

Changing the Game of Change!

Exploring radical change in times of transition

How to move a system from resistance & stress to a new future, collective energy & personal growth

"You must be crazy" was the instant reaction, when we proposed our new way of change for the first time. It must have been 2015 when having this conversation with a local branch of a Dutch banking organization. After then only large organizations, at the brink of a crash by massive strikes or other unavoidable disaster, accepted our offer 'they couldn't refuse'. Only then started our journey, exploring radical new ways to change organizations and systems, without broadly felt frustration and mental losses. Now the coronavirus is driving every system to the next normal, their first reaction is showing the unprecedented adaptability, we only witnessed before at collapsing organizations. We realized we discovered key ingredients of a new path, based on new sets of principles. We translated our learnings not only into a new operating system for change, but also into individual retreats as 'Leadership on Stage', 'Beyond Self' or 'Asia's next leadership challenge'. Programs that focus on individuals exploring new ways to face individual and global challenges. Here we present the first outcomes of our journey. We are still, or now even more, excited!

The future is not what it used to be!

The coronavirus crisis is a world-changing event, showing that phenomenally rapid change is possible: it's just happening! On the short term we see bureaucratic barriers easily put aside and new technologies rapidly being embraced. But more fundamentally, we can see how this pandemic is accelerating preexisting trends, political, social, economic and organizational. We are moving and learning fast forward.

On politics and society, we learn that we need strong institutions for health and basic infrastructure, strong governments and strong 'commons'. On economics, global competition on tests, IC-beds and all scarce facilities, marks the end of our romance with market society, our race-to-the-bottom-efficiency-economics & hyper individualism. On organizational level we learn that focusing on reliable profits, stability and risk reduction, we overengineered tight bureaucratic processes.

New dynamics are paving the ways to new ways of collaboration, to new ways of organizing. Recently we have seen a few inspiring early examples of new organizing models. For instance, in his 2014-book 'Reinventing Organizations' Fredrick Laloux has traced 'teal organizations'; self-managed, holistic, driven by an evolutionary purpose and.....very successful. He described 10 striking examples of substance. Their common feature is that they all (re)started from scratch. They were all able to create new sets of values and draw participants who were attracted to the new concept. Our real challenge is to find out how to move from a legacy.

What is wrong with traditional change?

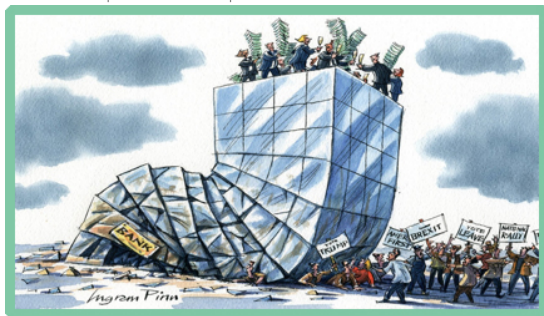
All these corona experiences are driving a change in our understanding of 'change' itself. 'Paradigm shift' is among the most overused phrases in consultancy and journalism. Yet this pandemic may be the case where it applies. Organizations are until now familiar with a specific model of change, operating within existing parameters and structures and focused on direct measurable results. Driven by our reaction to this pandemic our collective notions of the possible have changed already!

Since we created structured organizations, as we did when entering our agricultural revolution (around 10.000 BC), we tried to make them stable and reliable. And God, how we succeeded! This once revolutionary new invention enabled us to collaborate in large numbers. We were able to explode our food production and outperform any other living species. We also played a nasty trick on ourselves. As originally free hunter-gatherers, we 'promoted' ourselves to being tiny parts of a big system, often controlled by a stern, sometimes religious, hierarchy. This social invention created two new problems: As humans our roles became isolated as we got trapped in a box, and our systems got trapped in the focus on stability. However, these issues were long term problems. In the short term, we finally had a warm feeling of security now that sufficient food was available. This blinded us to our loss of freedom and adaptability.

