

Chapter 3 Transforming Cultures Framework

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Introduction

In this chapter we provide a brief overview of the Transforming Cultures Framework. We take the outputs from the lessons and model typologies from Chapter 2 and position them into a Framework to explain how they might be applied in a process of transformation.

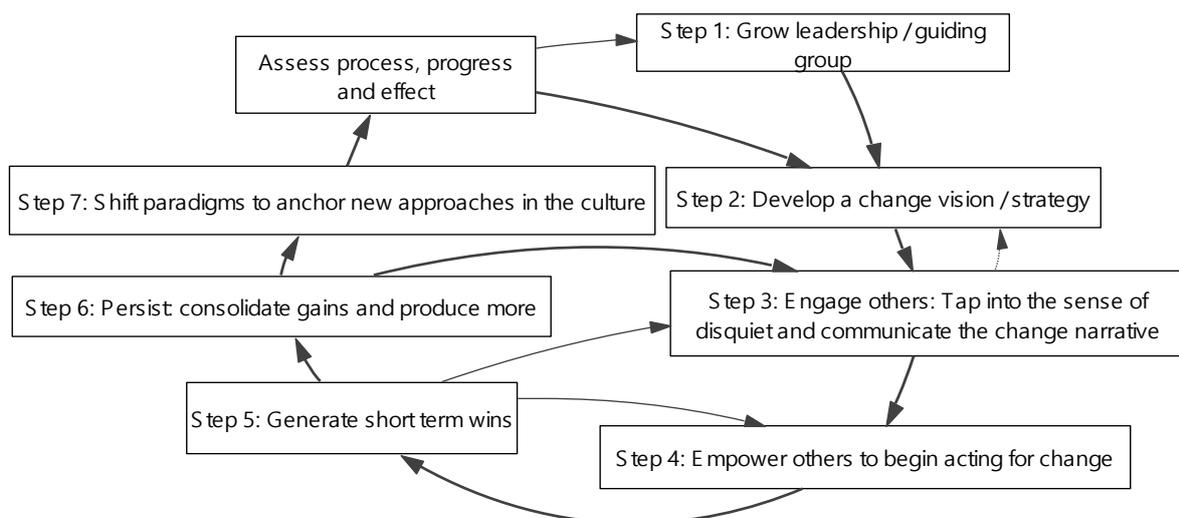
Framework introduced

Webb's extension of Kotter's (1) 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 the 2014 Human Ecology Forum seminar series. At the wrap up workshop, a model of change based on this framework was presented; it summarised the input from the presenters (see Appendix that follows). That framework has been modified here to better encapsulate the transforming cultures process as it emerged from the series (Figure 1).

The major difference between the original Kotter derived model and this one is in the omission of his initiating stage of *creating a sense of urgency* leading to *formation of a guiding coalition*. In this societal transformation process the sense of urgency already existed among the individuals who have come together to participate. This historical initiating context generating concern among a group of people is captured in the Framework as Step 0, which sits without but pervades the formation of a leadership group. These individuals already embody a set of values or goals reacting to evidence we are diverging from desirable outcomes; and reflects understanding of the implications of this divergence. So our framework begins with the formation of the guiding coalition or, as some commentators put it, a leadership group. We would suggest that in all cases this spontaneous formation of a leadership group is more likely to fit the reality of a social change in

Figure 1

Step 0: E co-sociologic context



The Webb-Tait Framework for Societal Transformation; modified from Kotter [1996]. Arrows depict major influence pathways and important 'feedbacks'.

contradistinction to organisational change process. In organisational change an initiating group is required to recognise the situation needs correcting and they then need to start the process and bring others to join. In a social situation, the sense of disquiet already exists and it is in realising that others share the disquiet that a group who can guide the change process surfaces.

The cycle then proceeds from the small group of concerned individuals becoming a collective, developing up and then promulgating the change narrative, engaging others and helping to empower them to act, growing the movement, and in a snowballing process achieving wins that further recruits members, redevelops the vision, shifts paradigms (worldviews, social norms and practices), expands the leadership group, and iteratively continues.

The Steps fall into two groups, hinged around taking action: Steps 1 to 4 (development phase) are the influence generating steps, Step 4 is the begin action phase, while 5 to 7 (consolidation phase) incorporate the actual changes. Step 8 (evaluation phase) ensures that the practice of adaptive governance to guide the ongoing iterative process occurs. The latter phases are being undertaken by multiple actors, and so there is much less ability, if any, to control these later steps.

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.

Framework for Transformation

This section outlines and discusses the Transformation framework.

Steps 1-3 Creating a Guiding Coalition and Change Vision, Engaging others

Step 1 Creating a guiding coalition – building leadership

There was some debate about the order of Kotter's initial steps. It would seem pragmatically 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 *de novo*. However even here, some initial leadership is required from an initiator and a small group of early supporters. I have re-instituted this as Step 1 in the revised model.

