

WOW 5 Working Paper
Group 8 – The Commons as Transformative Paradigm

Coalescing Efforts towards a Thrivable World A Pattern Language for Systemic Change

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Abstract

This presentation examines engagement and the drivers for transformative action, and the conditions under which disparate efforts of all kinds can coalesce to generate systemic change and bring about a new paradigm generative of thriving, sustainability and equity.

Challenging the assumption that open groups of change agents and activists can agree on the representation and materialization of a shared overarching vision, goals and priorities (even on the commons themselves!), it places itself in the context of an ecology for transformative action with its diversity, systems and processes, and examines a variety of forms of engagement under the lens of action logics.

Action logics are derived from leadership and psychological development theory, generally used in constructive developmental approaches. They reflect the affective, behavioral and cognitive modalities which drive people's thinking, experience and action.

In this presentation, action logics are applied horizontally as a meaning-making framework to understand the nature and processes of engagement and to examine what type of common underlying logic, and in particular of commons logic, could manifest as common ground across action logics.

Ultimately it opens up further areas of research and practical applications, and in particular the development of a pattern language and other tools for bringing to awareness the common ground elements that would help 'activate' and leverage agency wherever it can be found (and in particular in the mainstream) in a way that nurtures the commons at all levels and in all its dimensions.

Introduction

With her life long research on the governance of the commons Elinor Ostrom set the stage for the reversal of Garrett Hardin's Tragedy of the commons curse, which formed the basic argumentation for the privatization and monetization of public, or public domain, goods and services.

Ostrom showed that commons as social forms, with institutional frameworks and rules elaborated by the communities taking charge of the system they depended on, were in a condition to thrive. Humans were after all able to cooperate beyond their immediate individual interests.

A new political discourse of the commons emerged, providing an alternative to market enclosure and state supremacy, giving rise to a whole new vocabulary.

The commons became a banner under which many disparate communities, movements, and initiatives, from global pool resources to regional commons, parks, public libraries, culture and digital commons, the free internet, seed banks, and more, started to rally, giving birth to a grassroots movement. This diversity, which constitutes the richness of the commons and its potential as paradigm, is also what makes it hard to pin down a clear definition of the commons and to forge or delineate an identity and common vision for the movement. There is no one model of the commons to apply, and the existing models are not something to adopt and implement 'in one piece'.

Much of what social change and environmental activist groups and communities of practice are currently engaged in is related in a form or another to protecting the environment, people, resources from over-exploitation and abuse, even if not organized as commons, aligned with the commons ethos, or expressed in 'commons speak'. Each social change agent holds a piece of a response to the various manifestations of the tragedy of the commons and to making the world a thriving place. In other words, at the same time as commons are promoted as organizational models, focus should be applied on spreading and embedding the logic of the commons in social change activity and alternatives that already exists, together with the provisions that would prevent this logic and the resulting commons to be co-opted, so that people in other movements can feel more confident that the policies and models they recommend actually prevent or improve the practices as far as abuse and over exploitation or enclosures are concerned. Commons as organizational forms would emerge as the result of a diversity of communities and movements taking all kinds of social objects generative of livelihood into their care and hands, thus reclaiming them as a commons in the process.

By finding and articulating the commons logic underlying their activity, existing movements of all sorts could further strengthen their own narratives and contribute to amplify the coalescence of disparate efforts towards protecting, nurturing and growing the commons as a whole, by design. The awareness of each other and of the whole that movements would gain in the process would help resolve conflicting interests between commons. From this perspective, commons would serve as a medium for accelerating the adoption of practices that address social, environmental and economic dimensions in a sustainable, cohesive and interconnected manner. They could also serve as a vetting system to assess the impact of social change initiatives and sustainability policies and practices and help operate inescapable trade-offs, so that people within mainstream institutions trying to instill other logics into the system could do so in more confidence.

The commons as generative system

The concept of commons is difficult to grasp in its wholeness because of the many dimensions of the commons, and the many ways people experience and relate to it. At the same time it resonates at the deepest level in each of us.

Commons are usually characterized as resources, natural or social, tangible or intangible that must be kept abundant; collaboratively governed by the communities and networks that produce or use them and have a stake in keeping them sustainable for their own livelihood and for posterity. They are closely associated to commoning, defined by Peter Linebaugh as the activity of (re)producing commons.

From a systems perspective, the commons are embodied in the timeless (re)generative systems that humanity shares to protect, care for and renew resources and opportunities for self-realization and thriving, which ensure the adaptive capability and health of the system.

- As object, the commons are the assets that we inherit or create, use and change, and that serve our livelihood (our natural, social and cultural resources, genetic and biological diversity, knowledge, etc), that we pass on to future generations. These multiple factors of opportunity and enablement need to be nurtured, and (re)generated, and to remain accessible to the greatest number. They must be protected against capture, over-exploitation, depletion and abuse.
- As process, the commons are the practices, the culture and the relationships people build with each other, with their resources and with the earth, the ways of being and doing in common (caring, sharing, nurturing, replenishing our common assets with discernment, transparency, empathy, equity, justice, mindfulness...), which ensure the (re)production of the commons. This process critically depends on sustained and adaptive know-how, on increased knowledge flows, and continuous collaboration and learning, including ways of working together on problem solving. It takes multiple forms and names.
- As result, the commons are the outcomes (access, capacity, well being, quality of life, prosperity, abundance) and outputs produced by these practices (knowledge, common goods) that in turn become assets to protect, nurture and reproduce in a circular process.

