

THE ART OF **CREATIVE** LEADERSHIP

ALEXANDER KLEBE

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DESCRIPTION:

THIS ARTICLE LOOKS AT THE WAY WE LEAD. IT FOCUSSES ON THE WAY WE SHARE IDEAS IN GROUPS AND TAKE ON A NEW LEADERSHIP ROLE IN EXECUTING THEM. BENEATH LIES THE POWER OF THE GROUP-THINKING AND A METHODOLOGY OF CREATING A COMMON VISION WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN ORDER TO CREATE SOCIAL VALUE FROM YOUR IDEAS.

"WE LIVE IN A TIME OF TREMENDOUS CHANGE, THE WORLD IS GETTING SMALLER. IT IS CLEAR WE CANNOT STAY WITHIN OUR OWN BOUNDARIES ANYMORE." (DR. AREGA YIRDAW)

1. INTRODUCTION

We love to dream about democracy, peace and sustainability while getting ready to deal with the complex challenges of our times: financial and economical crisis, revolutions and climate catastrophes – manmade creations for which (future) leaders have to find possible solutions and opportunities to change.

Seldom these solutions are found alone, we engage and discuss in groups whether of same interest, workplace or background. In the past decades the evolution of the built environment has gained in speed as in number of inventions and events shape our social development. This gain in overall speed and interconnectedness has rendered our world smaller, and more complex at the same time. The innovations in the sectors of digital networks and opinion sharing the people themselves have led to an era of collective thinking. The people themselves are calling to establish a culture of listening, of learning and of taking on greater responsibility.

Tools like facebook, Blogs and Forums have helped to establish a dialogue even on a global basis, beyond political and cultural differences. People can share their ideas and actions and invite others to join on a common base. It could be compared to a wave of innovation, or might even be considered as a social media evolution – a beginning of a new thinking and action model. In this context we are calling upon the development of a leadership model, to meet the challenges for the leaders of tomorrow.

We realize an awakening in the leaders, giving room for new ideas and concepts, that can change the life not only of the few hundred millions in Europe, but of the entire world. Change, which is necessary for the next 5 billion people in developing countries. In these transformational contexts, we see a great potential to advance the way of thinking and organizing our “Eco System”, which refers to Economical, Ecological and Ethical balance of our Society on a whole. In this role creativity and leadership are the tool to be taught to future leaders, in order to establish common grounds for creating core values, clear visions, empowering relationships and innovative actions.

"LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING ARE INDISPENSABLE TO EACH OTHER."
(JOHN F. KENNEDY)

2. LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Economic schools of thought have brought a great many theories on leadership and Management to the fore. How to actually lead many great organizations. Per definition "Leadership" is about setting a new direction, about involving and motivating a group to a vision. Management in comparison is about controlling the resources and to maintain the status quo according to established principles and units of measurement.

We act as leaders, when we set a new goal, and the way to reach this goal (especially when other people are involved) is through the process we call Management. The aim of economic actions by management or an individual, as seen in the classical economic theory is essentially to generate benefits mostly in terms of profit. Which, in the macroeconomic point of view we learn to measure as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a whole nation. In these fine models, we tend to forget that: in every decision made, every goal set, every process created we might want to include not only the profit but also the people and the Eco-System into our calculations of benefit.

Since the Gross National Happiness and Social Impact are taken into account on macroeconomic levels and not only in Bhutan, by the political and economical leaders in the Western hemisphere our understanding of Entrepreneurship has shifted towards the triple bottom line goals: people, planet & profit.

3. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

We witness a shift at the microeconomic levels of leadership and management as well. Socially and Ecologically friendly products have found their way onto the shelves and into the minds and interest of the consumers. Character based lending evident in various forms of Micro

credits, even Micro Insurances, or Collective Farming and home installed renewable energy production, global education and local empowerment, revolutions backboned via Social media and crowd funding offer a shift of power towards the people themselves.

We can as well observe an emergence of social entrepreneurs behind these ideas. Together with the good will of those who have put aside a few billions they create change. We support them in their effort to give something back to society and to save the endangered Eco-System. Finally we find the means to address the pressing socio-economical, environmental, geopolitical (to name a few) challenges we face today. Challenges that might indeed be greater in magnitude than the sum of all wars, we as the mankind have been facing until now.

