

# Resource: Shared-Power World

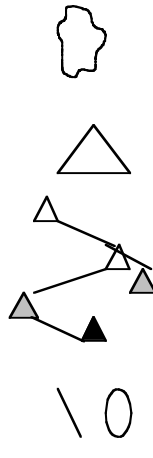
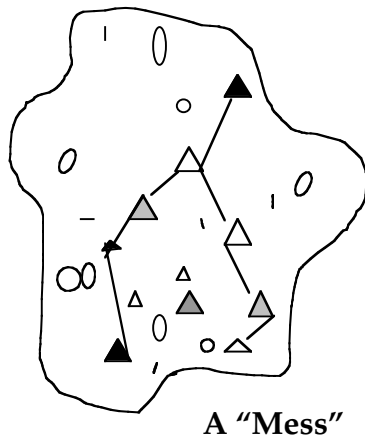
**Shared-power, "no-one-in-charge" world:**

In a shared-power world, public problems spill beyond the borders of any single organization. A network of organizations is needed to make headway against the problem; no single organization is "in charge."



*You give an order around here and if you can figure out what happens to it after that, you're a better person than I am.*

*--U.S. President Harry S. Truman*



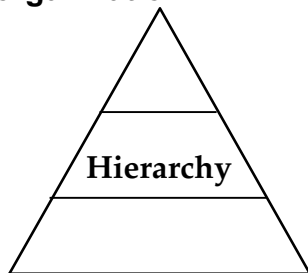
Public problem

Organizations involved with, affected by, or responsible for acting on a problem

Network of organizations

Individuals and groups, respectively

**The "in-charge" organization:**



Single organizations or hierarchies work well when: the boundaries of the organization contain the problem, there is a well-understood technology for addressing the problem, there are adequate resources, goals and objectives are clear, and authority is seen as legitimate. The organization can then be "in charge" and solve the problem.

**Public Problem**--affects diverse stakeholders; cannot be solved by single organization; likely to demand extensive collaboration; resists short-term, piecemeal solution.

**Emergent Problem**--complex problem that is as yet ill-defined and for which no clear solutions exist.

**Programming Problem**--created once an emergent problem is understood and applicable values, norms, goals, and directions are articulated.

**Operational Problem**--concerns how strategies can best be implemented.

Source: Bryson, J. M. & Crosby, B. C. (1992). *Leadership for the common good* (pp. 5-10). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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- To get anything done in a “no-one-in-charge” world, people and organizations must share something: information, objectives, activities, resources, power, or authority.
- Power sharing requires a common objective, whether stated or not.
- People and organizations share power to achieve separate and joint gains and avoid losses.



***An overarching leadership aim is to construct policy regimes--a set of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures--that prompt ethical and effective action to resolve a public problem; in other words, regimes of mutual gain.***

- In shared-power situations, many groups or individuals are partially in charge, with some responsibility to act; it is important to understand how each fits into larger efforts to achieve the common good.

*If there is no struggle, there is no progress . . . . Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will.*

*--Frederick Douglass, U.S. abolitionist*

In a shared-power world:

- Individuals, groups and organizations are enmeshed in numerous, overlapping policy-related networks, which vary in level of development.
- Goals and preferences are fairly consistent, at least for a while, within groups, but inconsistent and pluralistic across organizations and coalitions.
- The positions of interest groups and the composition of coalitions can change, sometimes quickly.
- Conflict is seen as legitimate and expected as part of the free play of the “political marketplace”; struggle, conflict, and winners and losers result.
- Information is used and withheld strategically.
- Within a social group, people hold consistent, often ideological, sets of beliefs about connections between actions and outcomes; groups may disagree with each other about these connections.
- The decision-making process may appear disorderly because of the clashes of shifting coalitions and interest groups.
- Decisions result from negotiation, bargaining and interplay among coalitions and interest groups.

In a shared-power world:

- Power is rarely shared equally.
- Leaders must draw on many sources of power to change existing arrangements and power alignments.

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**Readings that may be of interest:**

- Cleveland, H. (1993). *Birth of a new world: An open moment for international leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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