

THE ART OF **CREATIVE** LEADERSHIP

WORKING PAPER (12-12-11)
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DESCRIPTION:

THIS PAPER LOOKS AT THE WAY WE LEAD CREATIVE TEAMS AND EMPOWER CREATIVITY TO INNOVATIVE THINKING. IT EXAMINES METHODS OF USING GROUP INTELLIGENCE IN WHICH THE COMBINED SKILLS AND TOOLS CREATE SUSTAINABLE VALUE FOR PEOPLE, PLANET AND PROFIT.

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1. FOREWORD

In early 2011 while the preparations for the Haniel Creative Summer School - "The Art of Creative Leadership" at the European University Viadrina took place; many questions on how we teach, combine and use knowledge arose.

The basic question was how creativity could be taught to future leaders and how their ideas could be translated into tangible and sustainable innovation.

Many great minds were involved at various stages of dialogue on the given matter, the project developed rapidly, and with each step forward, each new "co-creator" won, it became even more interesting than the original concept of Creative Leadership intended:

1. The involvement of the ideas of many, among them artists, scientists, entrepreneurs and beneficiaries,
2. The common vision: making education an experience, which would set a milestone in the fields of Creativity, Leadership & Sustainability
3. The given tools: the financing provided by the Haniel Foundation and the infrastructure of the university, blogs and Facebook.
4. The inclusion and development of the skills of combined potentials,
5. All came together to the creation of a product: The Haniel Creative Summer School on "The Art of Creative Leadership" with 33 people, who spent 5 days at the castle of Wartin.

The name soon become synonymous with practice, and the very manner in which the event was organized, and the styles of the many leaders, were appreciatively combined giving rise to a holistic approach that in itself defines the very character of the creative leadership. The whole planning of the event became an evolutionary process of collective thought which gave substance and form to our ideas.

As preparations for the summer school continued, we developed a "how to guide" on the Art of Creative Leadership. This roadmap of sorts is intended to help leaders to stimulate creative behavior and creativity and design a social environment in which it can be further developed and engaged. (more infos: www.creativesummerschool.de)

2. INTRODUCTION

In the past decades the evolution of our 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.

Leaders on a global level aim to find answers and ways to deal with these complex challenges: the financial and economical crisis, the establishment of democratic led governments and climate catastrophes. Although the results of now can be heavily discussed, we like to focus on the way we lead and how we educate the leaders of tomorrow, who will be held responsible for the impact of their decisions.

The question of the writer is: How can we 'up-cycle' our concept of leadership in the areas of politics, business and education in order to create the change that we want to see in the world: Value-based societies and organizations that serve the people & planet – by creating products and projects that encourage equal relationships, mutual respect and profit.

The idea of openness and dialogue has become a key factor in shaping possible solutions and opportunities towards the desired: democracy, peace and sustainability. Still we are facing the greatest manmade catastrophes, where the shortcomings and short sights of the past are a major challenge for future generations.

In this context we are calling upon the development of a new leadership model, to meet the challenges for the leaders of tomorrow with Creativity. How can we invite what we have most – our almost endless supply of ideas into the process of Leadership and responsible decision-making? Creating change is not a one-man show. We engage and discuss in groups whether of same interest, workplace or background.

Since the past innovations in the sectors of communication have led to the opportunity of collective dialogue. Empowering the people to establish a

culture of listening, of learning and of taking on greater responsibility in their own role as a Leader. We realize an awakening in the minds, 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 7 billion people on this planet. 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)

3. 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 expanded the benefit thought towards the inclusion of people, planet & profit.

“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)

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The most commonly used definition of sustainability is the one of the Brundtland Report: „Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.“

In despite of major economical systems are based on growth. Some economists are driven by the thought, that without economic growth our whole system will fail. The need for growth is the last drug of capitalism. In China the economic boom can be compared with a car that is driving at high-speed and nobody dares to brake, although they know it is heading towards a cliff.

A good example for what might happen to cultures driven by the goal of endless growth is the history of the Easter Islands. It was a perfect micro cosmos that could at large resemble our planet. The tribe-leaders, who were constructing giant heads of their glory, were ultimately forced to fight over the last available resources to secure their mere survival and led to the eradication of their culture. When western sailors discovered the islands the giant monoliths were the only testimonies of the former existence of any civilization that by then had itself already extinguished.

The concepts of sustainable business aim to learn from nature:

- Nature does not produce any waste, everything is re-used/ recycled
- Nature lives from solar energy and transforms it

- Nature respects and profits from bio-diversity
- Everything in nature is connected: one species relies on the other
- Nature is transformational, seasonal change is part of life-cycles

5. 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 (private donors & foundations) 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.

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

6. CREATIVITY & INNOVATION

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.

Creativity is mostly associated with the areas of Marketing & Design – where the creation of new products, compelling brand strategies and advertisement are the main purpose of many talented professionals.

The term can as well be used for “pragmatic problem solving” especially in the poorest regions of our world. In Indonesia a man called “*Solar Demi*” improved the life 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 into new connections and purposes.

“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. But still for many of them it is.

7. 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.

The Leadership style we want to embrace learns from nature. In the natural system of creation, there is no waste created,

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

I. 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.

Share your ideas to get initial feedback from friends and co-workers. Even the opinion of your boss might get you valuable information on how your idea is perceived. Even though many great ideas have been regarded as mad or just unrealistic, they have become reality. Some of them sooner and others 400 years later like airplanes that Leonardo da Vinci scribbled long before its realization.

II. 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.

III. 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.

There are different types of people, who have varied skills and can profit immensely from collaboration. The partnership of a Dreamer and a Doer is an important example in the process of creation. While the Dreamer thinks of new possibilities the Doer splits them into makeable action steps.

IV. USE AND INCORPORATE TOOLS

In China the kitchen board offers the most necessary: one knife. Therefore the Chinese say: "If you are skillful enough, the tools don't matter."

In many areas this is the same, you can achieve a lot without much by the power of thinking on which tools to employ and by skills. For any greater project the most common tools will always be Time (your time), Money (if your father is no millionaire mostly from Investors or Funders or buyers) and physical resources.

Creative Leadership not only means to achieve a set goal with minimum of resources but to challenge future resource shortages and waste creation already in the moment of the product design. At one point in time almost every tool becomes obsolete. Recently this momentum was rather designed to happen earlier than later, which by definition is good for corporations who need to sell more tools, but contra productive in the sense of responsible usage of the given resources.

Especially in the fields of communication one of the most powerful tools are social networks: tools like facebook, blogs and forums have helped to establish a dialogue even on a global basis, beyond political and cultural boundaries. People can share their ideas and call to action. Invite others to join or contribute on a common base and spread news & media on a global level and gain support for the created projects. The use of blogs makes it easier to have a presentational platform for your ideas and projects for others read your story and spread it through their circles.

V. 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. Even when you have finished a product or project you can always ask your clients, partners or co-workers if there is anything, they would have done differently. The circle of creation is in completion.

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