# HEF Cultural Transformation Theme

# Wrap up Workshop

# Forestry Building 102, ANU - 28 November 2014

## Summary of Discussion and Outcomes
(Bob Webb and Peter Tait)

## Participants:

Dirk von Behrens

Hannah Barrowman (morning only)

Val Brown

Bob Costanza (introductory sessions)

Tim Hollo

Gillian King

Barry Newell (Workshop Facilitator)

Franzi Poldi (morning only)

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## 1 Assumptions (Peter Tait)

Human behaviour is creating multiple crises which require transformations in the 'operating systems of society' that is culture.

There is still time to make the necessary transformations. The HEF Transforming Culture series in 2014 has addressed various aspects of how such transformations might be approached. Components could include

- Methodologies
- Ideas and examples
- Practical plans to effect cultural transformation

We should also consider how we might take action ourselves, including as a group (and for example through the HEF and Frank Fenner Foundation).

# 2. Frameworks and Mapping of Themes Presentation and Discussion (Bob Webb – see separate document for presentation)

The presentation was provided in order to introduce and position various conceptual frameworks that might be useful, and more specifically to map the various 2014 HEF series presenters' themes to the frameworks.

The presentation included the 'Newell template' (p3 of presentation and below) which is one way of viewing and understanding the complex socio-ecological systems of interest including cultural adaptation. It is a high-level systems version, incorporating feedbacks, of the 'Boyden framework' (p2 of presentation). Note that the latter explicitly reflects a set of values (the importance of meeting human and ecosystem health needs).

The presentation also included the 'Webb/Kotter framework' (p5 of the presentation and below) which addresses the processes of bringing about intentional cultural transformation to a particular system of interest. The Newell and Webb/Kotter frameworks are therefore complementary. Whilst they are in themselves values neutral, they incorporate values as key components and drivers of both the system and systems change.

The various 2014 HEF session themes were mostly focussed on the process of change and how to bring it about, and as such do seem to map reasonably well to the Webb/Kotter 'processes of change framework' (see p 7 of the presentation and below).

The presentation provided an input to the subsequent discussion (including 3 table groups and plenary session) around three focus questions:
1. *How could such overarching frameworks be improved/ made more useful?*
2. *How could the mapping of HEF sessions / other insights be improved / made more complete?*
3. *What are the emerging 'good principles' for effective cultural transformations?*

Discussion feedback was as follows:

## Question 1: The frameworks

*(1a) The 'Newell' high level systems template:*

Need to be clear that 'cultural paradigms' operate and change initially at the level of the individual; and that they comprise many dimensions (e.g. personal, group, ethical, aesthetic, feelings). The question is, how do you design interventions for this (that is designing the influence not the change, recognising that

the change is to some extent unpredictable)?  Also is there a need for an arrow from Ecosystem to Institutions to reflect the 'biosensitive'  perspective and a state of human connectedness  (or is this mediated only through link 6)?

*(1b) The 'Webb/Kotter' transformational change framework (see chart below with HEF themes mapped):*

In addressing the above question 'how do you design for intentional cultural change' the draft framework is ok as a starting point, though there are several aspects which could be both improved and clarified.
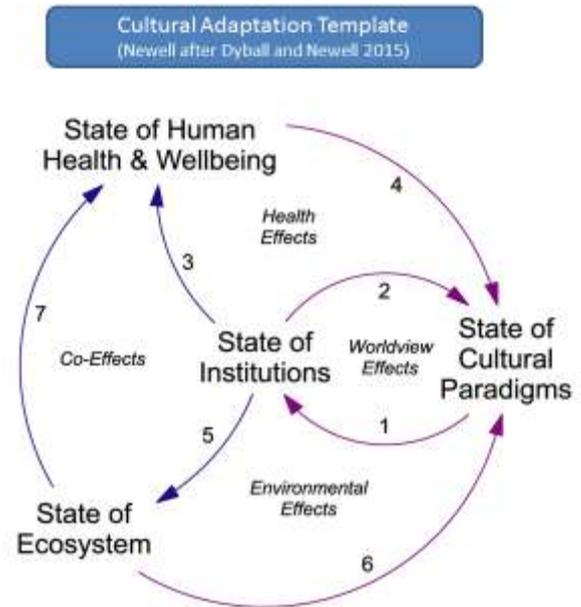


It is broadly consistent with and reinforced by David Kolb's Learning Cycle at the individual level; and it can also be viewed as a 'spiral' (or helix) which continues to loop round over time whilst also progressively shifting the nature of the challenge and the future vision as events unfold and progress is made.

