

WE GOT TO MOVE

INTRODUCTION

We live in a complex world that seems to become even more complex due to man-made and natural, large-scale disruptions such as globalization, climate change and robotization. There are no easy answers to handle this complexity. The root causes are often not well understood, let alone that it is easy to find ways to make progress when it is not clear in what direction people should be heading. These large-scale disruptions are beyond the control of ordinary citizens, yet they do interfere with the mundane challenges found in local communities, such as independent living for elderly people, loneliness, and local climate change countermeasures; all of which are complex challenges in their own right. We have no other option but to adapt to new circumstances. Because no one has a monopoly on wisdom and we cannot assume that a single person can steer us away from the cliffs, we have to find ways to address challenges collectively. And although the challenges we face may be global, we can face them by starting out locally with relatively small initiatives, which can then evolve into larger movements. In order to do so, we have to reconstruct shared meaning to agree on the direction we should take. In retrospect, not every initiative and/or direction taken will prove to be right. But 'mistakes' are also something to learn from. The point is, we got to move.

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NARRATIVE APPROACH

One way of helping us move, is sharing stories. This narrative approach helps us to pass on what we value in society and to come closer to understanding each other's point of view. It provides the means to continuously discuss and establish shared meaning and a common purpose, and act more as a community. Of course, our understanding of society will change over time, due to changing circumstances. That is, new stories will be added, and some will be abandoned if they no longer represent the way we think about society. In addition, by appreciative listening to the stories people tell, they feel acknowledged in the way they are. This is a necessary precondition to engage people in addressing challenges. Furthermore, stories give meaning to abstract concepts by putting them in context, so that others understand what is meant by someone's interpretation of a concept instead of assuming that we all have the same understanding. This way of using narratives results in a deep understanding of the origins of beliefs and assumptions each individual holds. Put differently: by knowing, valuing and appreciating each other's stories, the room for movement expands and the possibility to actually move in a direction agreed upon is maximized.

ORGANIZING SOLIDARITY

Global corporations and faraway nations seem to govern our lives. At the same time, we have become more individualistic and become more dependent on the community. Therefore, the question arises: since we have become more and more interdependent, how do we organize solidarity? How do we organize a process involving all citizens, businesses and institutions that lets us move into a direction that is arguably desirable and culturally feasible? This question is difficult to answer because of its many-sided facets. A first observation is that we have to address solidarity from

the relational practices angle and the different sorts of ties that bind us all (i.e., 'who are we and what do we do?'). This requires a deep understanding of different solidarities at work at different places and the beliefs and the concerns of all people who are faced with particular challenges. A second observation is that all parties concerned must collaborate, thereby recognizing that each individual has their own role to play and the principles that go with that role. The roles and principles individuals have, are not always in concord. Talking things through will often lead to understanding, but not necessarily to agreement. In practice, people will clash. We should, therefore, engage in a fruitful dialogue, see how solidarities are enacted and avoid a premature closure of debate in all circumstances. It is a process permanently in the making.

CREATING ROOM FOR MOVEMENT

If we want to move collectively, we must create room for movement. People have a subjective view on the world which they express in their narratives. They have many beliefs and assumptions which determine the position from which they observe the world. Most people are not aware of the beliefs and assumptions they have. As a result, their worldviews might be limited and as consequence their ability to find directions for movement might be limited. It is important to broaden people's worldviews by critically reflecting on the worldviews of others as well as on their own. If people gain insight into beliefs of others, their worldview may tilt and their own assumptions may change and broaden.

THE PROCES IS KEY – RESULTS FOLLOW

Our collective can initiate and facilitate processes that stimulate movement. We focus on the story each individual has to tell. Our narrative approach starts at community level with a problematic situation that is

of concern to the parties involved. The credo is focus and togetherness. We do not want to address the world's big issues; instead we focus on a concrete problem that a community is faced with; a problem that should be addressed collectively by citizens, businesses and the government. The process is key, not the precise outcome, since the outcome depends on what participants bring to the table and this is not known beforehand. It is important that participants are acknowledged in the process, so that the quality of the process and the outcome is satisfactory. It is essential that participants learn from the process, so that they can learn from their experiences and, hopefully, their newly acquired skills and attitudes, to tackle other problematic situations.

SUSTAINABLE CHANGES

A single person cannot change the world, unless the ideas they put forward are embraced by a large group of enthusiastic followers. But even then, there is no guarantee that changes will last. For sustainable changes, every party involved has to change, in order to support a new direction taken. In addition, support for that direction has to be guaranteed through policies. This does not mean that policies are fixed forever. Policies must be validated continuously on the basis of efficacy, effectiveness and efficiency, and adapted when deemed necessary. The world is in flux at all times, so change is inevitable. What it all boils down to is this: you have to find shared meaning to adapt to changing circumstances and you have to translate meaning into policies. In this process, governance is not the province of the government only. On the contrary, we steer on what we, as a community, value. Our initiative instigates these kinds of processes and works as a catalyst for changes that start at community level but may, eventually, become changes that affect the entire world.

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