements of structure; and dimensions of time. Although their measure of organizational context was rich and included a multitude of dimensions, Porter and McLaughlin found that 65% of the articles in their sample did not place any emphasis on organizational context, 19% placed a slight emphasis, and only 13% placed a moderate-to-strong emphasis on organizational context. They concluded that future research could be improved by “making a concerted effort to focus directly on the nature of the organizational context as a primary object of interest, rather than treating it as almost an afterthought” (573).

We recently reached similar conclusions about creative leadership research (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015). In our case, our initial intention was not to stress the role of context, but to integrate findings and insights from various research strands. We discovered, however, that the conceptualization of creative leadership varies significantly across research strands, not because of unbridgeable epistemological or methodological

discrepancies among them, but because of essential differences among the contexts wherein creative leadership is enacted. In other words, we found that contextual variability generates conceptual variability in creative leadership research.

After analyzing the sources of contextual variability that we found in the creative leadership literature, we crafted a metatheoretical model that entails three distinct collaborative contexts: *Facilitating*, *Directing*, and *Integrating* (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015). To date, we have witnessed perplexing instances where other researchers engage with the multi-context model as if the terms ‘Facilitating’, ‘Directing’, and ‘Integrating’ in it referred to individual styles and not to collaborative contexts. We have even come across the baffling idea that any leader can move into any context at any time and impose ab initio his or her own favorite stylistic mix—e.g., “a bit of facilitating, a bit of directing, and a bit of integrating”. After all, the extant leadership literature suggests that contexts constrain what leadership behaviors are considered prototypical (e.g., Liden & Antonakis, 2009: 1589; Lord et al., 2001: 314; Osborn et al., 2002: 798; see also Chapter 3 in this volume by Epitropaki, Mueller, and Lord). After all, we explicitly called the three contexts “collaborative *contexts*”; we clearly labeled the model “multi-*context* model”; we even gave the article the title “Creative Leadership: Towards a Multi-*Context* Conceptualization”. Why would anyone ignore context even when context tries so hard to be noticed?

There are many reasons that context is often ignored or sidelined in organizational research. Context defies broad generalization because it exposes the boundary conditions and other limitations of a theory (Bacharach, 1989; Liden & Antonakis, 2009). Ironically, instead of treating context as an opportunity to strengthen the sophistication and predictive validity of theories, research tends to accumulate evidence as if context did not matter (Johns, 2006; Sergeeva & Andreeva, 2016). Furthermore, researchers need to invest considerable time and effort in order to become familiar with the intricate and unique aspects of any given context (Mowday & Sutton, 1993). This is important because “apparently trivial contextual stimuli sometimes have marked effects” (Johns, 2006: 387). For example, in Chapter 9 of this volume, Bouty, Gomez, and Stierand note that in order to construct more refined interpretations about creative leadership in haute cuisine, they had to invest years in becoming “highly acquainted with their empirical field” (in fact, one of them has been a chef in haute cuisine). Most researchers, however, rarely become immersed in the context; instead, they treat it as a ‘constant’ in their study (Johns, 2006).

The paradoxical implication is that, when a number of studies on a subject claim to take into account their empirical context but in effect they treat it only as a ‘constant’, context ends up playing little or no role in the resulting findings across those studies, even when the studies are conducted in diverse contexts. For example, Thomson, Jones, and Warhurst (2007: 636) criticized the tendency of research to treat the creative industries as a single

type of work context, noting that “the distinctive characteristics of creative labor are best understood within particular sector and market contexts.” Consider also that the empirical studies that we reviewed in the Facilitating context in Mainemelis, Kark, and Epitropaki (2015) have produced largely convergent findings despite the fact they were conducted in diverse organizational contexts such as an oil field services company, an information technology company, a steel company, a cereals company, high technology firms, R&D departments, an industrial design firm, a telecommunications organization, a confectionery company, media firms, advertising agencies, management consulting firms, a non-for-profit hospital, a for-profit hospital, a petroleum drilling equipment company, an helicopter company, and a lunar design consultancy, to name a few.

