Title: Distributed Leadership in DMOs: A Review of Literature and Directions for Future Research

Abstract: Amidst key emergent challenges for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and destinations triggered by changes in the funding and governance landscape for tourism on a global scale, Distributed Leadership (DL) has emerged as a promising concept to provide a collaborative framework for channelling resources and leadership to cope with such changes. Current evidence from academic literature discussing the importance of embedding shared forms of leadership is scarce, few studies discuss the application of DL in the context of DMOs.

The key purpose of this conceptual study is to provide a critical overview of key DL contributions in the mainstream and DMO academic literature. The study seeks to examine the relevance of DL in the context of DMOs with the purpose to stimulate future empirical investigations in the application of DL in DMO organisations.

Keywords: Destination Management Organisations, Tourism, Distributed Leadership, Destination, Leadership.

1. INTRODUCTION

Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) are challenged to function within a significant degree of uncertainty brought by shifts in public funding and governance in large-to-small scale tourism destinations on a global level (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013). Two key defining features of the new funding and governance landscape have been the reduction of governmental funding for DMOs (see Hristov & Ramkissoon, 2016) and state-driven initiatives aimed at encouraging the transition from public-based to private-based leadership (Reinhold et al, 2015; Estêvão, Carneiro & Teixeira, 2013). Collectively, these two features in

the context of tourism management and within DMOs in particular, have created a necessity for a better distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities among DMO members and the pooling of individual DMO member resources (see for example, Kozak, Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014).

Shifts in DMO governance and funding provide opportunities for the introduction of new models with a focus beyond traditional management and marketing to enable DMOs to flourish within this new landscape. Reflecting on reduced governmental funding, increased supply and lack of adequate planning, Carrillo-Hidalgo and Pulido-Fernández (2019) refer to the emergence of private-public DMOs which actively involve the private sector and ensures diverse financial streams. The changes within the landscape of DMOs have initiated a need for new forms of leaderships, such as DL, which can provide opportunities for DMOs to navigate through uncertainty whilst delivering value and impact to its members (see also Chaperon, 2017).

The decline of governmental support and state-led leadership for tourism destinations and DMOs do not depend on geographical positions, significant reductions in state funding can be monitored in many destinations and DMOs worldwide (see for example, Hristov & Naumov, 2015; Scott & Marzano, 2015). As pointed out by Kennell (2013), there has been much controversy and disagreement across a number of destinations and DMOs concerning the extent to which public funding is considered across the critically important pillars of the local economic development. Governments across the globe are now empowering DMOs and various significant stakeholders to play a more active leadership role. DMOs are tasked to identify alternative, yet sustainable funding mechanisms for some of their operations through the introduction of new models with a focus beyond management and marketing (Reinhold et al., 2015; Reinhold, et al., 2019).

Current conceptual contributions discussing the relevance and application of DL to DMOs, however, remain scarce (Hristov & Zehrer, 2019; Kozak et al., 2014). Equally, evidence of critical discussions providing an overview of the gaps in the DL literature in a DMO context and recommendations for key future research strands into the two concepts is limited. The key purpose of this conceptual study is to conduct a critical overview of key DL contributions in the mainstream and DMO literature and debate the relevance of DL to DMOs, and as such to inform future empirical investigations into the role of DL in a DMO context and practice. This paper aims to:

(1) discuss and debate the importance of embedding shared forms of leadership and defines the concept of DL and its relevance to DMOs and destinations;

(2) identify key broad and specific gaps in the mainstream leadership and DMO-specific literature in relation to DL and position key avenues for future research that have the potential to advance distributed leadership practice in DMOs.

The study draws on experience from DMOs in the UK (particularly England) and their shifting operational environment (see Hristov & Ramkissoon, 2016). Bornhorst, Ritchie and Sheehan (2010) argue that there is a strong relationship between the establishment of any leadership practices and the intentions of governments to promote a more inclusive and participatory approach to destination management. This is particularly the case in the context of DMOs in England where there has been a shift in terms of the allocation of state funds and wider governance landscape (see Hristov, 2017). Responsibility for destination leadership and financing related projects and operations has been transitioned to DMOs and their supported member organisations. This transition calls for the distribution of leadership and funding to support the very purpose of DMOs in destinations. Funding and governance constraints faced by DMOs, however, are not specific to this particular context (Scott & Marzano, 2015).