There is a universal aspect to the commons and to what drives social movements across the globe even if we cannot clearly translate it in comparable terms across languages. However when various movements or communities gather in the same room to devise common action, coordinating on vision and pathways and bringing coherence to their aggregated action is challenging. Agreement is broader on aspiration and intention than it is on actual representation of what the future looks like and course of action.

Engagement Logics and the logics of the commons

Angles of approach and solutions are multiple among change agents and activists. The diversity of people, backgrounds, cultures, disciplines, information acquisition modes and cognitive processing preferences, psychologies, worldviews influence the point of entry into an issue, the 'direction' of the process involved, the type of outcome sought out, and the level of intervention.

Bellow is an illustration of how various paradigms and main engagement and action logics that drive change can be expressed in relation to the commons, and the types of solutions that arise for each of them.

These engagement and action logics clusters are inspired from Susanne Cook Greuter's leadership development framework and Barrett Brown's work on communicating with many worldviews. They reflect the affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions of what motivates people's engagement and action choices, and therefore are descriptive of perspectives and preferences, and modus operandi. Each community of action is legitimate and functions as participatory collective with its own logic, organization and unity.

Going back to the source and essentials, and Mother Earth:

This manifests the cultural, mythical, sacred, spiritual dimensions of the commons and commoning. The commons logic is expressed as replenishment, harmony, attunement, giving, communing with each other and nature, honoring all beings and life. Examples are found in the ancestral traditions of indigenous societies and movements inspired from them, such as the Buen Vivir and Pachama traditions of Latin America, the spiritual teachings of the Native Americans and the Aboriginal Australians, traditional medicine and meditation practices. They usually intervene in confrontation with modernism.

Self-protecting livelihoods fighting the system as survivors or heroes:

This manifests the empowering, enabling dimension and distributed nature of the commons. The commons logic is expressed as generative of opportunity, autonomy and resilience. Examples are found in commons and peer-to-peer activism, intellectual property activism, open source and open access movements, commons based peer production and makers hackers movements, or new forms of co-working and entrepreneurship, relocalization, alternative currencies. They usually intervene outside of and in opposition to institutional contexts.

Creating legitimacy & stewardship through governance & institutions:

This manifests the stewardship and governance dimensions of the commons. The commons logic is expressed as protection of the commons through institutions, law & policy, ethics & governance, limits and boundaries. Examples are found in conservation, human rights, justice & equity activism, right to access movements, global commons activism, or in polycentric or subsidiary forms of governance, commons governance forms, Pigowlian taxes, open government. They usually intervene at the global UN or national levels and in Ngo's, political parties and unions contexts and may be under suspicion from the others as the concept of commons is easily co-optable.

Seeking rational solutions & efficiencies via new strategies & mechanisms:

This manifests sciences, technologies and 'tools' serving the commons. The commons logic is expressed through management and conservation/preservation technologies and models, new macro and micro economic models and policies, new organizational forms, governance and business models, integration of externalities, new indicators and metrics. Examples are found in the conscious capitalism, circular regenerative economy approaches, clean technologies and renewable energies. They usually intervene in the belly of the beast and may be under suspicion from the others as the concept of commons is easily co-optable.

Fostering emotional relationships between people & with nature:

This manifests the commons as social practice and outcome, the loving, caring, sharing, participatory, inclusive, consensual dimension of the commons. The commons logic is expressed as community involvement, social responsibility, learning, collaborative practices, practices of wellbeing. Examples are found in new forms of local communities and communities of practice such as transition towns or

eco-villages, community agriculture, new forms of consumption, the gift and sharing economy, community currencies. They usually intervene at the local community level.

Understanding systems & complexity linking theory & practice:

This manifests the systemic, dynamic and integrative aspects of the commons. The commons logic is embodied as a system and process generative of opportunity and thriving, interweaving contexts and development, and the cultural, natural and technological aspects. Examples are found in permaculture and bioregionalism, systems and design thinking and process methodology as well as capacity and leadership development, and in advanced dialogue methodologies. They usually function transversally and integrate interventions at multiple levels and scales.

Transforming self & others integrating the material, spiritual, societal:

This manifests commons as enlivenment, at the interplay of awareness, thought, action and effect. The commons logic is expressed as experience of wholeness of existence through mind and spirit, deep sense making and awareness of systems interactions and dynamic processes requiring personal transformation. Examples are found in integral and spiritual movements, developmental psychology, grounded in evolutionary psychology. They usually intervene from the deepest introspective level to the widest cosmologic level.

The logics of Engagement and Action and the Commons Logic

Niches and clusters

Change agents driven by their own engagement and action logics gather around the social objects, or objects of care, they are attracted to, very different in nature as shown above, which determine priorities and the pathways envisioned.

These social objects are the nodes around which visions and practices are shaped, forming clusters of cooperating specialized agents (Holland 2012). That is where meaning is created and shared through languages that help us understand each other, where conversations and repeated interactions are initiated.