That lasted until the next big change in life conditions arrived: The scientific revolution (around

1500) driving the industrial 'age' (at around 1800) introduced new economic innovations such as markets and competition. The old invention of hierarchical organizations, that served us well with increasing our food production, adapted again step by step by adding a commercial skin. Utility distributions function developed into marketing & sales. Driven by inventions as reward and bonus systems, these even became the dominant organization function. A new form of life developed: 'the global corporate'. Extremely efficient and powerful, but because evermore based on classic hierarchy, still not flexible at all. These global corporates simply were never designed to change deeply and pro-actively. As a result: a growing mismatch between the pace of change of the external environment and the fastest possible pace of change in most organizations. If it were different, we wouldn't see so many incumbents struggling to capture the future.

And there the trouble starts. Lighted by the global financial crisis of 2008, and a corona-pandemic in 2020, driven by the digital tech-disrupters, and forced by the quest for solutions on global ecological challenges, on fossil energy, on global warming, on poisoning food chains and waste production, we are at the brink of a new era. And these beautiful inventions of the past, these global corporates, basically all major complex organizations, are paralyzed. They now have become part of the problem.



Trying to adapt as fast as they can, they produce more management books than real solutions. They are just too slow. They are the 'dinosaurs' of our time. Attacked by disrupting start-ups or a worldwide pandemic, they try to play their old tricks: defending their profitability by laying off vast amounts of employees. They suffer as wounded animals. But their loyal employees are the real victims. You may wonder, is it our quest to save these dinosaurs and restore the status quo? No, we are in this to sparkle individuals to choose their own destinations, and to create space for reinventing new ways of collaboration and participation. We need transformation without stress and frustrations.

We need to change the game of change!

Our journey starts...

Our first discovery occurred when asked to assist with a crashed reorganization at a large Dutch hospitality organization. Facing severe financial trouble, they launched a process of laying off 25% of their 4000 employees, most of them with a life-long relation with the company. As the employees felt that they were paying the price for long term mismanagement, they stood up against the management and started striking, with full media coverage, hitting the evening news almost on a daily basis. The management panicked and started to (re)consider our proposal, moving to a radical bottom up process for reorganization.



As the board was part of the problem in the eyes of the employees, we searched and found the informal leaders, embedded in the organization. They acted as a temporary extra coordinating team during the reorganization. Their message to their colleagues was: *"The challenge we are facing is the same, but we have permission to approach it in a different way; together, with you. Together we will have dialogues on how to move forward, on who wants to stay and who wants to leave, but also on how to reinvent our business. The process will be based on everybody's free will and ideas for improvement"*.

The result was amazing! Almost all that left did so voluntarily, backed by a sufficient social plan. Lots of small startups emerged as the most entrepreneurial employees left. That sounded alarming to the formal management, but surprisingly the 'remainders' were able to not only translate their enthusiasm into new and better business plans, but turn the company into a profitable future within six months! This was much better than any consultant could have promised at almost no additional external costs. So, our first discoveries here where:

- Bottom up reorganization is not only possible, but offers great opportunities
- Bottom-up change requires a flexible and organic process, without predetermined outcomes or fixed goals, but allowing for local diversity in solutions and unexpected insights that will direct the process.

- The self-management capabilities needed for reinventing organizations can be unlocked, even in a classic hierarchy
- The temporary coordinating team of local managers was able to 'self-manage' this fragile process, when backed up by professional process-support. There is no need for external experts or consultants 'on stage'. It was sufficient to 'lead from behind'.
- The organic nature of the process, without a fixed plan or outcomes focused on practical or material goals and deadlines, made the board feel very uncomfortable. Also, taking on a new role as supporters of bottom-up solutions instead of directing the outcomes top-down created discomfort for them, especially within the context of a traditional hierarchy being in such a critical context of transition. We failed in acknowledging the worries related to the depth of this personal change requested of them, and thus in keeping the top management aboard. We took the impact for them too lightly: An important learning!

How to move a system? Changing a system needs systems thinking

The case with the hospitality organization showed us that our basic assumption about how to change an organization was not completely off track. We now felt encouraged to explore our systems

approach in a broader sense. Looking for other 'victims' willing to experiment with us we introduced our bottom-up approach to different organizations with a serious sustainability risk, meaning that the continuity of these organizations was uncertain, caused by a crashed or otherwise problematic reorganization. This time we could at least demonstrate some concrete results from the past, which increased our confidence and in turn their acceptance of our proposal.