Even research that pays attention to context usually focuses only on measuring a few discrete variables across contexts. This approach has many benefits, including generalization (Liden & Antonakis, 2009). For example, studies conducted in Facilitative contexts have shown that higher degrees of leader support are associated with higher degrees of employee creativity (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014; Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015). Despite its merits, however, this approach has some limitations. Because it is not concerned with how the selected variables interact with other variables in the focal context to form complex configurations, it ends up studying a set of variables in a context rather the context itself (Rousseau & Fried, 2001). As Johns (2006) noted, it “is not that context is never studied. Rather, it is that its influence is often unrecognized or underappreciated”. In other words, research that focuses on measuring discrete contextual variables across contexts ends up highlighting the primacy of contextual invariability instead of shedding light on the intricate role of contextual variability.

Moreover, this approach relies on standard quantitative tools that cannot easily capture essential qualitative differences among contexts. For instance, consider the difference between the normative expectations for a leader to be a ‘master-creator’ vs. a ‘facilitator’ of others’ creativity. This difference is not merely a question of degree that can be reliably assessed with a standard Likert-type scale. It is also a question of kind and embeddedness in social structure (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015) and requires thus more context-sensitive forms of assessment. Finally, research that measures discrete contextual variables across contexts usually focuses more on what Heath and Sitkin (2001) called ‘Big-B’ variables, which emphasize interesting behavior that may be relevant for organizations, and ‘Contextualized-B’ variables, which emphasize behavior that occurs in an organizational context, and less on ‘Big-O’ variables that emphasize behavior that is central to organizing. The tendency to ignore the ‘Big-O’ often leads to conclusions that may be elegant and valid in psychological or sociological terms, but they often leave one quarreling as to what exactly is ‘organizational’ about them (see also Blair & Hunt, 1986; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006).

I operate here under the assumption that most of us have conducted in the past research of low contextual sensitivity. It is beyond my purpose in the present chapter to suggest ways for strengthening the contextualization of future studies (see Blair & Hunt, 1986; Liden & Antonakis, 2009; Rousseau & Fried, 2001). Instead, I discuss how the multi-context model can be used as a metatheoretical tool for revealing significant patterns of contextual variability in the extant creative leadership literature. Drawing on past analyses of the role of context in organizational research in general, and in leadership research more specifically, I highlight the critical role that context plays in our capacity to understand the pluralistic manifestations of creative leadership in organizations. Building on the multi-context model, I also propose a set of insights about what constitutes context in creative leadership; its levels, dimensions, and configurations; and some key organizational sources of contextual variability in creative leadership.

### **What Constitutes Context?**

“The term ‘context’ comes from a Latin root meaning ‘to knit together’ or ‘to make a connection’” (Rousseau & Fried, 2001: 1). In social science, context generally refers to “stimuli and phenomena that surround and thus exist in the environment external to the individual, most often at a different level of analysis” (Mowday & Sutton, 1993: 198). With regard to behavior in organizations, context refers to “situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behavior as well as functional relationships between variables” (Johns, 2006: 386). In more specific reference to leadership, context “is the milieu—the physical and social environment—in which leadership is observed” (Liden & Antonakis, 2009: 1587).

Understanding a given context requires in-depth investigation and thick description of its essential properties (Rousseau & Fried, 2001: 7; Sergeeva & Andreeva, 2016: 256). Seminal examples of delicately contextualized creative leadership research include Bouty and Gomez’s (2010) study of the evolution of creative practices under three different head chefs in a Michelin-starred restaurant in France over an eight-year period; Lingo and O’Mahony’s (2010) study of the creative brokerage of 23 independent music producers in the Nashville music industry; Marotto, Roos, and Victor’s (2007) study of the performance of an Eastern European orchestra under four different conductors; and Murnighan and Conlon’s (1991) study of leadership and team dynamics in 20 string quartets in Great Britain. These studies went beyond testing or extending known theories, models, or relationships: they all revealed, in quite vivid and compelling ways, how creative leadership is related to specific exigencies of practice, intricate elements of the social structure, and other aspects of the focal context.