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).

Bob Douglas in his example of Castro in Cuba, emphasises the importance of leadership for envisioning, inspiring, motivating and coordinating change. The importance of leadership also emerges from the literature (Chapter 2). The literature also reminds us that leadership for change needs to be with the people, coordination and enabling rather than directive.

Step 2 Developing a Change Vision/Strategy – mapping change

The Guiding Coalition’s initial task is articulate a guiding vision that encompasses both a vision for how a different future may look, and a realistic means to bring that about. It is not possible to lay out a detailed vision of the world we want. Firstly that is impractical; 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. Others joining the movement can agree to, adopt and/or adapt this set of principles and values. These principles and values provide a unifying locus around which ongoing action can be structured.

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.

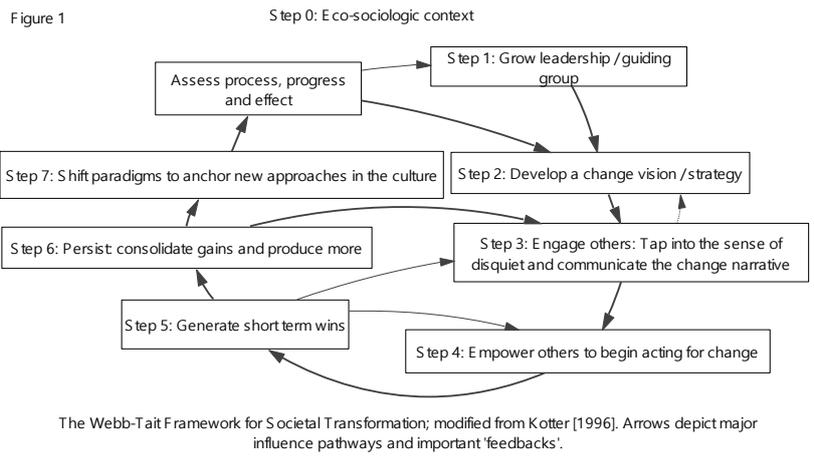
Some general descriptions of how such a future may look and work, based in these principles and values, is possible as a way to open people’s imaginations to the possibility of change. The real power however would be in helping people arrive at their own conception of a future that meets their present disquiets.

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 3 Tapping into a sense of urgency – engaging others

In the Anthropocene, people will be drawn to this process of transformation with a sense that the world can be better, or more likely a sense that it is just not right. So there is less need to create the sense of urgency than to harness that which exists and mobilise it for change. 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 (see essay ...).

This step encapsulate two related processes. The first is disseminating the visions about what a biosensitive society might be like and how it might be achieved. The second is to invite, motivate and inspire people to join us. In doing these, the communications needs to be honest about some of the inherent uncertainties about the ability to forecast where change may occur, how any change might play out, what unintended consequences may appear, and that the process is really about a journey rather than arriving at a destination. Also to be acknowledged is the iterative nature of the change process.

Communications need to occur using all possible media. Since the aim is to inspire and motivate people, allow them to tap into their disquiet about the current state of the world, and provide them with the hope to take action, using the ‘arts’ will be particularly important in order to speak to people through their emotions as well as their reason. To this end, using the neurological, cognitive and psychological research into cognitive processes will afford the crucial insights that will make the means and content of our communications the most effective.

This step includes the realisation that interpersonal communications are fraught. Semantics are vital. The project will need to develop a process for understanding and contesting definitions, and to continue to refine our understandings iteratively as the project develops and more people join. Refining our understanding of the meanings of our terms is necessary also to counter the current system’s marginalisation of the meanings of many of the key words such as value, culture, democracy and so forth.

The engagement process needs to reflect the values and principles by employing dialogue not just ‘communication’. It is a conversation to promote transformative change, to maintain interest and develop understanding and deepen knowledge.

Step 4 Empowering others

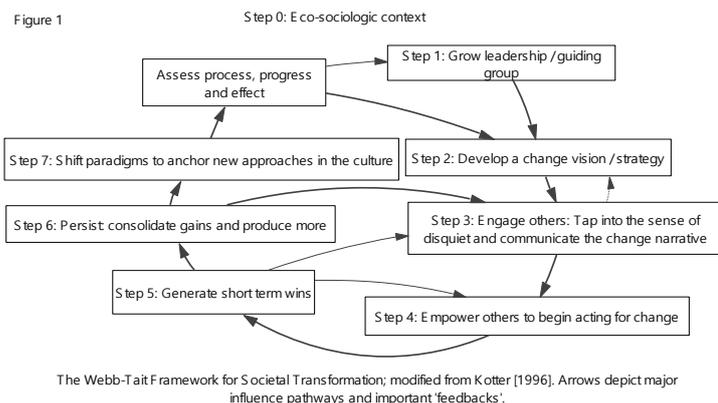
The steps of empowering are:

Introduce people to the concept of power and teach them the ability to discern the power relationships within a social situation; that is power analysis skills.