In the following period we designed and assisted change processes within a national police organization, a 4000-member horticulture cooperative, a children's hospital, a national tax organization. As well as a process to develop leadership in local government in Myanmar and numerous retreats for organizations and individuals. We summarized our insights and discoveries in 12 guidelines for radical change. These guidelines are not an integrated recipe, nor a twelve-step program to organize any change process, simply our learnings so far. They summarize points for attention that we discovered during our journey, trying to move systems beyond their inherent incremental change capacities: the pioneering principles and a base-plate for transformative change. We are still learning and finding more areas to consider. Here we will share our thoughts and experiences

How to move a system Principles to guide radical change



Prepare to move: build foundation for change



- 1 **Read the landscape:** observing without judgment (e.g. Spiral Dynamics)
- 2 **Self-awareness:** from 'they & it' to 'I & we': we are the system (e.g. self-reflection)
- 3 **Identify the change-agents:** key players & informal leaders to guide the change
- 4 **Release the stress:** hold space to bring ease into the system (even only 2%)
- 5 **Connect extremes:** from persuasion to open communication, exploring multiple change stories (e.g. ValueFraming; Driven by Dialogue)
- 6 **Strengthen teams:** this is where true transformation germinates and shows itself (e.g. Flying Teams model)



Change process: bottom-up, driven by dialogue

- A **Organic process:** from (fixed) goals to guiding by intention (why) and open minds (dare to explore radical new futures)
- B **Follow the energy source:** it's the engine and center of the change process (supported by change-process team and transformation dashboards)
- C **Create empowering platforms:** the foundation to support the change initiatives
- D **System leadership:** from control to facilitator of change by leading from behind
- E **Engage massive participation:** from top-down to large-scale dialogues
- F **Continuously shift ownership:** from management to self-management



Preparing to move

First, we learned moving a system needs preparation concerning some crucial aspects. We need to explore and strengthen the capacity for change, creating a jumpstart for a new 'systems operating system'. We recognize six aspects that build a solid foundation for an organization or system to move.



Read the Landscape

How do we collectively prepare for transformation?

Already 500 years BC, Chinese general Tsun Zsu taught us that one of the important preparations for a battle is reading the landscape: "know your battlefield" he says, in other words, understand the system that you are about to enter. Entering a system, you will first encounter the prevailing judgments. Judgment of and about (top)management, colleagues, suppliers, customers and whichever stakeholders are involved. Judgments are useful in daily life, but an obstacle in change processes. Judgments are solidified historical beliefs and frustrations driving critical judgments. They tie up organizations and disappear unnoticed in its culture, operating as unwritten rules.

To unfix a system, all those involved, especially its change agents, have to dismantle the unwritten rules by exploring and revealing the underlying judgments. Sometimes we do so by a process of forced exaggeration, often leading to confronting but hilarious realizations. Often we follow up by placing these judgments in a system of developmental stages. For instance, Spiral Dynamics helps us to explore stages of individual and collective development, creating an understanding of existing perspectives without judgment.



Self-Awareness

Every participant in a radical change process, from initiator to final adaptor, determines the final outcome. How do we make our own mindset ready for change? Is it even an option to start without doing so? No way!

Otto Scharmer states in his transformative 'Theory-U' model that all of us have to face our judgments, cynicism and our deepest fears, before we can truly open up to a new and deeper inner knowing, and let a new future emerge collectively. Yoval Harari explains in 'Sapiens' that organizations, and systems like religion, political systems or even a concept as money, are only collective myths. So

with every change, we have to explore, question and share our individual and our collective beliefs. They determine the result.