This organisational change in the role and functions and disruptions to the operational body of DMOs is also seen in other countries, such as Italy and Switzerland (see Reinhold, Laesser & Beritelli, 2015; Scott & Marzano, 2015). Key developments in the broad organisational and leadership literature relevant to this study, namely the role of leadership in organisational transformation, are examined. The paper continues by linking these developments with a conceptual discussion into a number of collaborative forms of leadership as related to organisational change. The emergent role of distributed forms of leadership in contemporary DMOs and its relevance to destinations are also debated. The current progress of the mainstream DL literature in DMOs and destinations are then discussed, with the view to provide recommendations to bridge the gaps between academic theory and professional practice.

2. THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE: LEADING CHANGE IN DMOs

As discussed at the outset of this paper, shifts in terms of state funding and destination governance prompt organisational change on a DMO level. The role of leadership in leading change at an organisational level has been considered as important both in the tourism literature (Hristov, Ramkissoon, 2016; Hristov, Scott & Minocha, 2018) and the mainstream organisational management and leadership literature (Graetz 2000; Hallinger & Kantamara 2000; Mullins 2013). Harris et al. (2007) discuss the importance of conducting further enquiry into the interplay between DL and organisational transformation:

> "The evidence is able to confirm that there is an important relationship between distributed leadership and organisational change which makes it worth further investigation and scrutiny."

> Harris et al. (2007, p.345)

The new landscape for DMOs and more specifically, their funding mechanisms, has been characterised with significant complexity and uncertainty (Coles et al. 2014). These challenges have been recognised and debated during the *2nd Biennial Forum Advances in Destination Management* in St Gallen, Switzerland:

"public budgets are increasingly squeezed, and austerity measures dominate the agendas of government bodies at different levels … as is already the case in countries, such as Italy and the United Kingdom."

(Reinhold et al. 2015, p.3)

A transition from traditionally influential organisational literature domains in the field of DMOs and destinations (see for example, Beritelli, Bieger & Laesser, 2007; Pechlaner, Raich & Beritelli, 2010; Pechlaner, Volgger & Herntrei, 2012) has emerged as an opportunity to navigate through management changes and decision-making (Hristov & Zehrer, 2019). This emergent paradigm demands significant attention to bridge the gaps between theory and practice (Morrison, 2013).

Recent developments that have led to rethinking of traditional organisational paradigms are also evident in the organisations undergoing change. This paper draws on the extant mainstream literature on leadership to explore the latest theoretical developments and practitioner trends to establish a link between recent advances in the mainstream organisational leadership literature and DMOs and destinations.

Modern organisations are very complex entities (Owen & Dietz, 2012) and as such, are well placed to facilitate the development of leadership and importantly shared types of leadership (Pearce, 2004). The importance of developing leadership capabilities amid uncertainty in the operational environment is also acknowledged (Chambers et al., 2010). Change is about leadership (Gill, 2002), which requires a strong vision of the organisation's

future. Vision in leadership is therefore a driving force (Senge, 1990), which may be of key importance in times of organisational change and shifting organisational priorities.

Traditional theories of leadership tend to examine characteristics, attitudes and multiple values held by individual leaders (Bass, 1985; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999) in addition to discussing leadership roles of inspirational, heroic and visionary examples (see Nanus, 1992). This set of theories follows predominantly orthodox leadership paradigms. Previous research has outlined the significance of the context, i.e. the place where leadership occurs (see for example, Martin et al., 2009).

This paper provides a critical investigation of key DL contributions within the mainstream business and DMO academic literature and debates the need for more contextual investigations to study the role of DL in the context of DMOs. It does so by providing evidence of contextually-embedded leadership (Chreim, 2015) with a focus on the transition from autocratic approaches in management (e.g. dominating local government) and traditionally 'heroic' leadership towards shared forms of leadership (see Cope et al., 2011). The premise of the study is that traditional (e.g. individualistic, heroic) leadership models are ill-equipped to explain and theorise on the largely complex and uncertain context that contemporary organisations inhabit (Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Oborn et al., 2013). The study also argues that more studies are needed and suggests key avenues for further research exploring the potential to integrate DL to DMOs at a time of reduced state funding and shifting DMO and destination governance globally.

