

Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change

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Abstrak

The gulf between those who practice grassroots leadership and those who theorize about leadership has been shrinking for some time. Much of this is due to changing images of who leaders are and what they should do. In the past half century, notions about the essence of leadership have shifted from a hierarchical view that leadership flows from a leadership position to a much more lateral view that leadership roles are available to everyone. James MacGregor Burns' *Leadership* (1978), which popularized "transformative leadership," was one of the first to describe the shift from a command-and-control vision to one that is more inclusive and participatory. Robert Greenleaf's notions about "servant leadership" (1977) held that leadership should at its core attend to matters of inequity and social injustice. A third seminal work, one that left solely hierarchical views of leadership behind forever, theoretically if not always in practice, was Ronald Heifetz' 1994 book, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. In it, Heifetz introduced the notion of what he calls adaptive work, or the learning required when neither the problem nor its solution is clearly defined (a term cited in several of the chapters in this book). Learning is the key term in adaptive work. Because there are no easy answers or singular solutions in adaptive work, achieving agreement on a course of action means first that participants must recognize that their existing perspectives won't lead them to a resolution, and second that they must suspend assumptions, entertain fresh questions, and try on the perspectives of others. They must realize that a solution is not a matter of applying technical solutions more expertly, but rather one of framing problems differently.