American writer and philosopher Ken Wilber goes even beyond fear and debunking collective myths as he concludes that we have to prepare ourselves by transformation on four levels of consciousness:

- Clean up: cleaning up our personal mental health by addressing issues from the past that influence our thinking and behaviour (by coaching, therapy, circles, family set-ups)
- Wake up: our spiritual awakening (by contemplation, meditation or devotion)
- Grow up: move towards a next step in development, individual and collective, taking consequences of your 'awakening'
- Show up: express your new insights in the open, by speaking your truth and engaging others. Living your values out loud

They are all mental missions to prepare for transformation. Not only for a company's employees of all hierarchical levels, but also its advisors and facilitators. When we do so, we move from the perspective of 'it & them', from outside ourselves, to 'I & we', to inside.



Identify the change-agents

As we illustrated with the case of the hospitality organization, the speed of change in any organization is determined by the support of the distributed leadership, not being the same as the existing formal leadership. Sometimes it takes quite an effort to identify these 'hidden' leaders. Key is to bring informal leaders and other key players together in supporting platforms during the actual change process. They often are of immense value to the success of the process. They are the eyes and ears on the ground, know what is happening in the organization at any moment, and whether the change process can speed up or worries should be addressed first. But they are not only a good source of information, their informal leadership can also carry the initiative further through difficult times; they enjoy a natural trust from a solid base of followers. They can be identified by interviews, or in larger systems, by (on-line) network-analysis.



Release the stress

Organizations or systems, involuntarily forced to change, often put themselves and the people within them under a lot of pressure and stress. The fear of losing safety and accomplishments narrows the focus to short time survival. Management's first

reflex on uncertainty is taking (back) control. If anything creates rigidity, it is this mechanism. One of the first things systems leaders or facilitators have to do, is to try to bring ease in the system, even if only 2%. Think of it as providing mental space to dare to move. Becoming specialized in working with crashing or stuck systems, we learned how important it is to bring a stressed system at ease. Creating a safe space for front runners and change agents is often referred to as 'holding the space' for change to happen.

Each individual holds their own unique method of either adding to stress or instead bringing ease. It could, for example, be with humor, vulnerability or short meditations. When changing systems, it is important to be aware of your method. This processes of finding out how to release stress also is an important aspect in our retreats. When we create mental space, in combination with being out in nature, there can be room for contemplation and an inner journey. It allows us to (re)connect with our intuition and wisdom. Ultimately giving us the space to know where to go and which next steps to take. When changing systems, mastering this practice can prove an important asset when a system gets stuck or stressed out.

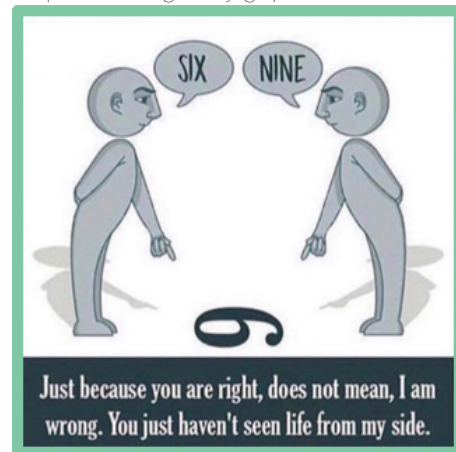


Connect extremes

Often crises lead to fear, and fear drives us apart. It polarizes and so paralyzes us as individuals and as organizations. When we struggle for survival from a state of fight or flight, there is a tendency for people to become more identified with their mental positions on a matter. Although providing us with a sense of security, it leaves little room for doubt and open dialogue. We rely on having an opinion ready, as society has taught us, not on postponing our opinions and keeping an open mind. How do we bridge those gaps? Where fears trigger our judgments and mental patterns, bridging the gaps is about postponing and breaking these.

In a period of five years Floor directly worked on and off with the advisors that helped Nelson Mandela prepare South Africa, extremely divided by decades of 'apartheid', for the first integral elections in 1994. He almost 'interrogated' Chris Cowan and Don Beck, writers and founders of 'Spiral Dynamics', about their methods to connect the conflicting African parties such as the ANC, 'Afrikaander Weerstand Beweging' and Inkatha. As they shared their insights on systems-change, Floor discovered something even more interesting: How Mandela himself translated these methods into deep empathic communication. The

more Beck and Cowan explained their methods, the more Floor realized what a great communicator Mandela had been throughout this process of reunification. And also how his advisors overlooked the impact of Mandela's contribution. He learned that empathy, daring to see the other's perspective, is not a moral virtue, but a necessary technique to bridge any gap.