3. SHARED FORMS OF LEADERSHIP IN RESPONSE TO ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

3.1 The rationale for sharing leadership

Shared forms of leadership, such as DL are gaining wider acceptance in contemporary

organisations. As argued by Cullen-Lester & Yammarino (2016, p.173), "a paradigm shift has occurred within the field – many scholars now view leadership as a property of the collective, not the individual". Contemporary organisations, regardless of their vision, mission and objectives, are constantly challenged to rethink their modus operandi in order to achieve sustainable structures, deliver value to their members, flourish and compete successfully (Cullen and Yammarino 2014; Mullins 2013).

Leadership and its shared or distributed dimensions have been endorsed by scholars and practitioners due to their potential to bring about improvements to leadership practice (Hopkins 2001). Kotter (2007) contends that successful organisational transformations require a 'leadership coalition' from within the organisation. A leadership coalition is often powerful, it captures diverse titles, expertise, reputations and information enabling members of the organisation to set and achieve common goals (Kotter, 2007). Organisational decision-making in collective settings is therefore governed by the interaction and expertise of multiple individuals (Harris, 2008). Emphasis on the interaction of individuals is a key strength of shared forms of leadership. Hristov & Zehrer (2019) introduced the DMO Leadership Cycle (see Figure 1) as an emergent conceptual framework to explain how reshaped DMOs are called upon to move beyond traditional organisational paradigms and explore opportunities presented by DL.
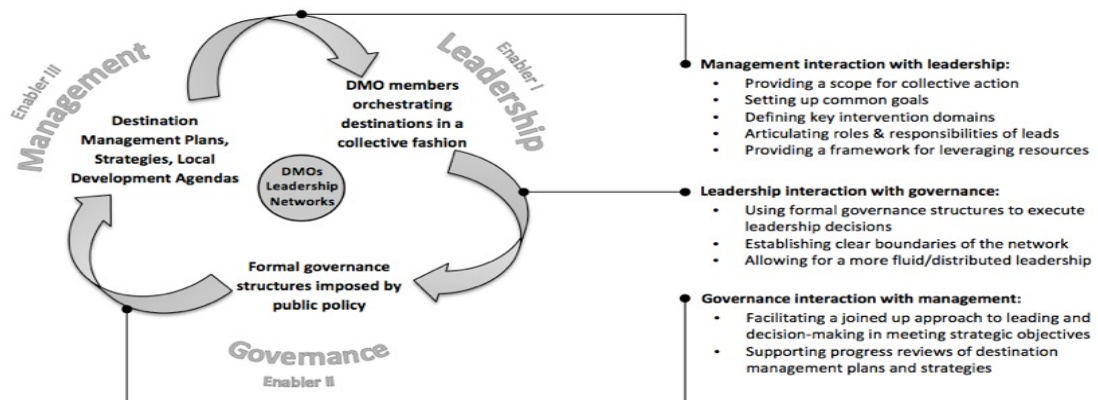

Figure 1: DMO Leadership Cycle (Source: Hristov & Zehrer, 2019)

The three dimensions are indeed enablers, which provide the conditions and structures to allow for DMOs to serve as DL networks are:

- DMO member organisations seen as a lead network of stakeholders (DMO Leadership Cycle's Leadership dimension);

- DMOs as formal governance structures defining boundaries of the lead network (DMO Leadership Cycle's Governance dimension); and

- Destination Management Plans (DMPs) providing strategic vision and direction for DL (DMO Leadership Cycle's Management dimension)

The three building blocks are seen as enablers of DL on a DMO level and provide a framework to explain how DMOs can serve as leadership networks in destinations (Hristov & Zehrer, 2015).

The above transition is seen as a paradigm shift from an orthodox and 'heroic' leadership to more shared forms of leadership, that recognise that "teams, organisations, coalitions, communities, networks, systems, and other collectives carry out leadership functions through a collective social process" (Cullen & Yammarino, 2014, p.1). As a result, the critical discourse in academia and practice has resulted in the provision of a number of definitions and conceptualisations of leadership and its collective dimensions (see Table 1).