The action frameworks that are built or shaped from practice to serve movements and communities of practice provide a context for co-individuation: the processes by which identities of individual and collective change agents are formed, transformed, and differentiated in relation to each other and to the forces that hold people together and fuel their capacity to act in cohesive and effective ways. Clusters grow and boundaries expand with the arrival of new agents driven by similar engagement or action logics that create new opportunities for interaction and adaptation and for interconnections between clusters, allowing for agents to co-evolve.

At the same time however, as these frameworks create 'natural boundaries' around clusters of cooperation or 'niches of action' they become 'exclusive' of alternative frameworks. This hinders relational dynamics and our capacity to collaborate across groups outside of our domains of action. As all niches have different opinions about the challenges the world is facing and the ways to address them, each tries to convince others that they hold the best solutions and methodologies, trying to 'funnel' all the other solutions through their perspective.

Our territory of action as a whole is actually composed of islands that do not share the logic, the motivators and the narrative...

Unity in diversity?

As change agents, most of us acknowledge the critical need for systemic change and for collective intelligence and action, and we feel increasingly interconnected, but we are facing a paradox. What

seems to make us effective agents focusing on our respective domains of engagement and action is specifically what prevents us from uniting and being effective as a whole.

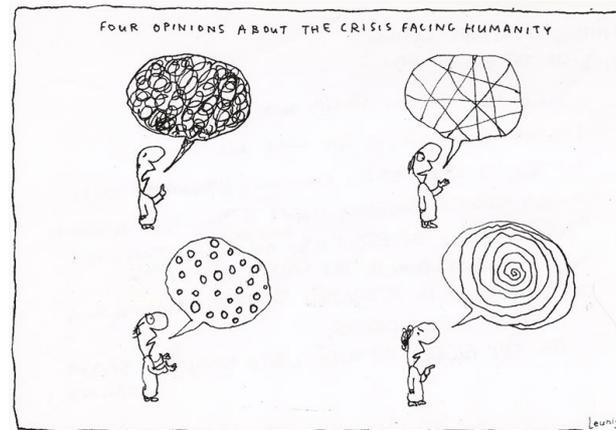


Illustration Michael Leunig

Because of the specialization of agents and the non interchangeability of engagement and action logics, attempts to organize a global response to a global challenge and unite ‘across islands’ often results in dilution of focus and therefore of prospects, leaving all parties weakened and in delusion. Alternatively they foster the adoption of ‘unifying’ ideologies, reductionist both in thinking and action in ways that can ultimately put systems at risk and lead to totalitarianism –back to square one, the travelled routes into sameness. Eventually they crystallize existing contradictions and perpetuate conflicts between solutions or alternatives. Something Occupy and other recent self-organized movements have worked to overcome, focusing on leverage points and avoiding action plans and demands, with some success but also shortcomings, in particular as far as being able to understand each other ‘across islands’, particularly when not speaking the same ‘language’.

An ecology for transformative action

The legions of change agents already busy intervening on a variety of leverage points of the system or ready to be mobilized are distributed within the wider system where they have the potential to drive systemic change and human development. The critical point is for these distributed and locally organized efforts to coalesce in order to change the feedbacks and information structures of the system and its capacity for renewal so that the system can take care of itself in a healthy way.

In *Changing Image of Man* (Marley 1982), a team of researchers from Stanford University established that cultural transformations historically occurred with the presence of a strong image to embody change and crystallize imagination and action toward new visions of the world. They suggested that such informing image would need to provide a holistic sense and perspective on life, entail an ecological ethic, entail a self-realization ethic, be multileveled, multifaceted, and integrative, lead to a balancing and coordinating satisfactions along many dimensions, be experimental and open-ended. This describes well the characteristics of an ecology from which transformative action and a transformative image can emerge, as well as the commons logic itself.

The changing image of man approach however, and the approaches based on developmental psychology or vertical development in general, make a conceptual case based on evolutionary predicaments and consciousness development as a goal, assuming that transcending our levels of consciousness and the order of complexity from which we develop and apply solutions is necessary before engaging into effective change. In other words they postulate that people need to change themselves before they can change the system.

The model suggested here is founded on the coexistence and complementarity of the positive components within each paradigm, and at each level of consciousness and perception of complexity. It

focuses on the immediate operational capacity and the existing capabilities of the 'efficacious agents', and on the conditions under which they can leverage the potential for change in their own context, each brushing a stroke of the impressionistic changing image of man while bringing their stone to the systemic change process in a co-evolutionary way. By construction, it includes the vertical development models as one of the many coexisting engagement logics.

Human development is as much an emergent property of the collective/aggregated application of agency through praxis and an outcome of change itself, as it is a prerequisite for change. There is a feedback loop at work here also, which nurtures the co-individuation and therefore co-evolution process.

Looking at the universe of possibilities for intervention and innovation as an ecology for transformative action (Finidori 2012) enables to envision change and problem solving not as a transcendent, centralized or controllable process that encompasses sets of critical and prioritized components and leverage points into one master plan or framework, but as an immanent distributed self-directed one composed of myriads of initiatives, master plans and frameworks that complement each other.