Need to appreciate the relevant historical change contexts for the issue at hand (e.g. example cited that Canada able to legislate and then promote anti racial discrimination very effectively through simple devices such as posters, because of a long process of international change from anti-slavery, civil rights, anti-apartheid etc. precursors). An historical perspective provides a point of reference for the adaptive change process.

It could be viewed as an elitist framework; and it needs to operate in the fourth dimension where the other three (humans, other living entities and non-living entities) interact.

The framework itself is values neutral, though the incorporation of values is an essential part of the process of implementing change in line with the framework. The framework works effectively as long as seen as part of a broader system.

**Costanza:**
- evolutionary theory of SES/cultural change
- change as transitions not endpoints
- multiple selection scales – genes/groups (Wilson) – act on intentional/reflexive cultural design variants (sociotectures) – reflected in worldviews, institutions, technologies
- systems intervention points (Meadows)

**Newell/ Webb (including IARU):**
- dynamic systems view of SES
- theories/ frameworks of SES/change (e.g.Ostrom SESF)
- multiple levels (global, social, group, organisational, individual)

**Brown/Harris:**
- SES as self organising systems (physical, living, human, combined); synergies of parts and wholes; humans influencing but not in sole control
- change emergent, depending on human capacity to create/use knowledge

**The processes of intentional or designed transformation**
(BW261114 draft – not for distribution)

**STEP 1: Create a Sense of Urgency**
Help others feel a gut-level determination to move now

**Costanza/ Stafford Smith:**
- interacting slow/fast drivers and variables
- biophysical/social/cultural tipping points
- planetary boundaries

**Power/ Douglas:** tension/crisis as opportunity
**Douglas :** growing inequality/inequity/injustice
**Boyden:** cliff of environmental disaster

Paradigms

Goals

**STEP 8: Make It Stick**
Anchoring new approaches in the culture for sustained change

**STEP 2: Creating the Guiding Coalition/Leadership**
Putting together a group with enough power to lead the change.

**Douglas:** leadership/ strategists/ PIC
**Power:** power core element of change

**STEP 7: Don't Let Up!**
Consolidating gains and producing more and accelerated change

**STEP 3: Developing a Change Vision/Strategic Initiatives**
Clarify how the future will be different from the past

**Costanza/ Stafford Smith:**
- SDGs/wellbeing/ KPIs – GGP/ GPI
- self identity (societal addiction/ consumption vs sustainability/ stewardship)
- scenario planning/ alternative world views/ generic categories
- economy in society in environment

**Boyden:** biosensitive/biorenaissance
**Thomson:** social capital, safety, equality; green spaces and health
**Webb (including IARU):** transformed energy, food and urban systems
**Brown/Harris:**
- 7 ways of knowing individually
- power of ideas and listening
- creating collective mind/ purpose

**Boulton (Morton):** hyperobject framings
**Wyborn:** resilience stronger than risk

**Tait:**
- Involves behaviours and beliefs
- various levels of culture (global, regional , local, personal

**Tait (Anderson R):** culture change; new habits; renormalising; social proof
**Power:** power a core element of culture; culture related to identity and experience
**Costanza (Ray/Anderson S):** rise of 'cultural creative' symbotype (vs modernists, traditionalists)
**Stafford Smith:** mainstreaming vs ongoing coordination of change

Framing

**STEP 6: Generating Short-term Wins**
Creating visible, unambiguous success as soon as possible

**STEP 4: Communicating the Vision for Buy-in**
Ensuring that as many people as possible understand and accept the vision – volunteer army

**STEP 5: Empowering Broad-Based Action**
Removing as many barriers as possible and unleashing people to do their best work

Institutions

Knowledge and Technology

**Thomson:** competing political/economic philosophies; improved democratic processes; international integrity
**Tait:** governance and democracy
**Tait (Anderson R):** choice architecture
**Boyden:** societal/institutional arrangements
**Costanza (Ostrom):** governance of commons; institutional evolution
**Brown/Harris::** collective mind/action/response from individual knowledges
**Webb/Wyborn:** structures and processes. multi scale governance; decision support approaches; addressing status quo/denial; managing uncertainty