Key Leadership theories		
Theory	**Source**	**Defining features**
Collectivistic leadership	Friedrich et al. (2016)	• Leadership as a changing process in which a leader may utilise the attributes of followers according to his/her purpose • Leaders allocate elements of the leadership role among their followers as per the situation needs.
Distributed leadership	Gibb (1954)	• Leadership is based on and thus heavily shaped by shared interactions within the firm. • Takes into account organizational contexts

Collective leadership	Friedrich et al. (2009)	• Leadership is a function of collectively utilizing knowledge and skills of individuals in a network possess • Information and communication are key to the emergence of leadership
Emergent leadership	Kickul and Neuman (2000)	• Leadership is aimed at establishing conditions necessary to the accomplishment of goals and objectives • Personality traits and abilities define emergent leaders
Team/Group leadership	Day et al. (2014)	• Leadership is based on the improvement of team performance • Organisational context defines the nature of team leadership
Flock leadership	Will (2016)	• Leadership model characterised with emergent collective behaviour • Organisational challenges unlock the practice of flock leadership through interactions
Contingent leadership	Yun et al. (2005)	• Leadership that applies to some situations but not to others. • Leadership model shaped by specific situational elements
Group leadership	van Ginkel and van Knippenberg (2012)	• Leadership that shapes a group's understanding of their tasks (jobs) • Group leaders provide directions on how to approach a group task and focus on performance
Network leadership	Balkundi and Kilduf (2005)	• Leadership is socially embedded in a network of individuals • Leadership influence relies on social networks
Shared leadership	Fitzsimons et al. 2011	• Addresses leadership development in team-based settings • Focus on the collective dimension of decision-making, but omitting the role of interaction and context

Table 1. Key Leadership Theories (Source: Authors)

Amid multiple definitions and conceptualisations of leadership and its shared or distributed dimensions, the dominant discourse has focused on two concepts, namely Shared Leadership (SL) and Distributed Leadership (DL) (see for example, Bolden 2011; Fitzsimons et al., 2011), which are both discussed later in this paper. DL is the second of the three

organisational literature domains from the mainstream organisational literature, which underpins and informs the cross-disciplinary approach applied in this study, drawing a line between the concepts of SL and DL in the context of DMOs.

3.2 Shared leadership versus distributed leadership from a DMO's perspective

Discussions in academia as to whether Shared Leadership (SL) and DL are interchangeable terms have been extensive (see Bolden et al., 2011; Fitzsimons et al., 2011). Hairon and Hoh (2014) emphasise the limited agreement towards a clear definition of DL, which can potentially be translated across diverse disciplines. Friedrich et al. (2016, p.313) also note this trend in the leadership domain, where "there is frequent overlap in definitions and use of the same words interchangeably (e.g. shared and distributed leadership)". Fitzsimons et al. (2011) attempt to address this overlap of definitions by putting forward a four-fold discussion on the key characteristics of these largely overlapping, yet contrasting concepts within the wider leadership paradigm.

Distributed leadership is far more inclusive as it goes beyond a focus on team-based leadership to capture entire firms as units of analysis and importantly, takes into account their organisational environs (Fitzsimons et al., 2011). In other words, in DL the key focus is on leadership at an organisational level, whereas SL addresses leadership development in team-based settings (Ruark & Mumford, 2009). As such, DL is in line with the main organisational subject discussed in this paper, namely a formal organisational structure (i.e. DMO) and its organisational environment.

Secondly, unlike SL relying on individuals solely leading themselves, DL practice is based on and significantly influenced by internal processes within the firm and its internal environment. Interactions, in the case of DMOs are arguably best studied through the lens of DL as this approach has the ability to capture the role of developmental resource exchange and communication (e.g. provision of expertise and skills, financial and non-financial resources),

which is a fundamental consideration of the largely resource-constrained DMOs (see Hristov & Zehrer, 2015). DL therefore goes beyond SL, where the primary focus of the latter is on the collective dimension of decision-making and thus largely omitting the role of interaction (Fitzsimons et al., 2011), which is key to the emergent network-shaped organisations (Buchanan et al., 2007).

Thirdly, cognition processes and sense-making in the case of DL are not simply limited to human beings, who act as leaders in the organisation (Fitzsimons et al., 2011), but stretch over to include aspects of the context, e.g. the environment, in which organisations operate in. DL is then well positioned to facilitate the study of leadership practice that is enacted within an organisation, which is challenged to rethink its modus operandi as a consequence of external changes to the operational environment (Hristov & Zehrer, 2019).