While understanding any given context requires focused investigation, understanding contextual variability requires a different approach. Exploring why and how the manifestations of a phenomenon vary across different contexts requires the identification of a few fundamental contextual dimensions in order to craft a metatheoretical framework for contrasting, comparing, and integrating the findings of research studies conducted in different contexts (Johns, 2006: 391; Liden & Antonakis, 2009: 1594). In order to develop such a framework, we recently posed the question, *which contextual dimensions are particularly relevant to understanding the manifestations of creative leadership across contexts?* (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015). Searching for a response that was grounded in the extant literature, we reasoned that a proper metatheoretical framework must meet two criteria. First, it must specify contextual aspects that have been solidly theorized as being central to the phenomena of creativity, leadership, and creative leadership; and second, sufficient empirical evidence should exist that the variable configurations of those contextual aspects are related to the variable manifestations of creative leadership.

With regard to the first criterion, we found that there is substantial agreement in the literature that creativity in organizational contexts requires both creative contributions (e.g., generating and developing new ideas), and supportive contributions (e.g., providing psychological, social, or/and material support for creativity) (Amabile, 1988; Amabile et al., 1996; Ford, 1996; Madjar, Oldham, & Pratt, 2002; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Simonton, 2002, 2004a, 2004b). With regard to the second criterion, we discovered in the empirical literature three manifestations of creative leadership, which differ in terms of the ratio of leader/follower creative contributions and in terms of the corresponding ratio of leader/follower supportive contributors.

We proposed hence a multi-context model of three collaborative contexts of creative leadership: *Facilitating employee creativity, Directing the materialization of a leader's creative vision, and Integrating heterogeneous creative contributions*. In the Facilitative context, creative leadership focuses on eliciting and supporting followers' creative contributions. In the Directive context, creative leaders act as primary (but not lone or sole) creators who elicit and use followers' supportive contributions. In the Integrative context, creative leadership focuses on eliciting heterogeneous creative contributions from followers and synthesizing them with the leader's own creative contributions (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015; see also Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1). We also clarified that whether creative leadership will be manifested in the form of Facilitating, Directing, or Integrating ultimately depends on a dynamic confluence of cultural, industry, organizational, professional, personal, and task characteristics. In the next section, I discuss how this model can help us understand the tendency of different research strands to focus on different levels of the organizational context.

## Levels and Configurations of Context

Johns (2006) portrayed context as entailing two levels, the omnibus and the discrete. The omnibus context refers broadly to an entity that entails many features and particulars. He noted that research about the omnibus context should tell a ‘story’ that describes *what* (substantive content of the study), *who* (occupational and demographic elements), *where* (location of region, culture, industry), *when* (absolute and relative time), and *why* (rationale for the conduct of the study). The discrete context refers to the particular contextual variables or levers that shape behavior or attitudes, and includes the task context (e.g., autonomy, uncertainty, accountability, resources), the social context (social density, social structure, and direct social influence), and the physical context (e.g., temperature, light, the built environment, and décor). Johns (2006: 391) suggested,

Discrete can be viewed as nested within omnibus context such that the effects of omnibus context are mediated by discrete contextual variables. . . [which] provide the explanatory link between more descriptive and general omnibus context and specific organizational behavior and attitudes.

