

Culture, climate change and ecology: making connections - achieving change

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Forum Theme: Transforming Culture

Abstract: In the first presentation of the *Cultural Transformation* theme, the need for radical cultural change to avoid the collapse of civilization was argued. The aim of this next presentation in the Theme is to explore ideas around *culture*.

It offers a number of theoretical approaches to understanding culture and the centrality of communication and technology in creating and changing culture:

- contemporary ways of understanding what culture is;
- how cultures develop;
- how cultures shape notions of identity and experience; and
- how they influence decision-making and behaviour at various scales; individually corporately, nationally and internationally.

The presentation aims to provide some clarity and parameters for further discussions of ways to achieve better environmental outcomes for the planet and its current and future inhabitants. While concepts of culture are the main focus, some attention will be paid to the notion of 'transformation' and ways to work towards this in relation to cultural change for improved environmental outcomes.

Tim:

Culture defines how we act

Politics – the art of the possible. What is possible is culturally defined.

To change what is possible, change culture.

Common Cause Project: Extrinsic values (wealth, power, display) undermine Intrinsic values (love nature, compassion)

Values drive learning and belief ie frame what is learnt and believed.

Aileen:

Culture: multiple concepts of meaning

Culture: transference (exchange) and creation of meanings; culture is learnt.

Usefulness of post-modernism and feminist theory: power as the core element of culture and of change. Culture is political. Power creates knowledge. Power is agency, and interacts dynamically with systems.

But as culture is a social construct, it can be deconstructed, and changed.

Culture: a dominant culture, but culture is not monolithic; there are contested elements and tensions that allow alliances and collaborations, and provide openings for change.

Balloons = people; rock = culture; Moving the balloons, no lasting effect; moving the rock, the balloons stay moved. The right has been moving the rock.

Contemporary Theories:



- Power relations and networks
- Agency and Change – capacity for choice / action
- Cultural identity – shifting, produced interdiscursivity
- Contradiction, contestation, fragmentation.

Communications are central to culture.

Tim:

Art – identity – culture

Stories and narratives – powerful; create ‘reality’ and maintain cultural norms.

Therefore new stories create a new reality.

| Current story | Meaning | New story |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| It’s the economy stupid | It is about wealth | What makes us really happy |
| It’s too hard to change | Maintain status quo | Change is coming; we need to fly it |
| It’s all about me | Security = I’m OK | Power of community |
| Nature is there to be exploited | ... | We depend on the natural world |

Stories about reconnecting humans and nature; using multiple media, experiential learning, (green Music Australia), use of music / dance, theatre. Art neurologically linking to intrinsic values.

Q&A

Research on culture change: renaissance; Ming dynasty. Printing press, internet.

Place of media reform?

Getting new stories out: easy to write? No see literature on “capture truth” (Liz Boulton).

Power of metaphor. Power of coherent narrative (right vs left in coherence of their narratives)

Further reading

Common Cause Project, Brendan Nihan, <http://valuesandframes.org/>

Drew Weston, *The Political Brain*,

Corbs 2013, *Disruption of Scale*,