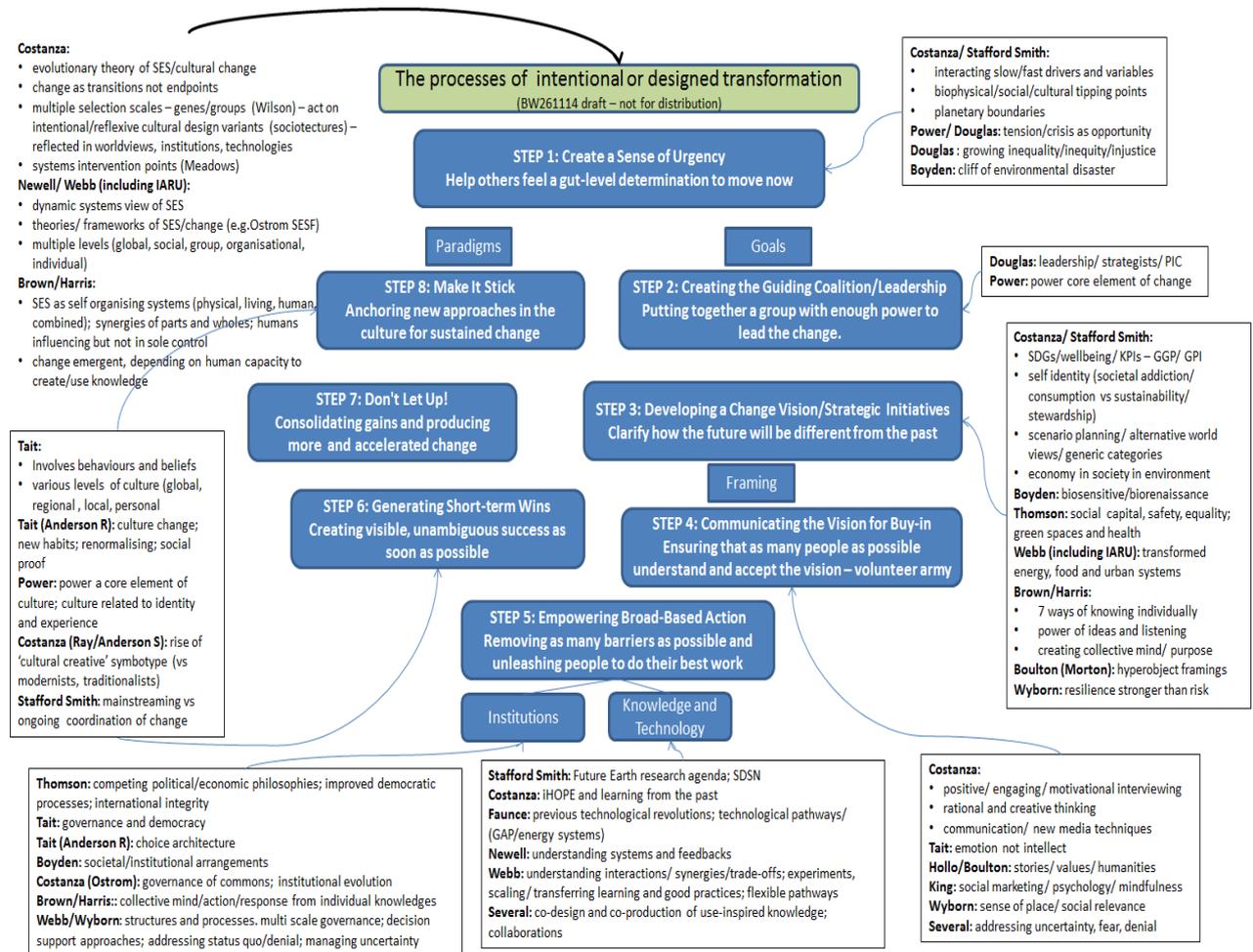


# Chapter 3 Cultural Transforming Frameworks and discussion

Peter Tait and Bob Webb

Webb’s extension of Kotter’s change framework provides a tool for us to consider the practical steps in a cultural transformation process. At the same time it provides a framework in which to incorporate the learnings from 2014. At the wrap up workshop, this figure was presented; it summarises the input from the presenters.