Similarly, Rousseau and Fried (2001: 4) suggested,

Whether circumstances intersect in ways that are fortuitous, fearful, or somewhat in between, a configuration of facts may be necessary to understand their meaning. A set of factors, when considered together, can sometimes yield a more interpretable and theoretically interesting pattern than any of the factors would show in isolation. All studies omit variables. But when neglected variables are causally significant, their omission creates problems in interpreting results. . . . Taking a richer slice of the organizational setting, its practices, and how people react to them is necessary to identify effects that derive from configurations and more detailed descriptions of settings and their distinct features can help us identify what those configurations comprise.

This view leads to a second question: *is creative leadership located in the omnibus context, the discrete context, or in one of their configurations?* Theoretically, all leadership must ultimately belong to a complex configuration that spans and connects the two levels of the context and the behaviors and attitudes that they influence (Blair & Hunt, 1986; Heath & Sitkin, 2001; Johns, 2006). For example, Osborn et al. (2002: 798) suggested that leadership

is socially constructed in and from a context where patterns over time must be considered and where history matters. Leadership is not only



the incremental influence of a boss toward subordinates, but most important it is the collective incremental influence of leaders in and around the system.

More often than not, however, creative leadership research takes into account only selected contextual aspects. Research on Facilitative creative leadership focuses on the discrete context, especially the social context. This body of research treats employee creativity as the dependent variable and works backward to identify personal and contextual characteristics that affect it (Zhou & Shalley, 2008: 351). Creative leadership is viewed as one of the most important elements of the social context that affects employee creativity (Amabile et al., 2004; Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014; Hunter, Bedell, & Mumford, 2007; Zhou & Shalley, 2008). This approach is consistent with interactionist theories of creativity (e.g., Amabile, 1988; Ford, 1996; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993) and with the observation that employee creativity is related more strongly to proximal contextual factors than to distal ones (Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2000). Furthermore, by usually focusing sharply on a set of elements in the discrete context, research on Facilitative creative leadership tends to explain with greater psychological precision several micro-dimensions of creative leadership.

On the other hand, this approach does not shed sufficient light on how Facilitative creative leadership is related to the omnibus context. Besides a few seminal exceptions that have addressed aspects of the omnibus context (e.g., organizational downsizing, Amabile & Conti, 1999; cultural values, Shin & Zhou, 2003; educational specialization heterogeneity, Shin & Zhou, 2007; and diversity, Kakarika in Chapter 7 of this volume), most studies in the Facilitative context focus only on the proximal social context and the task context. Creative leadership, however, cannot be fully understood if studied only as an isolated antecedent of employee creative behavior. Put another way, if creative leadership is part of the social context of employee creativity, what constitutes the social and organizational context of creative leadership itself? Engaging with this question; addressing the associated 'who', 'where', and 'when' elements of the omnibus context; and exploring more carefully the links among the omnibus and the discrete levels are important steps toward increasing the contextual sensitivity of this stream of research.

In contrast, research on Directive creative leadership emphasizes the omnibus context. Directive creative leadership is usually manifested in work contexts where there is a substantial overlap between the identity of the organization and the identity of the leader, or/and where the creative leader's personal mark is otherwise visible or recognizable in the final creative product (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015). Not surprisingly, many elements of the omnibus context, especially the 'who' of leadership, play a central role in this body of research. Unlike studies in Facilitative

contexts, in which the ‘who’ is nearly always anonymous, studies in Directive contexts provide vivid accounts of eponymous ‘who’, for example, chefs Ferran Adrià (Svejenova, Planellas, & Vives, 2010), Bernard Loiseau (Paris & Leroy, 2014), Alain Passard (Gomez & Bouty, 2011), René Redzepi (Messeni Petruzzelli, & Savino, 2014), Moreno Cedroni, Davide Scabin (Slavich, Cappetta, & Salvemini, 2014), Daniel Boulud (Inversini, Manzoni, & Salvemini, 2014), Fergus Henderson, Raymon Blanc, Michel Troisgros (Stierand, 2015), and architects Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Sir Edwin Lutyens, Ludwig Mies van de Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright (Jones, 2010) and Frank Gehry (Bennis, 2003). Even when such studies keep the ‘who’ anonymous, they usually discuss in detail the leader’s professional role, for example, “orchestra conductor” (Faulkner, 1973a; Marotto, Roos, & Victor, 2007) or “Michelin-star chef” (Fauchart & von Hippel, 2008). Because Directive collaborative contexts are usually associated with institutionalized and stratified settings with well-defined statuses and roles (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015), professional roles usually convey a wealth of information about the leader and the context wherein s/he operates (Johns, 2006).

