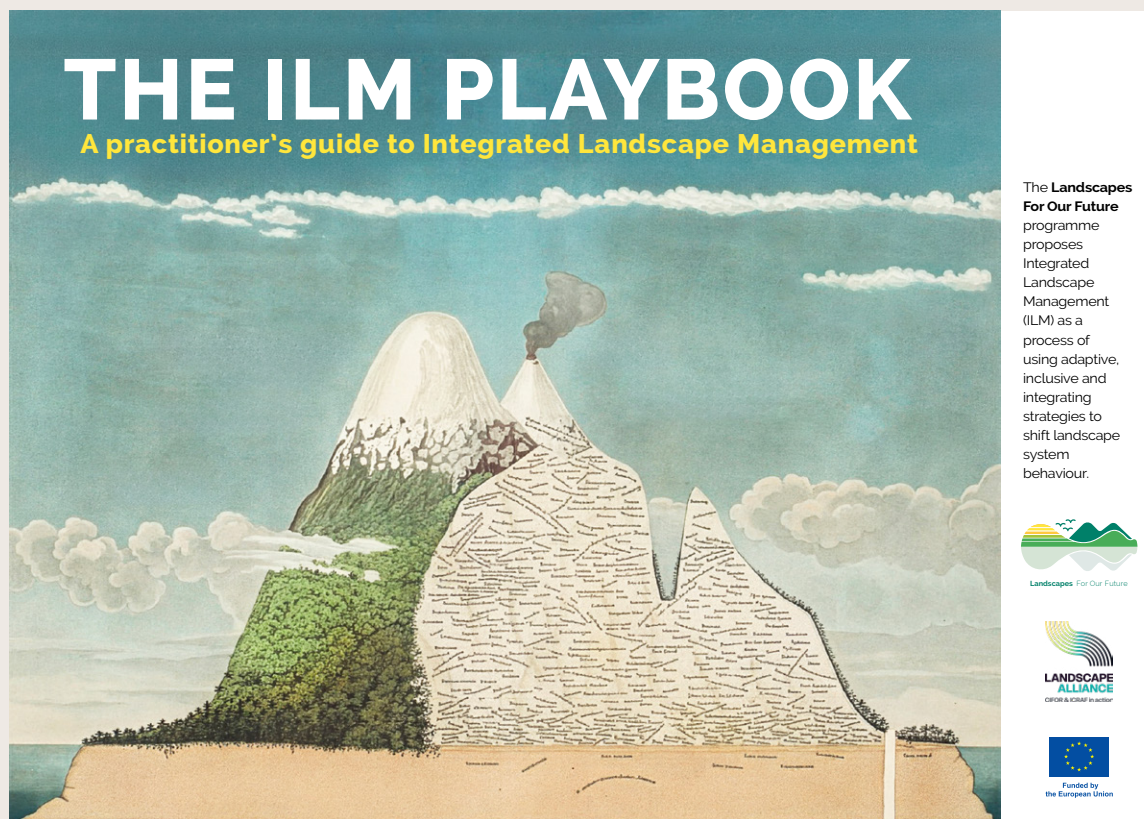


Extract from The ILM Playbook

The ILM Playbook is a practitioner curriculum developed through the EU-funded Landscapes For Our Future programme. Its **interactive web edition** provides a quick, non-linear route through the concepts and tools, while the **full-length PDF** provides the conceptual foundations, evidence and methodological depth behind them.

The concepts, methods and practical guidance were developed through the Central Component's work with project teams, partners and practitioners across the programme, and through the experience and learning generated in participating landscapes.



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Explore the full interactive ILM Playbook or access the complete reading edition at:
landscapesfuture.org/ilm-playbook

Leadership

Key take-aways

- Leadership is a major opportunity point in any landscape because leaders distribute and redistribute power – they are the opposite of power accumulators, and their presence is often what makes collaboration possible.
- Leaders emerge rather than being appointed; they advise rather than direct, and bear disproportionate personal risk to generate group benefit – qualities distinct from the ‘position power’ of office holders.
- Leadership need not be confined to a single person: in commoning sub-states it takes the form of *leadership ecology* – distributed, emergent and embedded in networks.
- Effective leaders are foxes who know when to become hedgehogs: open and synthesising while sensing, decisive and singular when the moment to act arrives.
- Leadership capability is not optional in the intervention team: teams need members who can convene, mediate and hold deliberative space without dominating it.

Leadership is an essential ingredient in successful ILM as well as being a major opportunity point in a landscape.

