

Chapter 9 Reshaping our minds: the parameters of transformational change

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Abstract: Transformational change of environment and society is not easily understood through a single lens, no matter how powerful. Both research and practice require a collective approach. The discussion will be based on a study of collective responses to dynamic changes in our four-dimensional world (the non-living and living systems of the planet, the influence of human ideas and the synergies created by the interactions among these three self-organising systems). Current responses include changing opposites to relationships, drawing on multiple ways of knowing, and the structural changes in society towards a collective science, deep democracy, and a common pool economy.

This presentation is a development of the ideas from Brown VA, Harris JA. *The Human Capacity for Transformational Change: Harnessing the collective mind*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge; 2014.

Synopsis and Commentary – Peter Tait

The transformation occurs in our heads (minds). Our minds are plastic, but exhibit two tendencies: to stay embedded in their culture (habits of thought and belief), and to focus on bits not wholes.

Consequently change is piecemeal, does not follow a program and so is unpredictable. Examples presented: Mount St Helens, Hiroshima, development of multi-organism cells/eukaryotes, flight MH17 and the conversion of a worldview grounded in creation to one of evolution, with evolutions in the associated assumptions and values, for example society as an individualist versus collective enterprise, or the place of humans as special (chosen by God) versus humans as part of the system.

Transformation happens in three phases to this: ideas, actions and application. Ideas encompass recognition of the four dimensions of reality shaped by five key interrelationships. Action comes through use of the methodology of the seven ways of knowing, that create the collective social structures in each sector (science, economy, governance, etc.) that facilitate change. Application arises from making the collective social structures to put these ideas into practice. This is explained in much more detail in *The Human Capacity for Transformational Change*. This methodology is the basis for creating a new story about how the world can be. All the structures needed to transform society are in place and operating somewhere now.

Ideas:

We live in a world of four dimensions: there are the three self-organising systems of the biophysical, the human social and the human mind plus the interactions between each of these. These allow us to counter the heresies of the current worldview:

Traditional	Collective
Nature red in tooth and claw	Natural systems are cooperative and purposeful
Humans in charge of the world	Humans are not in charge of the world
Our mind divided into sections	Humans are evolving to a collective mind
The world as two or three-dimensional	The planet is a single self-organising system (Gaia)

The second idea is that a collective mind approach reframes our traditional dichotomised view from opposites to relationships along a continuum:

Collective	Implication (based on Nowotny et al)
Parts and wholes	the local as a fractal of the global Relating and interacting across scales
Stability and change	choosing uncertainty Growth is natural
Individual and society	dynamic interactive systems Society is dynamic, people interact individually and in the system
Rationality and creativity	Creative rationality
Present and future	the future as the present The future grows out of the present; our present makes our future

(Nowotny H, Scott P, Gibbons M (2001) Rethinking science: knowledge in an age of uncertainty. Polity, Cambridge)

So using the methodology of the seven ways of knowing or thinking permits a full systemic approach to recognising reality and making wise decisions.

Conclusions:

1. Transformational change is always a sharp break in the pattern; tomorrow will not be the same as yesterday
2. The response to the break is self-organised from within the diversity of the system; no one is in charge
3. A transformational change is never final; the conclusion of one phase prepares for the challenge of the next
4. Transformational change is inherently collective; the whole pattern changes or the system reverts
5. In human-initiated change, the shift in ideas comes first; collective action in the whole system follows

Q&A

Discuss elements of the methodology. Key unresolved question: Collective what?

JH creating a third space eg WWWeb, Q&A, parliament

GK harmony, melody and discords

THMs

Transformation arises first in our minds, so depends on how our mind works. Therefore transformations are piecemeal, not programmed, and so are unpredictable. A reframing of how we

approach the world, society, and human agency enables a collective approach to creating the transformation required. The methodology of the seven ways of thinking contributes to this reframing. This facilitates development of collective social structures for a new way of living on the planet. A transformational change is a sharp break in the pattern of a system. The system will respond to that break; the response is self-organised from within the system. Either the whole pattern changes with the transformation or the system reverts. No one including humans are 'in charge' of the change or the response. A transformation is never final; each phase sets the conditions for the next change. In human-initiated change, the shift in ideas comes first; collective action in the whole system follows.

The concept of collective mind was challenged; participants understood the collective but wondered if mind was the correct word. However no better alternative has been suggested, and mind fits into the presenters' view of minds working together using shared space such as the internet.

But this is perhaps a distraction. The core concept of the collective mind is in its application as a methodology for working with groups of people to help them achieve a common purpose. The agreement about the purpose is the collective mind. While purpose 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 purpose.

Discussion of Mind.

Use of *collective mind* in this context provokes discomfort because of the 'new age' sounding nature of the proposition. How can there be a *collective mind*? Perhaps we are not talking brain centred neurological process *mind* but instead collective information and knowledge gathering, sharing, analytic and decision taking processes; what Julian Cribb describes as 'thinking at the species level'. The emphasis is on the species level, collective, big picture yet locally specific thought.