Empathy is an important first step, but just empathy is not enough to connect extremes. The next step is individuals or teams being able to let go of 'being right' and exploring the possibility of many 'rights', many perspectives, in any given situation. But will exploring all the options not get us stuck or paralyzed in a change process that is already difficult or slow? When all parties are able to come from a place of not-knowing, a new direction can reveal itself that is not clouded by personal or collective judgments, patterns or positions. What Otto Scharmer refers to as "letting the future emerge". A powerful process.

In his 2019 book 'Driven by Dialogue' Floor explains the process of connecting extremes, we use in almost any situation where connections are lost. As we see in any organization that is leaning strongly on top down communication, persuasion, then often referred to as 'dealing with resistance', leads to polarization and destroyed connections. Restoring these connections is a condition for change. Not to reinforce the original status quo, but to make room for real dialogue.

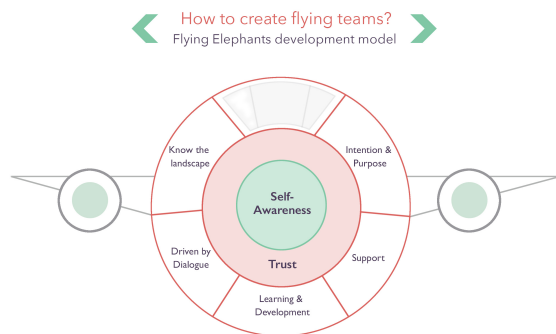


Strengthen teams

Another important foundation for change is good collaboration. Important because change starts at different sources throughout a system. Connections need to grow to carry fragile initiatives.

Teams are the main carrier of any innovation: The bottom-up process of change germinates in teams. The majority of an organization works in teams, and this is where the change will essentially show itself. Development of team-strength is

therefore an important foundation for change. Based on our experience working with and strengthening teams, we have isolated the following aspects of flying teams:



- Self-awareness: At the inner core of healthy teams are self-aware team members, asking themselves: which mental patterns cloud my judgment and decisions, what judgments cloud the team's judgments and decisions? To discover the unwritten rules we, as individuals and as a team, need to become aware and uncover the prevailing judgments.
- Trust: In our experience with maybe hundreds of teams, we learned the importance of creating trust; the backbone of a healthy functioning team. Trust is based on vulnerability and keeping an open mind towards other's intentions and your own. When there is trust, we are more open to change and continuous team development can thrive. Sharing personal insights or life stories contribute a lot to collective understanding.
- Intention & Purpose: When there is trust, team members dare to openly bring in their individual intentions and build the purpose of the team from there. In this context we often ask team members their 'why': 'Why is this project or personally related to this (team's) purpose?' Purpose and intention translate into practical team goals, but can also function as giving us a sense of direction while remaining our flexibility.
- Driven by dialogue: When there is a foundation of trust and a collective intention, team members are able to engage in unfiltered, constructive exchange of perspectives and debate on observations and ideas. They practice to postpone personal judgments. The team-members actively engage and speak up, without becoming identified with a (polarizing) mental position on how to move forward. Exchanging feedback, in the form of exploring different perspectives and awareness about personal patterns versus an opportunity of blaming or criticizing the other, can often be part of a helpful start for an open dialogue
- Read the landscape: When 'internal needs' are met, teams need to be able to objectively be aware of 'the external needs' within the environment in which they operate, by openly

sharing individual observations and insights. This awareness helps to accordingly break the silos we so often encounter in organizations. As soon as teams function well, they will spontaneously form networks with other teams as part of the transformation. But awareness of the environment extends even beyond teams, it also includes bringing the world outside of the organisation into awareness and team's decision-making.