A commons logic based pattern language as scaffold

Architect Ann Pendleton-Jullian describes ecosystems of change as scaffold to aggregate the different kinds of powers and mechanisms that are out there, and support the emergence of the new until it becomes strong enough to affect power structures. She suggests a new type of metanarrative. Something strategically ambiguous towards which to head despite our differences, and that can draw coherence from a variety of disparate micro narratives that shape events and build trust at the grassroots level.

For process philosopher Bonnitta Roy, the unifying principle or metanarrative would need to increase the diversity of the system. It must not try to transcend and resolve differences, but it must preserve and add to them. The unifying principle would be underlying, not overarching, and act an undertow for transformative action.

The commons logic, as the strive to protect, nurture, reproduce the objects of our care, the practices by which we care for them and the outcomes they produce in a circular process is an archetype -a collectively inherited unconscious idea, pattern of thought, image, universally present in individual psyches-, which manifests itself as system goal in multiple forms and languages, through different action logics, understandings and symbolic representations.

It has the potential to bring the pieces together, aggregating disparate efforts, strategies and narratives on the ground as a scaffold for a new system goal and dominant paradigm to emerge and steer the system in a new direction (Finidori 2013), with no prescriptive or algorithmic orchestration.

The commons logic is strategically ambiguous and versatile enough as underlying logic to guide action at various levels and scales, and tangible enough in operational terms to form the basis of a pattern language that can help existing movements on the ground articulate their own understanding and representation of converging system goals and leverage points towards a healthy system. Such pattern language can also serve as vetting system to assess the impact of social change initiatives and sustainability policies and practices and help operate trade-offs, to prevent the co-optation of commons.

Shared discovery and mutual recognition

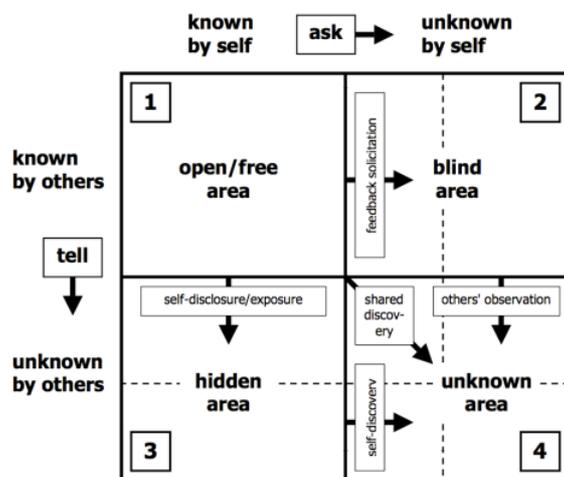
In the ancient Indian fable of the elephant and the blind men, each blind man feels a different texture and imagines a different object. Individually, they cannot make sense of the whole elephant. It is only when there is effective communication among them, recognizing that they will necessarily sense different things depending on where they are, that they can begin to realize what that beast really is. The need for collaboration arises because we are different. Trying to deny, eliminate, or gloss over our differences will prevent us from ever seeing what each of us alone cannot see.



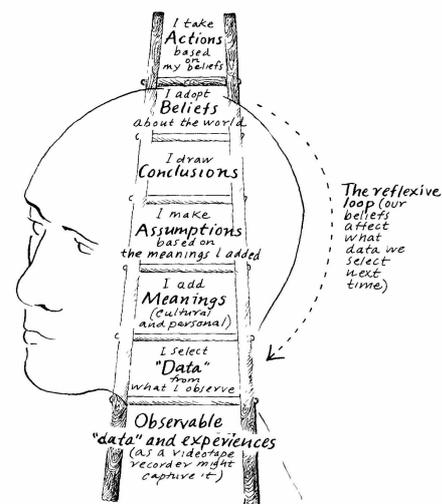
The Ancient Indian Fable of the Blind Men and the Elephant – Source <http://blog.practicalsanskrit.com>

The pattern language would try to bring the reality or the possibility of the elephant into each part, so that it is the elephant that materializes as a whole when all piece are described, and not a set of unrelated parts.

This way of viewing change refers to both the information and logics we have and operate on and the information and logics we are individually missing, at the same time. What it takes to find the complementary shapes one thing can use with others to build new things involves exploration and questioning, a playful mind and approach. We try and reach clarity while we manage to let go of our limiting assumptions and processes. The Ladder of Inference (Argyris 1982) reminds us that our assumptions are formed through the meaning we derive from the data we select out of real observable data and experiences, which are our own interpretations of reality. What we infer may be biased by the selection we make and by the reinforcing effect of our assumptions on our beliefs in a feedback loop. Double loop learning and walking each other through our respective thinking can help us discover our respective interpretations and draw a broader picture of reality. The Johari Window (Luft & Ingham 1955) opens up on self-awareness and shared discovery of the unknown, to expand the boundaries of our perception. A participatory process leading to participatory clarity.