Teach people to recognise their own power individually and collectively.

These powers include attitudes, experiences, knowledge and skills and the set of resources they have access to.

Teach people to exercise their power individually (being assertive) and collectively. The collective exercise of power involves being strategic and organised (see Blessed Are the Organized(2)), understanding and applying change theories, developing advocacy skills in all media and helping people understand governance, government and government processes.



In *This is an Uprising*, (3) Mark and Paul Engler provide an evidence based analysis of empowerment for change.

Of course, as discussed, the purpose is to initiate change that we hope will readjust the socio-political system to take humanity toward a more biosensitive and ecologically sustainable future, realising that the actual outcomes and benefits are not predicable.

Steps 5-7 Acting and embedding transformation

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.

Because the actual activity in these steps are borne out of the prior empowering and planning steps, there is little concrete to say about the processes. Action needs to occur across all of Meadows’ leverage points (4) and include both societal behaviour, institutional and paradigm change (Figure 2).

Levels of system change

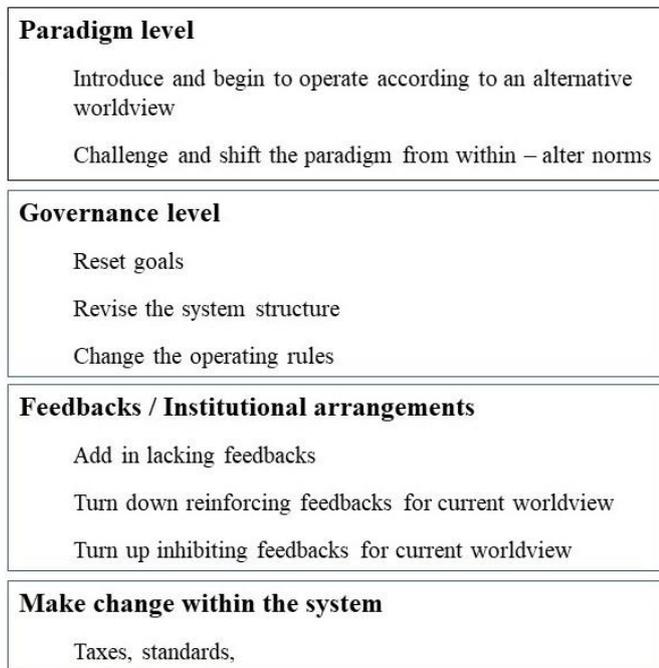


Figure 2: **System Leverage points**, adapted from Meadows D. Leverage points. Places to Intervene in a System Hartland, Vermont, USA: The Sustainability Institute. 1999

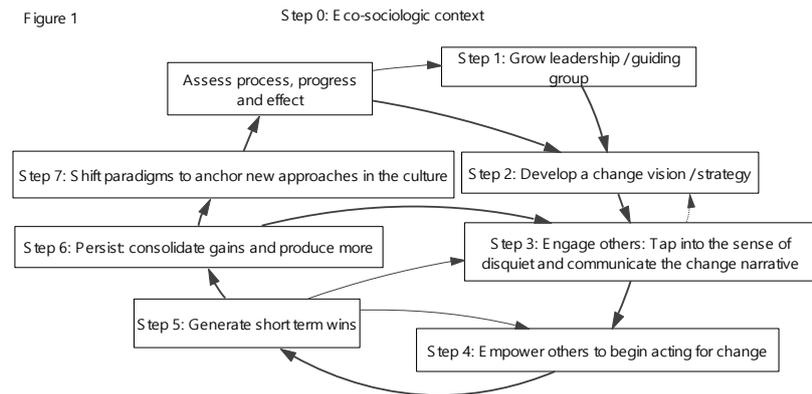
The common elements that emerge in these steps are:

- 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 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

Step 8 Assess process, progress and effect

Process – reflection about the methods and processes, tactics ... progress and effect – how much of what was intended been achieved, what still needs to be done, what changes required. Feeds into the next iteration of the transformation process.

Figure 1



The Webb-Tait Framework for Societal Transformation; modified from Kotter [1996]. Arrows depict major influence pathways and important 'feedbacks'.

References

1. Kotter JP. Leading change. Harvard Business School Press, Harvard. 1996.
2. Stout J. Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America Paperback-December 9, 2012: Princeton University Press; 2012.
3. Engler M, Engler P. This is an Uprising: how non-violent revolt is shaping the twenty-first century. New York: Bold Type books; 2017.
4. Meadows D. Leverage points. Places to Intervene in a System Hartland, Vermont, USA: The Sustainability Institute. 1999.