Finally, the scope of DL goes beyond the importance of "aggregating attributed influence", that being among the key characteristics of SL (see Fitzsimons et al., 2011, p.319), to develop capacity to act by means of joined-up orchestration. The latter implies a far more holistic approach to leadership in organisational settings, recognition of collective strength of diverse individuals within organisations, whilst also acknowledging the organisational environments often surrounded by complexity and uncertainty (Hristov & Zehrer, 2019). In this sense, the purpose of adopting DL is to engage and empower others (Martin et al. 2015).

4. DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AND DMOs

Within the mainstream management literature, the concept of 'Distributed Leadership' was initially coined by Gibb (1954) in his seminal research on the dynamics in the influence processes that occur within the formal and informal internal groups and firms. Major progress on DL had not, however, emerged after Gibb's (1954) study until his theories were revisited by Brown and Hosking (1986). DL, as argued by Harris (2008), is notably complex to be defined. DL has emerged within organisations as a consequence of fundamental changes and

subsequent complexities in order to shape a response to these complexities. DL has emerged in a number of organisations (Thorpe et al., 2011). A DL perspective in organisations should "recognise the inclusive and collaborative nature of the leadership process" (Oborn et al. 2013, p.254). In line with this, Valente et al. (2015) contend that successful leadership in DMOs needs to be empowering, providing equal voice to the various actors having a stake in destination decision-making and DL may be seen as an opportunity to fulfil this purpose, particularly in DMOs challenged to operate within a new funding and governance landscape.

Within the context of the wider organisational leadership literature, processes related to the foundation and practice of DL, as argued by Hairon and Goh (2014), can be attributed to ongoing changes within the public sector. Local state organisations and other public sector institutions, such as local authorities and councils also assumed DMO management and leadership functions. However, recent developments in the organisational environment, suggest that key destination resources are often located in a number of DMO member organisations (see Cameron, 2010; Penrose, 2011). These are likely to include players that represent a number of sectors of the economy, as well as governmental agencies and not-for-profit establishments (Hristov & Zehrer, 2015). Within this context, DL emerges in reshaped DMOs as a potential response to shifts in the landscape for DMOs. Indeed, Currie and Lockett (2011) concluded that organisational context influences the enactment of DL. Bennett et al. (2003, p.7) see DL as "an emergent property of a group or a network of interacting individuals." Equally, Spillane (2006) and Fitzsimons et al. (2011) attempt to provide a comprehensive definition of DL through establishing a link with SL. A definition of DL that underpins this study's direction, however, is the one provided by Harris (2008) in an influential work from the domain of Higher Education (HE), who argues that this form of leadership is:

> "assumed to enhance opportunities for the organisation to benefit from the capacities
>
> of more of its members, to permit members to capitalise on the range of their individual

strengths, and to develop among organisational members a fuller appreciation of interdependence and how one's behaviour affects the organisation as a whole…"

(Harris 2008, p.177)

This definition also underpins the initial conceptual framework derived from the interplay between theory and empirical data, particularly the DMO Leadership Cycle (Hristov & Zehrer, 2015). Acknowledging the strengths of others, often non-leaders by definition (Oborn et al., 2013), is seen as a key consideration of contemporary leadership theory. DL therefore assists organisations in their intentions to "benefit from diversity of thought in decision-making" (Evaggelia & Vitta 2012, p.3). Similarly, DL provides a platform to identify how diverse resources and the "varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few" (Bennet et al. 2003, p.7).

Further, impactful DL has to be managed, often in a very specific and structured way (Leithwood et al., 2006). When this statement is translated into destination and DMO research, DMPs are regarded as enablers of coordinated, effective and efficient DL by providing a vision for practising DL (see Hristov, Scott & Minocha, 2018). The DMO Leadership Cycle discussed earlier in this paper provides arguments that formulating collective goals, facilitating a voice in executive decision-making process, drafting joint action plans and planning for the future, captures a number of core activities and actions and as such, these activities provide a visionary function in organisations enacting DL – all being a prerequisite for effective DL practice.

Defining the ingredients of DL has been extensively discussed in the literature (Currie et al., 2011), nevertheless, "there remains a poor understanding of how and why collaborative styles are enacted" (Oborn et al., 2013, p.255). In the same vein, there is narrow evidence on the practices of DL in organisations (Cameron, 2010; Cullen and Yammarino, 2014; Tian et al., 2015). This study seeks to fill this gap by providing critical observations to serve as a basis for providing deeper contextual insights as part of future research on the role of DL in DMOs.