The Johari Window - ©Alan Chapman 2003
<http://www.businessballs.com>



The Ladder of Inference
Source: Peter Senge *The Fifth Discipline*

If movements, change agents and innovation based communities could describe the reality and the phenomena they observe on the ground, and learn to distinguish in the perspectives of others what is

different from their own, if they could discover and travel within the landscape of transformative action, and mutually recognize their coexistence, the common ground and potential synergies, then they wouldn't need to 'bargain' a middle ground or a synthesis. Just by acknowledging differences and by learning to discover what they don't know, natural channels would open up through which understanding can flow and things -including agreement- can happen. The awareness that they would gain would result in positive feedback loops reinforcing their own action and that of the whole towards a shift, providing forms of orientation that can help decision and action, and improve multi-stakeholder dialog and conflict resolution along the way.

Tools for discovery

A lot is happening at the grassroots, many projects and stories to share, opening up possibilities, and we are seeing several attempts to gather, aggregate and visualize information in usable ways. Location tracking and mobile technology enable tools for directory, action or crisis mapping, exponential computation power and visualization tools allows meta or real time presentation of globalized data. What is missing is an intermediary layer that connects the micro and the macro level.

One that would show how the micro and the macro are related, how each individual action and story contributes to the global outcome or global picture and has an impact; and vice versa, how large transformations, or large outcomes are made of combined individual actions or items. These tools are being developed behind closed doors, unavailable for the commons.

One that would draw substance, trends, evolution of significance and outcomes from projects, stories, conversations to build a bigger picture, keep track of directions and status toward purpose... at the smallest project level as well as the various levels of operation. This for the moment is the privilege and enclosure of social networks such as Google or Facebook (Bauwens 2014) that keep the insights and possibilities of the 'long tail' (Andersen 2004) for their own monetization out of our sight.

Tools and methodologies to give life to the visions below would be particularly useful.

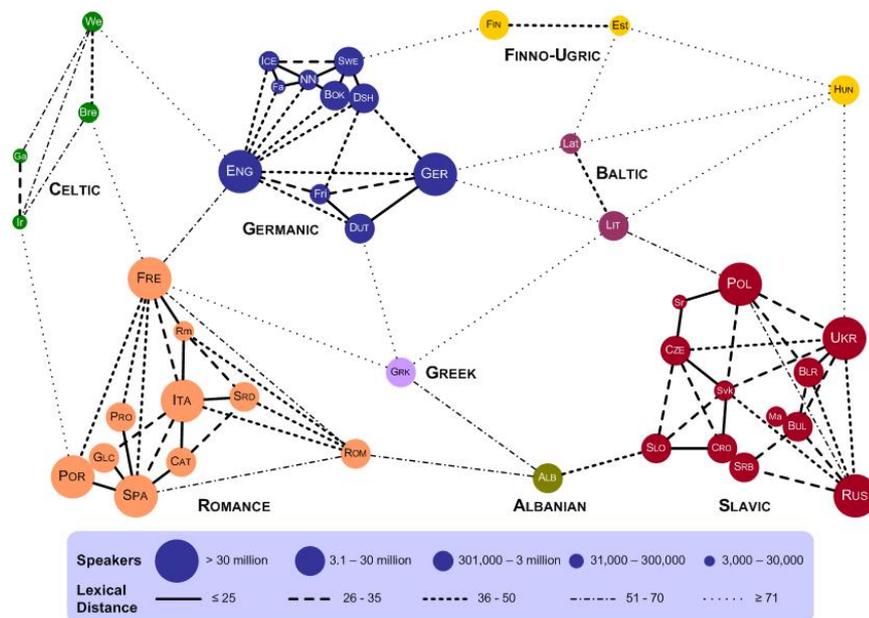
J.F. Noubel speaks of holopsticism, a form of reverse panopticon: "Each player, thanks to his/her experience and expertise, relates to the whole in order to adjust his/her actions and coordinate them with others' moves. Therefore there is an unceasing round trip, a feedback loop that works like a mirror between the individual level and the collective one."

Bracha Ettinger describes borderspaces at the junction of things, borderlinks created via fluctuation of distance in proximity to create relations without relationships, where traces produced are shearable between subjects in trans-subjective relationships. Revealing overlaps and relations between object and identify synergies across multiple dimensions (it can be across disciplines, domains, projects, cultures, communities, interests...)

Stephen Johnson describes Stuart Kaufman's idea of the adjacent possibles: "The strange and beautiful truth about the adjacent possible is that its boundaries grow as you explore them. Each new combination opens up the possibility of other new combinations. Think of it as a house that magically expands with each door you open. You begin in a room with four doors, each leading to a new room that you haven't visited yet. Once you open one of those doors and stroll into that room, three new doors appear, each leading to a brand-new room that you couldn't have reached from your original starting point. Keep opening new doors and eventually you'll have built a palace."

If patterns can be grouped in terms of sense-making or understanding, linked data exploration graph would enable discovery and learning through navigation of the adjacent possible for self- or collaborative discovery journeys and learning pathways, where people can explore the unknown from what is familiar, and navigate from one possibility to another, to their broaden horizons.

Imagine if possibilities and patterns could be mapped by degree of familiarity/closeness with each other, creating an impressionistic map of the domain of the possible, enabling by successive hops to discover other clusters and worlds...