In order to link the omnibus context with a focal set of behaviors or attitudes, research on Directive creative leadership usually pays attention to various dimensions of the discrete context as well. Although the resulting research may not always have the sharp focus or/and the psychological precision of research in Facilitative contexts, it tends to be more configurational (cf. Rousseau & Fried, 2001) and more informative about the vital connections among intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and institutional factors (see, for example, Faulkner, 1973b; Marotto, Roos, & Victor, 2007; and Stierand, 2015). On the other hand, because research on Directive creative leadership is often conducted in settings described as institutionalized or/and stratified, the generalizability of its findings is often more limited or/and not always clear.

Finally, research on Integrative creative leadership tends to focus more on configurations of omnibus and discrete elements. In Integrative contexts, creativity depends upon the creative synthesis of multiple and heterogeneous creative contributions made by the leader and the followers (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015). Research on Integrative creative leadership often examines temporary projects (e.g., filmmaking, opera, theater, video game production), where the leader is directly involved in forming the temporary collective and thereafter managing its relationships with internal and external constituencies. This body of research pays attention to dynamic processes and network exchanges that run through the omnibus and discrete levels and the external environment as well. In fact, creative leadership in this literature is often portrayed as a grand effort to configure human, symbolic, and technical capital sourced from inside and outside the organization (e.g., Lampel & Shamsie, 2003; Obstfeld, 2012; Perretti & Negro, 2007). For example, Lingo and O’Mahony’s (2010) study of nexus

practices illustrates how creative leaders form novel creative collectives that encompass various omnibus, discrete, and other external elements; and how they later utilize the power associated with their position in the temporary network in order to navigate relational tensions and other challenging professional exchanges.

Other studies focus more on collective forms of creative leadership in Integrative contexts. In this case, the integration of heterogeneous creative inputs into a final creative product is not an act of single leadership, but an act of dual (e.g., Alvarez & Svejnova, 2002; Hunter et al., 2012; Sicca, 1997), rotated (e.g., Barrett, 1998; Davis & Eisenhardt, 2011), or shared leadership (e.g., Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Harvey, 2014; Harvey & Kou, 2013). In any case, this research stream tends to focus more on fluid processes and their configurations and less on static elements of either the omnibus or the discrete context. Although research in Integrative contexts is more process-orientated and less static than research in Facilitative contexts, the generalizability of its findings is often more limited due to the temporary, less traditional, and often idiosyncratic nature of the work contexts where it is usually conducted.

### **Organizational Sources of Contextual Variability**

Johns (2006: 386) observed that when empirical results surprise us, it is often because “of our failure to consider contextual influence when doing research”. Paying attention to context is therefore essential to understanding the variable exigencies of organizational practice and the variable realities of social structure that influence the phenomena that we investigate (Osborn et al., 2002). This leads to a third question: *which contextual factors influence whether creative leadership will be manifested as Facilitating, Directing, or Integrating?* Put another way, which factors influence the ratios of leader/follower creative contributions and leader/follower supportive contributors? Organizational contexts fall on a continuum from “weakly” to “strongly” structured in terms of how the opportunities for making creative contributions are distributed among the members of the collective (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015). The stronger the organizational context, the more *ex-ante* influences it imposes on how creative leadership will be manifested.