- Support: Every team member has different strengths and talents to offer to the team, next to their professional skills. Building on them often starts with seeing someone else's strength as complementary to your own and exchanging these as mutual support. Every team member should be encouraged to take his or her special team role, and team members should actively contribute to strengthening confidence in others.
- Learning and development: Helping each other brings us the most valuable asset. Failures and mistakes help us learn, we have each other's back when it happens and learn together. The speed of learning is essential to an effective team.

Teams tend to wear out their collaboration, taking it for granted without investing time in maintenance, which can easily add to organizational stress. So, teams need to service their collaboration by planning quarterly retreats, considering a higher frequency in times of high stress.



The change process: Driven by dialogue

Ok, enough focus on the foundations. Let's get into action. Again, here we recognize six crucial aspects that drive effective radical change. Each apart, they do not sound radical at all, but together, they are a magical combination. Again, there is no fixed order or priority, they are simultaneously important. Application depends on the actual status of the system to move.



Organic process

As we are programmed by centuries of slow, incremental change, we have to unlearn many lessons we learned in school or at business academies. What are the principles we have to let go?

For radical change we have to shift from managed to organic. That may sound contradictory. Psychologist Kurt Lewin's seminal "unfreeze-change-freeze" model still guides how most leaders think about change. But in a world, that's relentlessly evolving, anything that is frozen soon becomes irrelevant and ineffective. What we need instead is constant experimentation, with new mental models, operating models, business models, and management models. The corona crisis showed us the power of adaptability. Not

freeze and refreeze, but “permanent slush.” This approach means less emphasis on building a powerful project-management office and more on building self-organizing communities that identify, experiment, and eventually scale new initiatives. Nature teaches us all we need to know about change: biologists call that regeneration. If a forest-fire destroys a landscape, it regenerates within months. If trees fall over, mushrooms and fungus take over. If soil gets exhausted, wild weeds enter to enrich the soil again. Needs and opportunities are the life force here, not top down driven goals and pre-fixed milestones.

That sounds natural, but applying that in organizational development creates a big challenge for everybody in the system, but mostly for (top)management. They are expected to be in control, to have a clear picture of the goal, of the ‘end-state’. In this new approach their ‘buy in’ is just as essential, but not on the goal, but on the process.

We experienced this first hand during our bottom up change approach at the hospitality organization, where management felt very uncomfortable. When they kept asking about results and milestones, we felt we only could answer; “Just wait and see, trust the process”. That indeed was no message to create trust with their shareholders. We learned to share and co-create the process in detail and invite them to take new roles.

Where traditional change processes are focused on concrete goals, normally to repair or improve the organizational system, organic change processes normally start focusing on primary service processes; the dialogue, between ‘user’ and individual supplier of the service. Driven by intentions, change-energy and dialogue: ‘Back to the original intention, back to the ‘Why’.

B Follow the energy source

So if not structured top down planning, then what drives a radical transformation? This is the key question in any change process and too often ignored.

The first confrontation between the rigidity of an organization and its increasingly evolving environment is not at board levels, but at daily operations with customers and suppliers. It is here where there is a mismatch, and consequently, where the frustration starts. Customers complain, employees feel unable to adapt, and management pushes to keep the results up to its targets. It often takes months or sometimes even years for the mismatch to show up on management dashboards or other sophisticated tools, as these are practically

designed to manipulate and hence offer an untruthful representation of current affairs. Once the dashboards do catch up, the initial frustration about the mismatch migrates and grows into frustration about neglect. These frustrations are traditionally met with tons of practical solutions. This is where you will find the emotional and practical driver for change. When the management finally recognizes the issues, they often react in a way they feel is expected: to make plans and organize action. Their top down approach moves the plans for change away from the initial source of energy - the frustrations. For instance, the people experiencing the pain or shortcomings of the system are no longer involved in exploring solutions, but only presented with the outcomes thought of by some newly installed project-team. When this happens, the new project is doomed to fail. And unfortunately, this is what traditionally happens in today's organizations.

We learned that an essential part of radical change is to stay close to the initial change energy, and bring and keep it in the center of the change process. So how do we do this?

First of all, by consulting and co-creating with them. It is the engine bringing the energy and motivation for getting to the bottom of what is needed and effecting real change.