5. KEY GAPS IN THE MAINSTREAM DL LITERATURE

5.1 An overview of key broad gaps in the DL literature

DL is a comparatively under-researched concept in the business management and leadership literature and indeed in leadership practice, despite its considerable scope to contribute to academia and business organisations (Thorpe et al., 2011). The empirical research based on DL is still largely undeveloped and evidence grounded in practice is thin (Hairon & Goh 2014; Spillane et al. 2008). Leithwood et al. (2006) call for a balanced and nuanced understanding of DL in its attempt to address a number of challenges organisations face. Processes and practices related to reshaping DMOs in England is just one example. Indeed, much has been written on theorising DL, whilst evidence in situ through operationalising DL is still scant (Hairon & Goh, 2014).

Hairon and Goh (2014) provide us with a scales and sub-scales for measuring DL practice quantitatively in the domain of education. Currie and Lockett (2011) examine the interaction of DL within an institutional context, namely healthcare, i.e. the National Health Service, and although they embark on the network concept, their methodology and subsequent discussion are largely qualitative. Gockel and Werth (2015) propose an approach for the measurement of leadership and its distributed dimension by benchmarking influence within a leadership network. Edwards (2011) explores the foundation of DL in a community context. However, few studies have taken into consideration the cross-sectoral establishment and implications of DL within a diverse network representing organisations from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors (Cullen-Lester & Yammarino 2016). Valente et al. (2015) emphasise the importance of further research in the domain.

Edwards (2011) calls for embracing the role of the private sector in the enactment of DL, such contributions are rare, and arguably not inclusive of the three main sectors. There is a need to understand how leadership is distributed across different forms of organisations.

Edwards (2011) also concludes that academia should go beyond education as a dominant context of DL investigations and embrace other organisational contexts to provide a solid theoretical base. This points to the need for understanding how DL develops in new forms of organisations, which fuse the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

5.2 An overview of key specific gaps in the DL literature

Equally, the mainstream organisational leadership literature calls upon fusing the foundations of DL and Social Network Analysis (SNA), i.e. collective approaches to investigating the establishment of DL (Cullen-Lester and Yammarino, 2016), and as such, it evidences the lack of research into bringing to the forefront both emergent paradigms. Drawing on these very recent gaps in the current state of the DL and SNA literature, this study adopts a cross-disciplinary approach to investigate the establishment and implications of DL.

A call by Cullen and Yammarino (2014), to introduce novel ideas in the discipline of leadership and its collective or distributed dimension, propose eight topical areas for further investigation. Three of them are particularly appropriate in the case of DMO organisations:

(1) Effectiveness within leadership networks and collective leadership;

(2) Differences in leadership networks and collective leadership over time;

(3) Developing more comprehensive leadership network structures by formal leaders;

(4) Progress in how we measure collective, distributed, system, and network leadership;

(5) Organisational and/or situational characteristics influencing leadership and its collective/distributed dimension;

(6) The allocation of leadership roles by members of a collective, network, or system;

(7) Shared and distributed decision-making, collective intelligence, and collective leadership connections; and

(8) The development and application of insightful and contemporary research methodologies for examining collective, network, and system leadership.

Adopted methodologies are often narrow and as such, they do not always allow for operations and practices related to the enactment of DL to be uncovered in their entirety and within a particular organisational context. Hence the methodological approach adopted in this study follows Cullen and Yammarino's (2014) call for the introduction of advances in the measurement of DL (see topical area four) to advance current knowledge in measuring processes and practices related to the enactment of DL in the context of DMOs. Nevertheless, within the context of fusing the concepts of DL and SNA, this study aims to respond to more than one of Cullen and Yammarino (2014) eight topical areas. This discussion suggests that gaps in both theorising and operationalising DL are arguably wide-reaching (see Cullen & Yammarino 2014) and as such, they set the scene for a number of investigations, addressed by this study.

6. KEY GAPS IN THE DMO LITERATURE IN RELATION TO THE DOMAIN OF LEADERSHIP AND DL

Fewer studies discussing the extent of destination leadership practices in DMO organisations exist (Hristov & Zehrer, 2015; Reinhold et al., 2015). A number of notable contributions have been explored here. As previously discussed, both management and governance have been studied and applied extensively at various spatial and more strategic organisation levels. However, destination leadership has predominantly been examined at a destination level (Kozak et. al. 2014; Pechlaner et al. 2014). This implies a gap in the tourism destination leadership literature and indicates a further need to uncover the concept of leadership on a more strategic organisational or DMO level.