The Steps fall into two groups: Steps 1 to 5 are the influence generating steps, while 6 to 8 incorporate the actual changes, are being undertaken by multiple actors, and so there is much less ability, if any, to control these later steps.

Also while logically one would enter the process at step 1, one could argue step 2 is a required precursor for step 1; that is, does a guiding coalition need to be present to raise or use more general concern? Clearly a group had their own prior concerns to initiate the process. So the Step 0, reflecting that 'sense of urgency', presupposes some underlying values or goals reacting to evidence we are diverging from desirable outcomes; and reflects understanding of the implications of this divergence.

Furthermore, the nature of adaptive change suggests that action will not always be sequential, and deliberate feedback and reiterations between some steps will occur. That is, the 'cycle' is really a

helix of re-iterating action through time. Therefore many or all the 'Steps' are likely to be in play at once, as actions at each step evolve in parallel (co-evolving), whether intentionally or not.

Finally to ensure an ethical process occurs, the participants in the wrap up workshop suggested that the founding assumptions, our values and a set of principles to direct the guiding coalition have to be made explicit. Such principles are in a state of evolution but suggestions to date are:

#### Values and Principles:

- The process of change must be ethical and grounded in a set of values
- Value dissent
- Respect for diversity of knowledge and approach
- Recognise change is an emotional process
- Be reflective
- Recognise we are designing influence not change
- Recognition that communication (whatever medium) is an iterative dialogic process

#### Assumptions:

1. Human collective behaviour as manifest in the dominant cultural world view is disrupting the ecological foundations supporting human society and the existence of other species.
2. Transformation of the current dominant world culture is imperative to ensure human survival and minimise disruption to the ecosystem and other species.
3. This transformation will need to reassert the biophysical realities within which we live and promote a culture which is sensitive to and respects nature and its limits.
4. There is still time to take effective action to minimise disruption to human society.
5. Systems are resilient but adaptable.
6. It is possible to attempt a transformation by designing a change that will influence the system
7. It is possible to influence complex adaptive systems but not to control the effect.
8. While an intent for transformation might be agreed, all other details of all other aspects, even final outcomes, are open to varying degrees of contestation and disagreement, but these are worked out within the larger, collective concordance about intent.
9. Human wellbeing and the natural world would be optimal if human societal behaviour was to accede to a set of values including but not limited to: biosensitivity, better resource use, externalities reflected in decisions, recognising biophysical realities/limits, in other words having ecological sustainability

#### **Processes of change – what have we learnt**

Firstly we have the framework outlined above for a model of change process. Each step in this framework as a primary task, which in turn can be broken down further into other tasks. This will be discussed later.

We have collected a set of values and principles and clarified our assumptions.

Next we have accrued a set of recurrent themes that pertain to undertaking cultural change. A couple of different and non-exclusive ways to assemble these are given below to facilitate discussion.

A theory, methodology or practice framework, proposed at the beginning of the HEF theme, provides the first take for reflection.

### Theory

- Culture is communication between and across the generations of a society
- Culture is about exercising power by establishing the operating system for a society. Therefore it is political, socially constructed and so subject to being changed.
- Cultural transformation as an evolutionary process reveals (unfolds) an approach to systems change that regards influences into the system as selection pressures.
- Recognising culture is a hyperobject provides a method for adjusting frames and identities.
- Change requires thinking “outside the box”, envisioning requires us to consider what is needed not what is possible.
- Change involves transgression and subversion leading to disruption to existing power relationships and hence conflict will occur

### Methodology

- System models provide a method for understanding and analysing a system, and provide a language to negotiate and share that understanding.
- Scenario planning gives a methodology for envisioning, and testing out, a set of possible futures.
- The collective mind is a methodology for working with groups of people to help them achieve a common purpose. The agreement about the purpose is the collective mind.

### Practice

Practice revolves mostly about marketing, which is about communications that draw on and apply research in psychology and neurobiology.