Lexical Distance Among the Languages of Europe - <http://bit.ly/1iub51j>

In order to keep the flow alive and running in line with purpose, we need to be able to see evolution in the making, how we contribute to it, and where it is taking us. We need to keep a momentum that will continue to inspire and empower, providing the conditions for outcome and achievement. Seeing the possibility of the change and the change in the making would help us enhance our ability to identify gaps, explore possibilities, fulfill needs, and (re)direct our agency to where we want to see it go...

Defining the goal of the system: The conditions for commons to thrive

A pattern language integrating the various dimensions of the commons logic would provide an architecture of participation oriented towards participatory clarity, and help learners and change agents in various communities of practice compose the solutions to their needs in a more interconnected and effective way. Such pattern language would be conceived around the elements that shape the various engagement logics and clusters of engagement and would help people in various clusters navigate the space of possibilities in self or group discovery journeys in ways that resonates with their own engagement logic, to discover the unknown and expand the boundaries of their understanding and action.

The pattern language would provision the conditions for the commons to thrive in the form of building blocks that will enable change agents to create solutions and organize action in the contexts they are engaged in, while keeping aware of the diversity of possibilities around. These building blocks would focus on leverage points in the system that can help break the patterns of the current economy, those which are devastating to the commons in all their forms, and that can instill instead patterns that are protective and generative of commons.

Donella Meadows spent much time studying leverage points, the places in complex adaptive systems where small shifts in one place can have very broad effects. Meadows established a list of twelve types of leverage points by level of intervention and order of effectiveness. At the highest level, the most effective points, but also the most difficult to change are psychological and cultural, related to the worldviews and paradigms from which systems arise. Meadow's highest paradigm, higher than changing paradigm is the power to transcend paradigm, to realize that no paradigm is true, to espouse them all. This is what the pattern language is set to do at the systems level. Allow each paradigm to

coexist with the others, without requiring paradigms to be changed a priori or as a goal, without requiring anyone to 'fit him/herself in other worldviews.

Next, the most important leverage point is the goal of the system from which all the others derive, enabling the system to self-organize within its own boundaries. This includes the system's rules, its accountability and correction mechanisms, and the elements that help its behavior regulate and go through adaptive cycles, such as the structure of the information flows that enable self-correction, the gains obtained from driving reinforcing feedback loops, and the strengths of balancing feedback loops relative the impacts they are trying to correct against, with the delays of reaction to change, that all have an effect on and are in return shaped by the interactions within the system, what is accumulated, how things flow, and finally the structures of the system, its stocks, buffers and parameters –such as infrastructures, resources, operative principles.

The pattern language would enable agents, movements or communities to design the goals and the leverage points for their own niche of action according to the type of paradigm and change they would like to see arise in the system, corresponding to their engagement logic, while protecting and reproducing the commons.

Pharmacology and the limits of accumulation

A notion to incorporate in the patterns, and related to the ability to read and react on signals to enable self-correction is the notion of pharmakon a concept broadened by Bernard Stiegler.

Pharmakon is the Greek word meaning both poison and medicine.

As much as a medicine can become a poison when abused, a poison can become a medicine in small quantities (re arsenic in homeopathy). Patterns can become anti-patterns if abused, and small doses of anti-patterns can be beneficial if only to keep the system in 'watch'.

Anything that is over applied reduces the variety and resilience of the system and makes it brittle or ends up by poisoning the system. One of the reasons our system is going into the wall is that we over apply recipes, loosing track of why they were used in the first place. We over-apply models or patterns and concentrate on measuring the rate of application of the models not the outcome and the accumulated effects of the model, or we apply the wrong models to situations.

For example positive feedback loops are wonderful in our system because they are sources of growth, expansion, and abundance. But the more they are at work, the more they drive the system into one direction at faster paces the momentum and course of which is extremely difficult to change, turning abundance into overexploitation, making the system easier to game and unresponsive to signals of decay or overshoot, unable to engage in self-correction or meaningful disruptive innovation, powerless in the face of systemic risk and instantaneously breakable by glitches or black swans. An analysis I have expanded in a Spanda Journal article to be published shortly.

The window of viability (Lietaer & al 2010) in which all sustainable natural ecosystems operate, at the point of optimal balance between two polarities such as efficiency and resilience offers a good example. Similar approaches could be taken with other polarities such as competition and collaboration.

We will be looking at which 'pairs' of patterns can help optimize each other, and at incorporating in our patterns some heuristics to explore the points at which a pattern can become an anti-pattern.

Centers as essence of life

One can refer to idea of "centers" (Alexander 2002) as the 'why/what for' determinant of the attributes of a design and from there relate to the notion of "pattern". Centers are the essence of life. "Patterns" are combined in 'generative sequences' to create/(re)design better "centers."

Patterns are not only problem solving principles (Alexander 1977), but they are also systems-structuring and generative elements with their own feedback loops that can be applied at various levels and scales as things are unfolding, enabling to go from liquid to solid, the diversity of which creates a

resilient 'structure' that is generated both in a constructed and in an emergent way. The scaffold is being built as we go, and the existing structure becomes the scaffold for more, enabling to add new 'blocks' like a Lego construction. One can imagine elements with the hooks and bridges that would enable connection and reconnection to other generative elements to form a newer always more resilient and 'true to purpose' whole, with ways to visualize the parts and wholes as things unfold and evolve, to navigate the adjacent possibles from our respective localities, learning and identifying needs and opportunities on the way. A mosaic of possibilities assembled around communities of practice and clusters of engagement.