Let me return at this point to Porter and McLaughlin’s (2006: 573) call for “a concerted effort to focus directly on the nature of the organizational context as a primary object of interest, rather than treating it as almost an afterthought”. The three contexts of creative leadership are not organizational contexts themselves, but contexts of creative collaboration nested within organizational contexts (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015). What exactly is ‘organizational’ then about Facilitating, Directing, and Integrating? I suggest next that the three contexts are shaped by different configurations of organizational conditions, as summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Organizational Sources of Contextual Variability in Creative Leadership

<i>Organizational Dimensions</i>	<i>Creative Leadership Contexts</i>		
	<i>Facilitating</i>	<i>Directing</i>	<i>Integrating</i>
Strategic role of creativity	Usually not central to the organization	Central to the identity of the organization	Central to the products of the organization
Functional role of creativity	Problem searching and problem solving; more creative ideas, more often, by more people	Craft, maintain, and evolve an authentic creative identity	Creative synthesis of multiple heterogeneous contributions
Key learning mode	Separation	Codification and teachability	Recombination
Structure	Usually permanent, usually hierarchical	Usually permanent, usually institutionalized or/and stratified	Usually temporary, often networked, often egalitarian
Size	Any	Usually small	Usually small
Key location in the social structure	Organizational positions	Usually professional roles	Usually professional roles
Perceived importance of creativity in leadership	Creativity is usually not seen as essential to leadership	Creativity is usually seen as essential to leadership	Creativity is usually seen as essential to leadership
Ex-ante normative expectations about creative leadership	More creative contributions from the followers, more supportive contributions from the leader	More creative contributions from the leader, more supportive contributions from the followers	Creative and supportive contributions from both the leader(s) and the followers, synthesis from the leader(s)

Some organizations (e.g., movie companies, music companies, theaters, video game companies) depend on the ongoing creation of new products that are complex and require substantial degrees of creativity (e.g., movies, music records). Because these products require distinct creative contributions made by different professionals, creativity usually takes the form of a higher order synthesis of heterogeneous creative inputs. In such organizations, learning is usually achieved through the recombination of human

capital (Grabher, 2004), work takes the form of a temporary project that is usually small in size and often has a networked form, professional roles tend to be more important than fixed organizational positions (Bechky, 2006), collaborative climate is often egalitarian, and leadership may take the form of a single leader (e.g., Lingo, 2010; Mainemelis & Epitropaki, 2013), dual (e.g., Hunter et al., 2012; Sicca, 1997), rotated (e.g., Davis & Eisenhardt, 2011), or shared leadership (e.g., Harvey, 2014; Harvey & Kou, 2013). In such organizational contexts, creativity is usually seen as essential to leadership, regardless of whether leadership is single, dual, rotated, or shared. When these factors are present in the organizational context, it is more likely that the collaborative context will be Integrative, that is, it will place *ex-ante normative expectations* upon the leader(s) and the followers to make both creative and supportive contributions, and upon the leader(s) to be in charge of the synthesis of the heterogeneous inputs.

In contrast, in other organizations creativity is central not only to the products but also to the identity of the organization, and, furthermore, there is often a close relationship between the identity of the creative leader and the identity of the organization (Jones, Anand, & Alvarez, 2005). The functional role of creativity in such organizational contexts (e.g., haute cuisine, boutique architectural firms) is not to produce diverse new ideas per se, but rather, to strengthen the development and maintenance of an authentic creative identity that permeates all aspects of the organization's existence. The key organizational learning modes, codification, and teachability, ensure that the creative vision and personal 'signature' of the creative leader are replicated in all products generated by the followers in the work context (Slavich, Cappetta, & Salvemini, 2014; see also Chapter 9 in this volume). Such organizational contexts tend to be highly institutionalized or/and stratified, more hierarchical than egalitarian, small and permanent in structural terms, and professional roles in them tend to be more important than organizational positions. Creativity in such organizational contexts is usually perceived as essential to leadership. When these factors are present in the organizational context, it is more likely that the collaborative context will be Directive; that is, it will place *ex-ante normative expectations* upon the leader to make more creative contributions and upon the followers to make more supportive contributions.