- Stories (narratives) are central to our identity, and for staying in status quo, and equally critical in bring about change. Our stories give us meaning and understanding of the world. New stories that give new meaning, purpose and describe how things might be are needed to replace the current stories and to help forge a new identity. Changing identity is challenging. It requires changing the frames (including the narratives and metaphors) that give us identity, to permit a new identity to emerge. It requires addressing the emotional responses to the change and using the emotions to shift the frames.
- Because words carry multiple meanings, to appeal to the emotions communications need to draw on multiple media: tell stories, dance, sing, play, draw, paint, cartoon and sculpt.
- Applying the seven ways of knowing and the collective mind process for designing intentional influence into a system opens reframings necessary to trigger change.
- Marketing, applying psychological knowledge and theories of change, can be used ethically to guide strategy and tactics to reframe situations and help change individual and group identities to bring about cultural transformation.

- Besides marketing, transgression and subversion leading to disruption to existing power relationships is necessary.
- Technology and infrastructure, the hardware of society, affect the boundaries and abilities for change to occur. Putting effort into changing these adjunct systems can facilitate culture change. Two examples are:
  - More generally novel technologies provide means for changing cultural structures; examples the abolition of slavery by machines (industrialised capitalism); creation of capitalism by technologies to better harness energy: developments in wind, water and lastly fossil fuels technology. So in future synthetic photosynthesis may provide opportunity for another change.
  - Specifically energy systems are fundamental to both political and literal power within society. Changing the energy system can open opportunity for change in political and economic power. This is particularly relevant for the transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy sources. Additionally efficient use of energy and an overall reduction in the amount of energy used will press for change in cultures, as well as being an outcome of the primary culture change.
- Disruption to existing power relationships will provoke resistance to change and the resultant conflict will need to be managed.

An alternative typology might be:

#### About culture

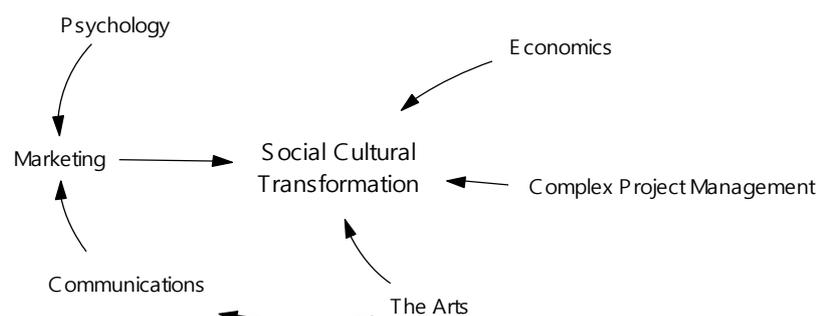
- Culture is communication between and across the generations of a society
- Culture is about exercising power by establishing the operating system for a society. Therefore it is political, socially constructed and so subject to being changed.
- Recognising culture as a hyperobject directs attention to transformation as a process of changing frames and identities.

#### About change

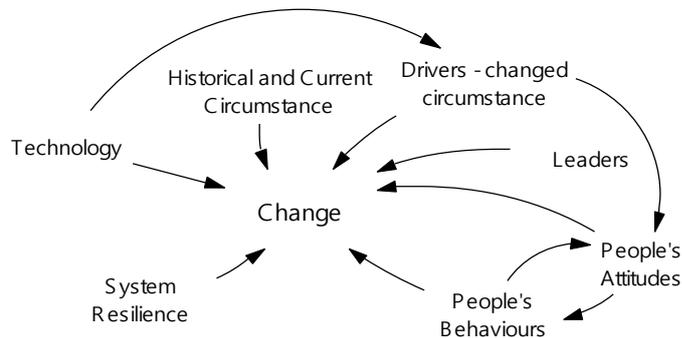
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- Scenario planning gives a methodology for envisioning, and testing out, a set of possible futures.
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- Disruption to existing power relationships will provoke resistance to change and the resultant conflict will need to be managed.

Another way to considering these elements is diagrammatically. This first diagram summarises the major elements that were identified as helping to drive specifically cultural transformation.



The second looks at a slightly different set of influences on change.