Secondly, by monitoring and guiding the process. Almost like driving a car, we need the engine to move forward, but without a dashboard and a steering wheel we wouldn't get too far. This ‘monitoring and steering’ can best be performed by a team of informal leaders, who combined often have the best and widest connections with the power to guide and empower change processes by trust.

C Create empowering platforms

Such an organic bottom-up process, supported by strengthened teams, will bring a lot of turbulence, change initiatives and practical innovations forward. Where do they land and find support? With management Innovation guru Gary Hamel, we learned that radical change requires the creation of another important ingredient that allows anyone to initiate change, recruit confederates, suggest solutions, and launch experiments: *effective change platforms*. These can be existing management teams (refocusing on change and development) or newly created platforms of informal leaders and change agents. Their role is to:

- Be the ‘systems-thermometer’. Collect emotions, opinions and ideas throughout the organization.
- Directing the unavoidable conflicts and dilemmas to the right ‘table’. Every organizational system creates inherent

conflicts. Change often brings solutions for old conflicts while also creating new ones. These conflicts often are ignored or pushed away by top-management. These platforms (of change agents) are to redirect these conflicts into fruitful dialogues.

- Encourage individuals and teams to tackle significant organizational challenges; especially those that are typically considered beyond an employee's 'pay grade' or sphere of influence
- Elicit dozens (if not hundreds) of potential initiatives and solutions rather than seeking to coalesce prematurely around a single approach; the way is first to diverge, then to converge.
- Focus on generating a portfolio of experiments that can be conducted locally to help prove or disprove the components of more general solutions, as opposed to developing a single grand design

For those platforms we recruit the informal key-players: people with broad networks and informal authority, the 'go to persons' of the system.

We saw it's effectiveness during a rigorous top down reorganization within the Dutch national police organization. When it turned into a potential crash (in some parts of the country), the local management team transformed itself from an executive board into a support- and change platform. Fed with information and ideas from over 400 locations, provided by communication professionals, moved from 'sending' information to listening to all involved, they directed lots of new initiatives into a cherished change process.

System leadership

All these books on new leadership concepts, do they really help in these kind of radical transformations? How can leadership be supportive instead of hindering true change?

The first image of leadership that comes to mind for leading radical change is a powerful leader that leads an organization into a safe haven. However, what is needed is just the opposite. Radical change needs distributed leadership throughout the system. It is not a one-man show, system leadership is shared, as a way of continuously adapting to change. This requests a very different attitude from leaders of systems change: Instead of presenting powerful visions and being in control, it is about daring to embrace the unknown and create an environment of learning together. From being the expert, to being a facilitator of change, to leading from behind.

As we mentioned before, the first role of system leaders is to bring the stressed system at ease. In their analysis of 'system leadership' in 2015, Peter Senge, Hal Hamilton & John Kania define another three capabilities of system leaders. The first is the ability to see the larger system, understanding the

dynamics between organizations within their contexts. The second capability involves fostering reflection and constructive dialogues. The third capability centers on shifting the collective focus from reactive problem solving to co-creating the future. What they do in practice is create real dialogue, build platforms for local change and empower leadership throughout the system. Creating and empowering 'champions' who work together on the most important issues of an organization. Who also taking initiative connecting the organization to the outside world, for instance by fostering new partnerships or starting 'social enterprise start-ups'. System leaders create new leadership. They empower followers to become champions - leaders in their expertise. These champions will transform the system, driven by their own vision and intentions.

A moving system needs a road to follow. System leaders can help by formulating a set of simple to interpret guidelines. Restructuring the hospitality organization, the board then stated three basic rules:

1. *think entrepreneurial for your own role or branch*
2. *bring down the cost for the whole where possible*
3. *implement your own measures yourself*

That turned out to be super effective and efficient guidance to restore profitability within six months.

Engage massive participation

Bottom-up means engaging and listening to all involved. We don't need only experts to solve a problem; like we mentioned before, it is the opposite! We need the people who are affected and part of the problem, to also be part of the solution. They will experience its effects on a daily basis. It is our experience that groups that reflect the population affected (no matter background or educational levels) produce better solutions than a group of experts or consultants. It is bringing the decision to the information instead of bringing the information to the decision.