Christopher Alexander's fifteen patterns of wholeness

Centers here would be what people rally around, the social objects described above towards which people direct their attention and care, intention and purpose, and action and practice, driven by their own engagement and action logics. Seeing centers as essence of life, as nodes of embodiment of commons logic, sits quite well with the definition of commons as factors of livelihood and enablement, generative of abundance, to be nurtured or (re)generated or an approach of commons and the common world as the conditions for existence (Garcès 2013).

These centers are constitutive of commons health and protection, designed or 'constructed' not as representation of a desired social order, but as generative systems. And the patterns, assembled for each center/social object according to its own internal drive or engagement logic would be aimed at 'bettering' the commons in whole or in part in all its forms and dimensions.

So in practical terms, the patterns we envision are not prescriptive of solutions, they are prescriptive of generative principles, mechanisms, and inquiry processes and they orient retrieval of information and decision making towards specific systemic effects (re)generative of the commons.

Developing an inquiry model: the questions asked

The development of the pattern language would be ongoing, built on an inquiry model based on observations of what is emerging on the field with an aspiration to systemic change in all clusters of engagement logic. It will be presented at the WOW5 conference where we will connect with other groups and research projects in order to set this in motion.

The inquiry model examines the environment of a change context, the goals and missions of the initiatives themselves, the languages used, and the mechanisms and powers at play. It is a first draft to serve as a start point for discussions.

On the Environment

The following questions can help each niche initiative make sense of the trends, of what is emerging in the environment, which audiences would need to be pursued in priority and leverage the most salient elements of it. This can help bring together a map of transformative action.

- **Cultural:** What existing shared values and visions are already moving in this direction? Where are the 'pockets' of opportunity?
- **Psychological:** How do mindsets, worldviews and preferences (or engagement and action logics) influence the process and the outcomes?
- **Systemic:** What existing structures and systems have the most power, influence, authority to help bring our goals about?
- **Behavioral:** Which individual actions are already showing the way? What are the drivers and challenges of our audiences?

On the change initiatives, mission and goals

This section of the inquiry would enable to map the various initiatives on the ground, their relationships to the commons and the risks and challenges they face:

- **Engagement & Action logic:** What are the types of engagement and action logics driving this change initiative or behavior? What is its goal and vision? What type of behavior, leverage point is it seeking to intervene on? What is the margin of manoeuvre? How far from a tipping point? 'Degrees of separation' between the current 'business as usual' state and a new state?
- **Commons logic:** How does this change initiative or behavior relate to the commons and commons principles, what is the commons logic in it? Which piece of the commons does it protect, nurture, (re)generate? Using which types of mechanisms, generative processes? How congruent is it with a commons logic?
- **Risks:** What are the limits and risks associated with this initiative or domain of intervention? In which circumstances could the envisioned beneficial initiative become detrimental to the commons within its own boundaries, and to exterior commons? What are the trade-offs to be aware of? How could the initiative be coopted or neutralized?
- **Provisions:** What are the 'remedies' to the above? What changes could be applied to be more protective and generative of commons? What principles and provisions could be established to make sure the limits are known and paid attention to?
- **Effectiveness:** How can the commons logic help frame and advance the agenda of this particular domain of intervention to make the action more effective?
- **Relationships:** What other initiatives, approaches, and domains of intervention is this particular one related to?

On the language

In particular, as far as language or vocabulary are concerned (and vocabulary twist has been an issue in discussion among commons activists), solutions associated terminology could be submitted to the following heuristics:

- What type of alternative/solution is this pattern, term or concept associated with? What issues is it meant to solve.
- What are the elements/interpretations that go against the commons logic: In which conditions can the term be detrimental to the commons logic/not acceptable – How/why would it prevent the issues to be solved – How could the term serve corrupt goals if its application is not associated to the right mechanisms (anti-pattern) – What should anyone using these terms to 'advance' sustainable goals should beware of and check (privatization, creation of a market, extraction for profit, reduction of access, etc... elements that go against the commons logic)

- What are the elements/interpretations that work in favor of the commons logic: In which conditions is the term beneficial to the commons logic/acceptable – How would it help solve the issues – How could this particular term serve the commons logic even better (patterns, mechanisms). What are the things to look for, examine. (reduction of exploitation/extraction/abuse, and or participatory governance etc).
- What associated terms/patterns can help address the issue more effectively in a commons logic.

On the mechanisms, processes, powers at play, interactions

The inquiry would orient people toward combining elements of solution and structures generative of commons the most relevant to their context and action logic, and guide them through the process, answering questions such as:

- Within my own context, how can I assess the ‘generative potential’ and participatory nature of a given activity and my margin of maneuver to propose and implement change?
- Within a given activity, what generative processes and structures would we need to set up, which of them would we need to change to generate a greater ‘generative’ outcome/impact. How can the message be effectively conveyed?
- How could I reorient my work towards something meaningful? If I am looking to make a certain type of impact, which activities and processes would be the most suited for my group, and the context I’m in?
- What possibilities are available to me immediately, in the middle term, in the long term?
- We are a group of change agents, activists, NGOs, organizations seeking to collaborate. How can we identify the type of generative outcome we each contribute, how can our activities nurture each other, what is missing for our individual and collective action to be more generative?
- We are a group of stakeholders with conflicting interests, or we are negotiating commons friendly or sustainable policy. How can we assess and compare the participatory and generative potential of various options? How can we design our proposals to minimize risks of co-option?