**Stafford Smith:** Future Earth research agenda; SDSN
**Costanza:** iHOPE and learning from the past
**Faunce:** previous technological revolutions; technological pathways/ (GAP/energy systems)
**Newell:** understanding systems and feedbacks
**Webb:** understanding interactions/ synergies/trade-offs; experiments, scaling/ transferring learning and good practices; flexible pathways
**Several:** co-design and co-production of use-inspired knowledge; collaborations

**Costanza:**
- positive/ engaging/ motivational interviewing
- rational and creative thinking
- communication/ new media techniques

**Tait:** emotion not intellect
**Hollo/Boulton:** stories/ values/ humanities
**King:** social marketing/ psychology/ mindfulness
**Wyborn:** sense of place/ social relevance
**Several:** addressing uncertainty, fear, denial

It would be helpful to be explicit that in reality, all the 'Steps' are likely to be in play at once, so to some degree each is evolving in parallel (co-evolving), whether intentionally or not. Also there is an explicit choice as to where to enter the cycle for most leverage – this choice will be issue and context dependant. Furthermore action will not always be sequential, with deliberate feedback/iterations between some steps.

**Step 0**

Need a Step 0, or first component of Step 1, that reflects that developing a 'sense of urgency' presupposes some underlying values or goals behind the need for change (such as inter and intra generational equity; inter species equity; etc); that there is evidence we are diverging from these desirable outcomes; and there is some understanding of the implications of this divergence.

**Steps 1-3 Creating a sense of urgency, guiding coalition and vision**

**Steps 1 Creating a sense of urgency**

- needs to be clearer about who creates the sense of urgency (e.g. should Step 2 Create the Guiding Coalition, be ahead of or in parallel with Step 1 – i.e. need a guiding coalition from the outset).
- Recognising that a sense of urgency is an emotional response
- is what IPCC has been attempting for climate change, though mostly within a risk paradigm and without the other steps
- needs some positive perspective – perhaps by paralleling with Step 3 Developing a Vision
- is especially amenable to use of Open Space Technology
- see Bob Douglas 2020 material for schools as an example

**Step 2 Creating  a guiding coalition**

- needs to develop a social license.
- Needs an 'organisation' ( not necessarily a constituted body but a consistent membership group) to push without controlling, to drive communications, to invite participation (GetUp as an example)

**Step 3 Developing a change vision**

- Values based vision of the world we want
- Make assumptions about the 'problem', 'solutions' and the possible futures overt
- All action occurs within and is informed/ influenced by an historical context

**<u>Steps 4 – 5 Communicating and empowering</u>**

- 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

**<u>Steps 6-8 Acting and embedding</u>**

- 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' / consolidate the changes
- change involves disruption/transgression/subversion and hence conflict
- change requires a focus on agreed actions
- 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

## Question 2: Mapping of the 2014 HEF sessions themes to the Webb/Kotter framework

The mapping of the HEF session themes seems generally ok (noting however that some of the HEF session presenters were not at the workshop to comment on this). This would need to be further understood and tested, and also modified with improvements to the framework based on the feedback noted above.

## Question 3: Some principles for effective cultural transformation

Culture is the sum of ethics, values, knowledge (belief, assumptions, worldview) and behaviour – it influences but does not alone drive behaviour. It is the operating system or 'the way we do things around here'. This is largely unconscious rather than reflecting free will. Note that ethics are externally constructed modes of conduct, and are part of social identity, whereas morals are more a personal compass. Every individual may express several cultures that reflect their various 'lives' and interests/ groups.

Intentional transformation involves designing a change that will influence the system; it is based on a set of normative assumptions (e.g. biosensitive cultures, better resource use and reflecting externalities, recognising biophysical realities/limits, the need for ecological sustainability,). It is likely to be characterised by disruption, transgression, subversion, unsettling feelings and conflict. Influencing change at the level of each individual is crucial.

Recognise that some people operate from the head to the heart, but many or most from the heart to the head; and that there are many different ways of learning and knowing, involving for example ethical, aesthetic and sympathetic domains of understanding and the importance of reflecting on these in their own right. These can be at least as influential as the disciplines in any process of cultural change.

Therefore
- need different framings and multiple messaging/ communicating/engagement channels and techniques
- need to show respect for and address/use the variety of knowledges
- need to use all the points of view to develop the 'collective mind' (collective mind = using all points of view and understandings).