Leadership is widely regarded as a multi-faceted practice centred on personal mastery, relational influence, and team orchestration.¹ Leadership suggests fostering the conditions, and providing the nurture, for people to exercise and expand their capabilities. It references the ability to motivate collective movement. It is important to note that while a ‘leader’ may be an individual, ‘leadership’ need not be confined to a single person.

1 Hill and Lineback, 2011.

The corporate sector recognizes that leadership is an essential resource to have in successful corporations, and therefore provides us with many useful adages:

- Leaders *share* trust.
- Leadership without sincerity isn't.
- Leaders are people who lead with intent, not explicit instruction.
- Leadership is the art of creating greatness in other people.
- The leader who does not listen will eventually hear silence.
- Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.
- A genuine leader does not search for consensus but moulds it.

“A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves” – Lao Tzu

In our view, successful leaders *attract trust* because they are consistent and reliable under risk. In addition, leaders emerge rather than being appointed;² they advise or suggest rather than direct; they delegate and mediate. Importantly, leaders bear disproportionate risk to generate group benefits – leaders, for example, are unafraid of trialling and uncertainty, willing to be wrong (and to admit it), and self-assured in unfamiliar spaces. Above all, leaders dispense and redistribute power constantly – leadership is the opposite of power accumulation. But leaders also provide heading, derived from their jack or jill-of-all-trades-master-none-capabilities (Box 1).

In our view, most collaboration exhibits leadership – successful collaborative states may have more than one leader. Whatever the case, when you walk into the collaborative sub-state, the leaders will not be immediately obvious, and they are unlikely to announce themselves. Leaders rarely see themselves as leaders, but participants in a collective ambition. The respect that a community holds for them will gradually reveal who they are.

In commoning sub-states, there is another variant of leadership – leadership ecology. This refers to a systemic, emergent leadership. It has three core principles:³

- **Interdependence:** leadership is relational, embedded in networks that influence both internal dynamics and external ecosystems.
- **Emergence:** arises from collective actions and feedback, not top-down control, enabling responses to complexity like adaptive challenges.
- **Ethical focus:** aligns with harmony in nature, systemic ethics, and connectivity across social, environmental, and technological realms.

² This is important. People appointed to a position hold ‘position power’ – i.e., that power that comes with the position. While a person who has position power may be a leader, it is not because of their position. Good leaders and those holding position power can both be respected, although for very different reasons. Good leaders are respected because of the societal risk they carry, the wisdom they can dispense, and/or the trust they can engender. Position power holder demand respect because they hold positions of authority.

³ Wielkiewicz and Stelzner, 2005.

Fox or hedgehog?

The Ancient Greek poet Archilochus is famous for his line about how a hedgehog is good at doing just one thing, whereas a fox is good at doing many things. The idea was pretty obscure for 2,500 years until the philosopher Isaiah Berlin made it mainstream, arguing that great thinkers tend to fall into one camp or the other. Macro vs. micro. Which raises the obvious question: why not be both?

This is basically how military historian John Lewis Gaddis opens his book *On Grand Strategy*. But Gaddis flips the question. Not “why not be both?” but “If being both is the obvious play, why do people fail at it so often?” Gaddis draws on the work of the psychologist Philip E. Tetlock, who studied over 21,000 predictions on world politics from experts in universities, government, and think tanks, made between 1988 and 2003. In his book *Expert Political Judgment*, Tetlock found that who these people were made almost no difference. Background, status, job title, political leanings, optimism, pessimism. None of it mattered.

What mattered was *how they thought*. And the variable that predicted accuracy was whether they operated like foxes or hedgehogs. **And foxes won. Big time.** The hedgehogs drilled down on one framework to form their opinions. The foxes stitched together information from diverse sources. They were also more open-minded, and less defensive when challenged.

You may think that the Foxes were more popular, but interestingly the hedgehogs were far more likely to show up on TV and speak at conferences. Turns out, confidence reads well on camera. It just doesn't predict much. But Gaddis doesn't stop at 'be a fox.' Citing Sun Tzu (the famed Chinese military general, strategist, philosopher, and writer), he argues that what great leaders actually do is something harder. They stay in fox mode while they're gathering, listening, and synthesising. Then, when it's time to act, they flip. They go full hedgehog. Decisive. Singular. Committed.

For Gaddis, the conclusion is simple: the issue isn't whether you can be both, or should be both. You must be both. The real skill isn't living in one mode. It's the toggle. Knowing when to stay open and when to close the door. When to keep listening and when to move.

With every great collapse of a firm, a battle, or a country, there is a leader who got stuck in one mode and couldn't find the other.

Derived from: GapingVoid Culture. 2026. Fox or hedgehog? <https://www.gapingvoid.com/fox-or-hedgehog/>

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