On structure and order

I mentioned pattern languages were systems-structuring that could be applied at various levels and scales as things are unfolding, enabling to move from liquid, unstructured, to solid, hierarchical, the diversity of which creates a resilient ‘structure’ that is generated both in a constructed and in an emergent way.

Structure and order are often points of contention when it comes to problem solving. There are many variables in play that determine the form of structure and order, and involved in the ‘decision’ or settling of which structural mechanisms are to be involved and how order can be ‘constructed’ or understood, which may influence choices and decision making. Some are internal to the decision maker’s situation, others are contingent:

Internal variables comprise:

- The type and degree of homogeneity in action logics / worldviews of a decision group (Graves/Cook-Greuter).
- The types of cognitive preferences of a decision group and their degree of homogeneity (Jung/MBTI).

Catalysts or 'retarders' comprise

- The degree of empowerment of a change maker or a team and its capacity to assess a situation. (Hackman)
- The degree of autonomy of a change maker or a team in self-designing and recomposing structure. (Hackman)
- The resources available.
- The tools and methodologies available for making sense of situations and generating mutual understanding for 'co-constructing' required elements of structure.

External variables comprise:

- The degree of complexity and predictability of situations (Snowden/Cynefin).
- The requirements and effects of time and accumulation on the process and the organizational life cycles.
- The scale of an activity and its level of intervention.
- The Interdependencies/trade-offs that may need to be negotiated
- The relational dynamics and power relations

For example open infinite games or conversations can begin structureless and then activities or discourses structures themselves on their own contingencies as conversations progress and projects crystallize, in more or less 'liquid' ways, with 'shape' being a function of what arises, in relation to what the other variables allow.

In the case of cities for example, patterns are composed and recomposed, generating and regenerating a scaffold as they grow, optimized with models such as Alexander's pattern language, which can explain why organizations die (they don't know how to recompose and recombine), but Cities don't as they know how to permanently renew themselves.

The Structure of the Pattern Language

The pattern language envisioned is multi-variable multi-layered design ecosystem, constructed around the notion of 'social objects' as "centers" or nodes of embodiment of commons logic and 'connective tissue' that bring various cohesive elements together. I would comprise:

- A set of underlying design principles, the underlying logic, or 'grammar' including the mechanisms, participatory and generative processes and feedback loops that will enable the commons to be protected, nurtured, grown 'by design' and preserved against over-exploitation, abuse, or enclosure, as well as the anti-patterns and mechanisms to identify as corrupt, and to stay away from.
- The heuristics, inquiry processes that will help combine complementary patterns to build new 'centers'. This would include principles of *pharmacology* and self-regulation of pattern application such as described below, as well as provisions to avoid co-optation of a pattern.
- The derived building blocks, or 'vocabulary', that will help change agents in each cluster of engagement logic compose solutions and pathways and create the narratives, or expressions of these underlying principles in forms and narratives or realities they can relate to, and that will appropriately help operate change 'locally', with all the diversity and meshing generated across clusters.
- The ways of connecting the elements above to existing practical applications, the connections between these elements, and their relationship with cultural aspects and forms of sense making and engagement which would enable their easy discovery and retrieval, making databases of solutions 'actionable' – an 'orientation system', and which would also enable to navigate between domains.

- The protocols for 'conversation' within and between 'languages', for mutual understanding in multi-stakeholder groups, discovery of each other's logics and operating modes, and dealing with conflicting interests, trade-offs, etc... in participatory processes.
- A framework for communication and communication charter or series of blueprints for artists, communicators, change agents to adapt and spread out via media, art, SOLE and Peer Learning accelerators, enabling self and peer discovery pathways.
- The tools and technologies that would make visualization, contextualization, matching, navigation, learning easier, that would enable people to embark on self- or group-discovery or learning journeys, navigate from the place they are at toward new possibilities starting with those that would seem the most 'natural' or effortless to them, and help change agents do their job more effectively...

We will hold a work session during WOW5. Please come and join us.

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Biography

Helene Finidori focuses on systemic perspectives and tools for transformative action, mainly interested in connecting dots and building bridges between people, cultures, disciplines, organizations, transitional stages. Co-founder and coordinator of the Commons Abundance Network, she teaches Management and Leadership of Change in the International Program of Staffordshire University.

Born in Canada and raised in France, Helene lived in many countries including Sweden, the US, Indonesia, Australia. She now lives in Spain.

After studying entrepreneurship at HEC in Paris she specialized in small and medium enterprise and created a niche specialty at the intersection of strategy, branding and organizational development. She worked in the waste management and consumer product industry, for business-to-business marketing consultancies, as an independent consultant specializing in innovation, IT and prospective, as well as in education and social development. From brand positioning, culture and strategy she moved to organizational change and cross-cultural collaboration and now focuses on social change, networks and movements.