Finally, in many organizations creativity is not central to the identity of the organization or its products, although it might be important in some of its units or operations. Creativity here takes the more free-flowing form of problem-searching and problem-solving through enhanced autonomy (e.g., Amabile et al., 1996), and/or the form of more structured organizational practices, such as brainstorming (e.g., Sutton & Hargadon, 1996) and idea suggestions schemes (e.g., Frese, Teng, & Wijnen, 1999). Such organizational contexts seek to elicit more creative ideas, more often, by more people in the work context. In order to increase the number of creative ideas, such organizations cannot depend only on the leader or any other given individual. Rather, they have to promote creativity more broadly among employees. These contexts tend to be permanent; more hierarchical; and

in them organizational positions tend to be more important than professional roles. Such contexts tend to pursue creativity by separating people so that they can be creative through different pathways (Grabher, 2004). More often than not, leader creativity in such contexts is not seen as essential to leadership, however, leadership is often seen as essential to fostering employee creativity. When these factors are present in the organizational context, it is more likely that the collaborative context will be Facilitative, that is, it will place *ex-ante normative expectations* upon the leader to make more supportive contributions and upon the followers to make more creative contributions.

Table 2.1 summarizes the organizational sources of contextual variability in creative leadership. I clarify that by calling them ‘organizational’ I do not mean to understate the influences of the larger contexts wherein organizations and their members are embedded, such as industries, fields, and professions. Rather, I assume that these influences are absorbed to some extent by the organizational context; they interact with other unique factors in it, such as elements of the organizational culture; and they are exerted upon the collaborative dynamics of creativity in the organizational context in uniquely patterned ways. In addition, I do not mean to underplay the importance of personal factors in shaping the emergence of the three collaborative contexts. Rather, I assume that the ‘stronger’ the organizational context, the less likely that the personal characteristics of the leader will determine *ex-ante* whether the collaborative context will take the form of Facilitating, Directing, and Integrating. I also assume that there is substantial between-person variability within the same context and that individual leadership styles play a role in this respect, as Chapter 14 in this volume suggests. That said, I wish to emphasize, first, the role of the organizational context as a source of variability in creative leadership, and second, the fact that, as the organizational structure becomes stronger, the emergence of the three collaborative contexts is shaped more by a set of variable contextual factors and less by a set of contextually invariable leadership styles.

## Conclusion

In light of recent evidence that the manifestations of creative leadership vary substantially across contexts, I have argued that creative leadership research needs to improve both the degree of contextualization of its studies and its overall awareness of the role of contextual variability. With regard to the latter, I have suggested that the multi-context model offers a metatheoretical platform for analyzing and integrating patterns of contextual differences observed in the literature. I have offered a set of insights about what constitutes context in creative leadership, its level and configurations, and the basic organizational sources of variability in creative leadership.

Although the arguments summarized in Table 2.1 are grounded in the extant literature (see Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015), future research should examine empirically their validity, and develop and further refine them. For example, while Chapters 11 and 12 in this volume examine

Integrative creative leadership, they focus on different structural configurations: the former focuses more on stable structures and the latter more on temporary structures. Future research could enhance our understanding of creative leadership by examining in more fine-grained ways such differences within and between the three contexts. In addition, while I have focused more on organizational sources of variability, future research could elaborate on the multi-context model in order to examine other contextual and personal differences within and among the three contexts.

In conclusion, Porter and McLaughlin (2006: 574) argued that research should pay more attention to the dynamic aspects and processes of organizational contexts. As they put it, “In effect, there is a need to build more movies rather than just snapshots” (574). In this chapter, I have suggested that the multi-context model offers to creative leadership researchers a metatheoretical conceptual tool that they can use in order to make such composite ‘movies’ out of numerous research snapshots.

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