Although the scholarship on DMOs has involved network theory and SNA in greater detail (see Scott et al., 2008a; Baggio et al., 2010), there is insufficient evidence to examine the extent of practice with DL in the domain of DMOs and destinations (Pechlaner et al., 2014). As noted earlier, the leadership paradigm and its associated dimensions have been explored in

a two-part special issue of *Tourism Review* (see Kozak et al., 2014; Pechlaner et al., 2014), with contributions also discussed in this paper. Valente et al. (2015) examine leadership practice in two different Brazilian Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) by approaching RTO associates and other RTO and destination stakeholders.

Further, an earlier contribution by Benson and Blackman (2011) investigates the practice of DL in a destination organisation, where the authors adopt a longitudinal qualitative case study including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis in order to explore different forms of DL in tourism firms in destinations. Benson and Blackman (2011, p.1144) argue that multiple approaches to data collection are able to draw "a more holistic picture of the case study". However, the omission of SNA in such investigations may lead to the provision of a limited perspective into the enactment and practice of DL.

Within this context, there are fewer studies to date, which have examined how DL is enacted and practised by a collective group of organisational leaders being part of DMOs and their networks of member organisations by adopting an SNA approach. Hence, current conceptual perspectives into DMOs through the practices of both DL and SNA with the aim to yield network data-driven DL insights are marginally limited (see for example, Hristov and Scott, 2016; Hristov and Zehrer, 2015). The broader organisational leadership literature also calls for more empirical work to provide evidence into the fusion of both organisational literature domains in the study of DL (Cullen and Yammarino, 2014; Cullen-Lester and Yammarino, 2016) as discussed.

Indeed, a limited number of previous research studies have been undertaken at strategic organisational level – by examining the DMO network of partner organisations involved in destination management representing the three key interested groups, namely, local businesses,

local government and local community groups (Del Chiappa & Presenza, 2013; Hristov & Ramkissoon, 2017).

7. CONCLUSION AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This conceptual paper has critically examined key concepts in the broad organisational and leadership literature, followed by a discussion into different collaborative forms of leadership in addressing organisational change. This served as an introduction to an in-depth discussion aimed at prominent contributions in the domain of leadership and DL. The paper explored the emergent role of distributed forms of leadership in contemporary DMOs and debated their relevance to DMOs, before delving into a critical discussion of the progress of the DMO and destination literature in the context of leadership and DL, pointing out prominent gaps in scholarship.

The above discussion suggests that unlike traditional forms of leadership centred around the 'leader-follower' relationship (Harris, 2008) and the largely team-bound SL concept (Fitzsimons et al., 2011), DL implies that both the social context and inter-relationships are fundamental ingredients to leadership activity (Spillane et al., 2001). DL practice is shaped by interactions (Fitzsimons et al., 2011) and as such, it is not surprising that DL is underpinned by considerable complexity (Day et al., 2014). Hence, 'heroic' leadership that is primarily the role of the individual may not be an efficient approach to leadership carried out on a DMO level since destination resources, expertise and knowledge in DMOs reside in often diverse, multiple member organisations.

DL has the potential to establish itself as a prominent leadership paradigm in light of today's pressures in the operational environment. The need to develop proactive approaches to respond to these pressures and recognition of the importance of alternative organisational forms, such as networks (Buchanan et al., 2007) are recognised. Leadership in the context of DMOs, as Valente et al. (2015) argue, is socially constructed, and such a networked approach

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may potentially yield rich insights into processes and practices related to the enactment of DL in a DMO context. Cope et al. (2011) also suggest that DL should embrace a model of leadership that is network-centric. Balkundi & Kilduff (2005) contend that there is considerable scope for research delving into the synergy between the concept of DL and social network approaches to data collection and analysis. However, the extant literature on DL suggests that the role and contribution of individuals or organisations as sources of influence within a distributed context have not been adequately researched (Cullen et al. 2012; Cullen & Yammarino 2014).