We believe in the power of social empowerment. As to the way we think of our economy, of our view of established models of growth, value and wealth creation, and of how we approach people, cultures and global politics. We've borne witness to the power of the people to overthrow "sole emperors", seen for our selves how modern media helps to organize and disseminate information to and among the masses. We have observed that our dependence on oil and other non-renewable resources cause more trouble in the long-term. We share the dream of those people who want change, and who are looking for a small (r)evolution in our own thinking and understanding of common leadership.

We realize that there are ways in which we can discover the most valuable means to serve one each other. Maybe it is just a matter of divergent thinking – of creative thinking.

How can we 'up-cycle' our understanding of leadership in the areas of politics, business and education in order to create the change that we would want to see in the world: The creation of value that serves the people – products and projects that encourage equal relationships and mutual respect and invite what we have most? – Our almost endless supply of ideas.

"GENIUS IS ONE PER CENT INSPIRATION, NINETY-NINE PER CENT PERSPIRATION." –
THOMAS A. EDISON

4. CREATIVITY

Creativity is mostly associated with Marketing & Design – the creation of new products but as well used for “pragmatic problem solving” in the poorest regions of our world. In Indonesia a man called *Solar Demi* improves the lives of the people in his neighborhood by building solar lamps from plastic bottles, water and bleach. Creating products that create value is no magic, it is a recombination of preexisting concepts, which can best be described by: “Copy, Transform and Combine.”

Creativity is to posing the right questions then eliciting a possible set of answers. Teaching creativity to business and politic students at university also means putting forward the question: “How can we educate responsible open-minded Leaders?” To answer this question would mean to allow for re-thinking, listening and to create room for dialogue with the students themselves.

Creativity could be best described as an attitude of a creative to be open to life, to appreciate its beauty and translate it into the bravery to go new ways and create with what you can do best.

5. CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

In these days Creative Leadership became an opportunity for shaping a shared sense of purpose – e.g. a sustainable future – and could be used as the approach to discover the most valuable ways to serve each other.

Creative Leadership, as we see it, is a style of looking at a system in the long-term, and foreseeing the possible evolutions instead of a keeping a static view on life, economy and people. People are by no means static beings like machines. People are of the most transformable species on earth, as learned from our personal and global history. Why not channel this gift of adaptability to the benefit of the world in which we live? They have everything at hand to learn new ways of thinking. In order to think about the way we lead, we would reflect following model.

THE 5 STEPS FOR CREATIVE LEADERS

1. APPRECIATE AND ENCOURAGE IDEAS

– Give room to share and exchange the expectations and ideas of your coworkers and the people around you. Create and cultivate a regular base for dialogue and open discussions in your group, encourage them to raise the right questions. Remain open for new approaches and embrace the possibility of failure, and even what you can learn from them.

2. CREATE A SHARED VISION

– The exchange of Ideas and the connection of the minds creating them will lead into a group thinking, which can be called the 'Mastermind' (Napoleon Hill, 1927). Creating a common vision on how a given challenge can be solved means to involve the many. Don't expect all the answers to be perfect at first, sometimes the most vague ones offer the greatest value if further developed. Sharing ideas needs a developed frame, so people can develop a long-term vision as well with security for themselves.

3. ACKNOWLEDGE AND IMPROVE THE SKILLS

– Everyone who is involved in the process has certain strengths, skills and power of observation. The Creative Leader helps to identify and strengthen the skills of his associates. In the process of leading development people themselves are the ones who are best equipped to best resolve real solutions. Animate for exchange of knowledge, skills and abilities on a broad range in order to develop more skills and empower the people to find new commonly generated solutions and combinations of personal skills to face the set challenges. Take ownership of your craft and allow others to do so.

4. USE AND INCORPORATE TOOLS

– In order to arrive at a solution certain tools will need to be identified and incorporated into the process. Creative Leadership not only means to achieve a set goal with minimum of resources but to further provide the right tools like money, time, Corporate Resources to the Group and the means to use them.

5. CREATE VALUE: PRODUCTS AND PROJECTS

– Find solutions that create value for the entire societal culture. That is sustainable and can be sustained by those who are in charge of it. Eligible products and projects take serve the many: the Happiness of the people, the sustained health of the planet and the Profit of the organization conveying the solutions.

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