Finally returning to the Webb-Kotter framework, I assemble the ideas elaborated above into the framework it provides. I embed the parallel Kotter stage labels Goals, Framing, Knowledge and Technology, Institutions, Paradigms into the steps of the **model** since each Kotter stage will have elements of all. Further, in our situation, the guiding group comes with its members' own sense of urgency and so this step falls more naturally into motivating or inspiring the need for change. In our particular case, the consequence of this historical sequence means that I have reversed the initial two Kotter steps. I would suggest that in all cases this is more likely to fit the reality of all change processes; an initiating group is required to start the process and bring others to join.

### **Steps 1-3 Creating a Sense of Urgency, Guiding Coalition and Change Vision**

#### **Step 1 Creating a guiding coalition**

There was some debate about the order of these initial steps. It would seem practically that those intending to design a change are already driven by a sense of urgency from their own experience, and so for practical purposes the guiding coalition will form. I have re-instituted this as Step 1. There are various ways this may occur, and this step cannot be ordained but will organically ensue. However once in existence, it needs to earn a social licence to continue and to organise itself. This organisation will involve both developing its own ethical framework, clarifying its assumptions, defining its language / terms, work out its operational processes, and possibly but not necessarily formalise its existence. The role of this body is to push without controlling, to drive communications, to invite participation (GetUp as an example of such a body).

#### **Steps 2 Creating a sense of urgency**

The Guiding Coalition's initial task is to create the sense of urgency. This is a communications task, and combines eliciting people's sense of disquiet with the current situation to generate an emotional response which will lead to an interest in looking for alternative possibilities. Various approaches are possible: a threats frame, a threat/risk framing. However marketing suggests that allowing people to describe their own perceptions and articulate unease leads better to involving them in the development of their own solutions.

Nearly simultaneously, people need some positive perspective and an offer of hope that there is action that can be taken to move away from the unpleasant situation. This is the Pain Island – Pleasure Island model. This should lead rapidly to Step 3 Developing a Vision of both how the world might be better and how the change might occur, at a big picture level.

### **Step 3 Developing a Change Vision/Strategy**

It is not possible to lay out a detailed vision of the world we want. Firstly that is impracticable; we cannot forecast at that level of detail. Secondly we could not agree on what this might be, and would bog down in details. What is possible, is to set out and agree on a set of principles and values that describe what kind of society we think would lead to a ‘healthy people on a healthy planet’, and agree to pursue those.

In doing this we will be making assumptions about the ‘problem’, ‘solutions’ and the possible futures. The critical thing is that we make our assumptions overt.

The final aspect of this process is to recognise that all action occurs within and is influenced by the historical context that brought us to our present. Thus all attempts to influence the system is grounded in how things are now.

The change vision also has to describe the process of change in order that people are able to engage in and not be intimidated by the actual change process itself. This has two aspects: outlining the process of how people are to be engaged and then what activity is to be undertaken to bring influence to bear on the systems. It presages the more detailed actions that follow in later stages.

### **\*Steps 4 – 5 Communicating and empowering**

These two steps disseminate the visions about what is needed and how it might be achieved. It also needs to be honest about some of the uncertainties and the iterative nature of change.

Communications need to occur across the whole spectrum of communications but particularly the ‘arts’ in order to speak to people through their emotions as well as their reason. It:

- needs to reflect dialogue and engagement not just communication
- cognitive processes and cognitive science insights crucial (e.g. George Lakoff, social psychology)
- marketing is relevant to all of Steps 1-6, not just Step 4 (Adam Ferrier book an invaluable resource)
- Semantics vital: developing a process for understanding and contesting definitions aids interpersonal communications and counters the current system’s marginalisation of meanings

### **Steps 6-8 Acting and embedding**

The action of transformation involves disruption of current societal systems, transgression beyond and subversion of current societal norms and boundaries, and hence will generate conflict and opposition. Conflict and opposition can be anticipated and will have to be managed as it arises in whatever form it takes.

- change requires a focus on agreed actions

- embedding change is a crucial objective of Steps 6-8 as it is very easy to backslide; Step 6 can win the battle but Steps 7-8 are necessary to 'win the war', that is consolidate the changes
- whilst it is true that significant culture change is really only likely at Step 8, being based on lived experience of the other steps, it is important to reflect that the other steps also require a culturally aware and informed approach – for example understanding the characteristics of the current culture(s) is essential for Steps 1-4.
- values and ethics key to culture change; but noted for example that the 'faiths' have been slow to support