Key themes deserving further attention in research and practice include proposed investigations into: the relevance of DL to DMOs, the provision of longitudinal insights on how DL is enacted and practised on a DMO level, undertaking a cross-case comparison of DMOs adopting DL, carrying out a fuller and more detailed post-network analysis study with DMO member organisations, investigations into the role of network champions in promoting DL on a DMO level, and research into further advances in visualising the enactment and practice of DL in DMOs.

7.1 DL's relevance to contemporary DMOs: Is DL a panacea for reshaped DMOs?

Although DL provides an alternative perspective to the way DMOs operate across their geographies, DL should not be perceived as a panacea to resource-constrained DMOs undergoing change. DL provides an alternative response to orthodox leadership theories but may not necessarily serve as a solution for organisations undergoing change (Harris et al., 2007). Inevitably, DL involves a number of considerations, which should be taken on board when it is enacted and practised. There is a need for more in-depth investigations into how leadership champions collectively act as an enabler and facilitate the enactment and practice of DL in organisations and networks undergoing change. Further, to assess DL's long-term

relevance and impact on reshaped DMOs to strengthen the credibility and relevance of the theory to real-world organisations.

Investigations into the outcomes of the enactment and practice of DL in networks would benefit future researchers in the field, particularly those aiming to investigate whether DL leads to an improvement of the work of reshaped and resource constrained DMOs. This important area of enquiry was beyond the scope of this study. Hence, further studies into the enactment and practice of DL in DMOs and beyond, which also have both in-depth and longitudinal dimensions, are needed.

7.2 Longitudinal insights on how DL is enacted, practised and influenced in DMOs

In the general leadership literature, the fluid and interchangeable nature of DL is also pointed out by Harris (2008) as one of the main characteristics of DL. The fluid and interchangeable nature of DL may be investigated through the adoption of a fuller longitudinal approach to the complete network in focus that include all DMO member organisations (in the case of DMOs with clear boundaries). The destination and DMO literature also provide contributions and position calls in favour of adopting longitudinal methodologies in studying strategic destination decision-making (see Beritelli, 2011; Pavlovich, 2003, 2014). However, these calls have not, explicitly made reference to studying DL in a DMO and destination context. These insights can contribute to shaping a response which tracks the progress and impact of the enactment and practice of DL both on a DMO level and for individual DMO member organisations.

7.3 Cross-case comparison of DMOs adopting a DL approach

Future studies involving cross-case comparisons can potentially yield further important insights with regard to how DL is established and practised in various DMO contexts. As such, this approach can enable the scholarly community to examine similarities and differences contrast the enactment and practice of DL across DMO structures and their operational

contexts. A cross-case comparison of DMOs adopting a DL approach is also likely to identify additional potential leadership types and network leadership behaviours outside the six common types of leader identified in this study. Indeed, as argued by Small and Rentsch (2010), there is a need for further studies to explore the spread of contrasting leadership behaviours and operationalising DL. Although this study made an attempt to address this call, there is a scope for more empirical evidence in this direction. Conducting a comparative analysis can reveal various DMO approaches to re-organising their organisations as an answer to public expectations to introduce a more inclusive leadership role.

7.4 *The role of network champions in promoting DL*

Gibb (1954), the initiator of DL, argues that leadership behaviours involving setting direction and aligning resources, rarely reside with only one individual, particularly in times of change as is the case with reshaped DMOs in England. Building on this, Buchanan et al. (2007) argues that network leaders and the interrelationship between them could be seen as an important vehicle to the establishment and promotion of DL across networks and organisations. This requires more recognition of the importance of leadership champions as a reflection of the distributed dimension of leadership in order to further promote DL across the complete DMO network. Hence, further enquiry into the role of network champions in including DL practice around the complete network of DMO member organisations is encouraged.

7.5 *Advances to the processes and practices related to DL*

Cullen and Yammarino (2014) calls for the need to introduce novel insights into the illustration of methodologies for studying leadership and its networked or distributed dimension.

A more comprehensive and detailed response is needed – one which is grounded in visual network analytics. It should strive to incorporate advances in visualising and simplifying DL development processes and practices. An approach which turns complicated scientific

numbers into simplified depictions, which address the world of practice, presents an exciting, but still largely challenging avenue for further research. Importantly, network visualisations play a substantial role in fuelling the process of theory building – new insights into investigated matters can emerge through scrutinising network depictions (Conway and Steward, 1998; Moody et al., 2005).

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