But talking with hundreds or even thousands of people about one issue, is that possible? Can you have a meaningful dialogue on that scale? Yes, we can, and the benefit of using the collective energy (even when its form is frustration) and the wisdom of the crowd is enormous!

For a billion-dollar horticulture cooperative with over 4000 owners, we brought together more than a thousand growers regularly to discuss their most pressing issues. Large multimillion grower companies joined and debated with small family businesses sitting at small tables of six to eight participants, solving tough problems that were

about to destroy their cooperative. It took several series of meetings to collectively design a completely new auction tariffing system, a challenge that had been postponed for over ten years. This turned out to be the start of a continuous dialogue about the future. Brought together by a neatly designed process (a combination of live meetings and an online platform) and questions that addressed the frustrations of the growers, they gathered in hundreds of sessions, in six countries, on three continents. And that process of collective co-creative development is still going on and guiding the cooperative through the corona crisis. As the growers were used to live meetings, corona taught us how effective these meetings could be on line: shorter and in a much higher frequency, but with the same intensity.



So yes, for radical change *massive participation* is not only possible, it is often the only way to a new future.

Although the whole change process is organic, the participatory events should be carefully designed. You want the whole system in the room, making sure that every participant feels engaged and that the essential dilemmas and conflicts are represented at every table. Effective bottom up dialogues follow a recurring pattern:

1. downloading general historic frustration
2. overdue maintenance; repairing neglected conflicts from the past.

Being condition for:

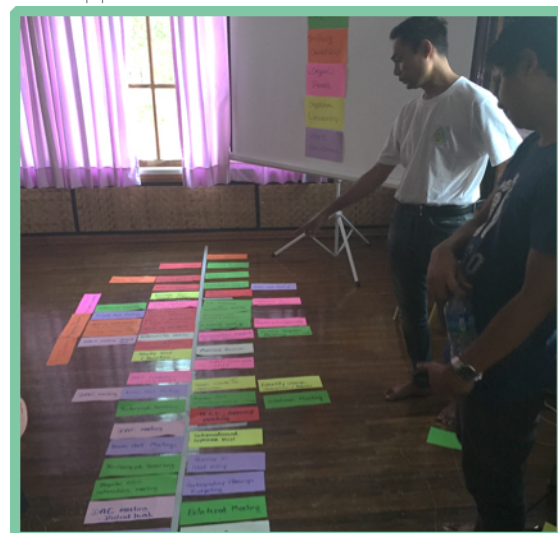
3. discussing the (near) future and current issues
4. generating new solutions

Participants consider their contribution important, transparency, about the integration of the dialogues and the results, is an important part of the process.

When 15% of the people is involved, the change process reaches a tipping point and can really take off, or at least it can no longer go back. We have witnessed that when people participating really join efforts to create joint solutions, boards are no longer able to ignore, overrule or direct their ideas. When a tipping point is reached, participation is a movement that can no longer be ignored or stopped.

F Continuously shift ownership

Ownership is an important issue for radical organic change. Where the traditional 'organizational operating system' advocates but simultaneously suppresses individual ownership, radical transformation depends on it. In an organic radical change process, we want to move from functionally being given a certain responsibility and accordingly being held responsible for its success or failure, towards taking intrinsically motivated ownership, and being allowed and supported to do so. We distinguish two types of ownership that are simultaneously important: ownership of content (strategy development and business-modelling); and process-ownership which guides and monitors the change process that supports the transformation envisioned.



Handing over ownership can be scary, as you are giving up control and power. But if you are too late in responding to the need, it will slow down or even stop the process. It is good to realize: People will rise to a challenge, when it is *their* challenge!

We are driven to continue this journey!

On this journey we have been able to discover promising elements of radical change, thanks to the organizations that gave us the opportunity, and colleagues that were willing to share their learnings and insights. We will continue our journey and keep sharing our insights and doubts.

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Eveline de Wal and Floor de Ruiter