The diversity of individuals should be viewed as a potential asset rather than a problem. There is value in dissent and multiple ways of thinking – it can help evolve more sustained intentional change

- there is then a need to understand and use the psychology of changing behaviour
- need to assess sources of knowledge as to whether they are valuable and help the change process
- one may need to change one's own views upon reflection
- one will need to respond to and handle dissent, even if on reflection one believes 'they are wrong'.

There will be a diversity/plurality of ethical components, views and positions; the job of a guiding coalition is to drive the shared 'change project ethic' whilst recognising and respecting individual views on

other issues may still vary significantly. Also it is possible to agree in practice even if there are different ethical drivers (the basis of much diplomacy).

Need to speak to emotions and cultural diversity but this is fraught as meaning is not intrinsic – needs meaningful dialogue, and creative thinking (note above and below discussion of role of semantics/semiotics). Needs formal process of reaching commonly accepted understandings of the key words: culture, knowledge, transformation (vs reform), etc..

Need positive and motivational framing and incentives, not just risk and cost; and preparedness to embrace and handle uncertainty.

Need to recognise, capture and ride the prevailing or emerging 'zeitgeist' – the spirit of the time - riding the wave, creating ripples in the pond, the nudging (but not invisible) hand

Need to connect more broadly to reach and recognise social change tipping points. The direction of change and tipping points may be helpful or not helpful (for societal and individual wellbeing). Could need to revisit Step 1 depending on the nature of the change that is unfolding in practice.

Developing the power and capacity for proactive designed or intentional (vs responsive evolutionary) change requires some 'organisation' and 'control' system

- which is responsive to leaders and members, positively inviting feedback
- and is somewhere along the spectrum between self-organising systems and dictatorship
- recognise that such organisation/ change agents are themselves within society, not independent of it; indeed we are all part of the systems we are changing; and that there are oppositional and neutral subgroups as well (note neutrality supports the *status quo*)

## 3. Gaps and practical initiatives

There was plenary discussion around two additional focus questions:
1. *Where are the major gaps in knowledge, understanding and practice of cultural transformations?*
2. *What might be some practical projects / approaches to address these gaps?*

Such a small group is trying to understand and drive change at this level; hard to grasp the depth when most people don't even think about it (cultural change) as critical to social and organisational change; people are often buttressing rather than changing the system. Thus Naomi Klein and Russell Brand both challenge capitalism but neither consider cultural change.

Epistemology and semantics (understanding terms) is vital but often peripheralised, for example by the Enlightenment project; but science is not absolute; semiotics, art, humanities also useful

So examples of some knowledge gaps are

- There is not a shared understanding (or working definitions) of:
  - Culture and basic underlying assumptions about 'how things work'
  - Transformation (vs transitional vs incremental?)
  - Are we promoting change to the rules or the culture or both?

- o  Knowledge content and knowledge processes
- How do individuals change – psychology and cognitive science? (see Matthew Rimmer – Law and Disruption). How to scale up from the individuals to society? The role of relationships?
- We do not understand the tipping points of cultural change – what level of change is enough or appropriate?
- We do not know enough about change networks – what works/doesn't work (e.g. Get Up) – how they influence both process and content.  Are agents of change self-critical enough?
- Scenario planning – what is happening and how useful?
- Uncertainty – how do we deal with it?

## 4. Next Steps

It was noted that the HEF and the human ecology discipline itself have many value assumptions/ethical positions; they are not always overt or open to different world views and expertise; and do not reflect enough on themselves.  [See also Bruin Christensen article in Human Ecology journal]
There was discussion how to take forward the HEF series and the above workshop outcomes, including through future HEF and/or Frank Fenner Foundation. In either case there is a need to build more self-reflection into the process (e.g. the various ways of knowing; more formal meeting roles?); and better reflect the role of humanities/social sciences – modelling the change we want to see.

It would be good to also involve a number of people who could add to the greater diversity of perspectives (e.g. Mike Smithson from ANU Research School of Psychology; agile or complex project management).

In early 2015 we will test these approaches in a session that amongst other things will report back on and discuss the results of this workshop, and consider in more detail options for taking forward.

To assist in this the frameworks and mapping of HEF themes to date will be modified to reflect the workshop feedback, including checking with some of the HEF session presenters not present at the workshop.

[BW/PT - 14 February 2015]