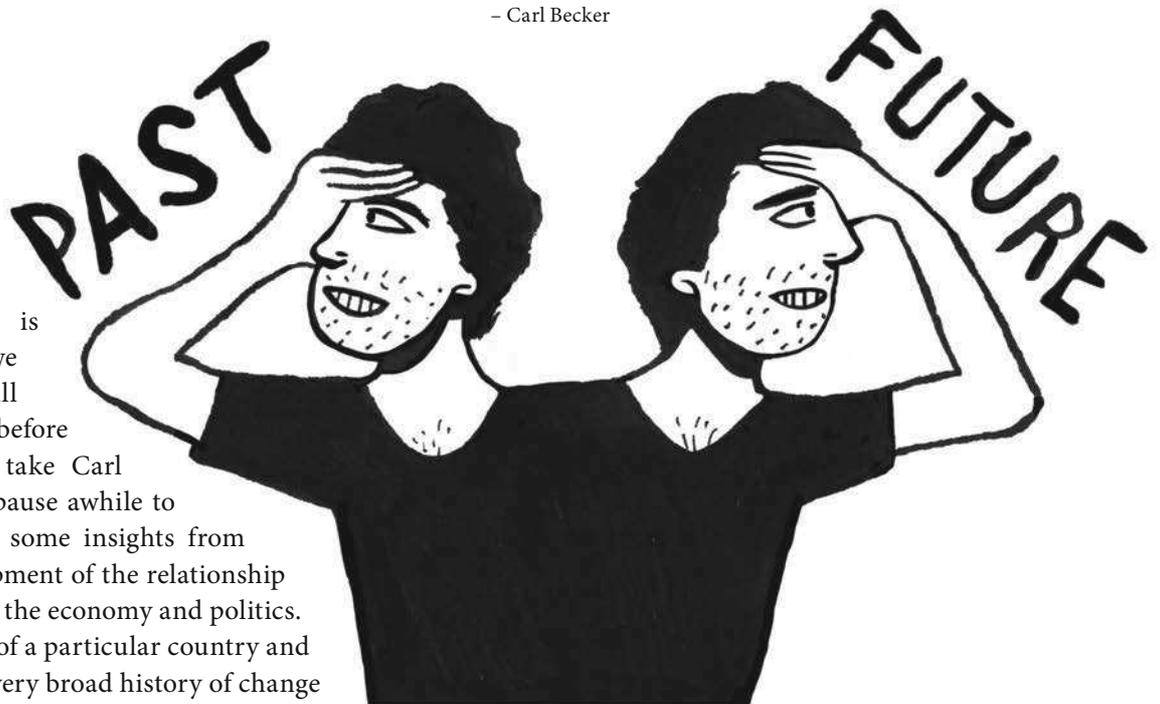


## CHAPTER ONE

# Histories of social CHANGE – from way back into the future...

*“The value of history is, indeed, not scientific but moral: by liberalizing the mind, by deepening the sympathies...it prepares us to live more humanely in the present and to meet rather than to foretell the future .”*

– Carl Becker



The big question is always “Where are we going and how will we get there?” But before we rush there let’s take Carl Becker’s advice and pause awhile to look back and draw some insights from the historical development of the relationship between civil society, the economy and politics. We have a case story of a particular country and after that we paint a very broad history of change through the ages.

Woven into these histories is the question of “What kind of social change really matters?” and some consideration of the nature of change itself.

To begin. The history of Finland is presented here through the life story of the grandmother of one of our writer’s. It is a fascinating case study in how it is possible for different sectors of society to find each other and succeed in developing an alternative path. It represents such a clear and inspiring historical example of how civil society and active citizens in Finland, as in the other countries of Scandinavia, were able to engage with political and economic societies in co-creative ways, leading to the development of one of the most comprehensive systems of social care, education and welfare within a thriving economy.

*“We should always be aware that what now lies in the past once lay in the future.”*

– F.W. Maitland

## Social changes in my grandmother's time

By Laura Lager, Finland

My grandmother Hilja was born in 1900, 17 years before Finland declared itself to be an independent state and 50 years before Finland started developing a welfare state. Grandmother lived almost a century until she died in 1993.

My grandmother was born to a small farming family. Her parents were peasant farmers, living simply, growing most of what they needed to feed themselves and sending a small surplus to market. But by the time she was only 12 both of her parents had died, leaving three orphans. And so the three children were sent to be raised by different step families. The farm and belongings of the farmhouse were sold to pay for their upbringing.

### Getting an education

My grandmother's childhood was challenging and hard, but she was lucky to be raised by a wise woman who appreciated education and wanted her to be successful in life. Hilja used all the possible learning opportunities. As a young adult she attended a Folk High School where she did social and spiritual studies.

Folk High Schools were founded in Nordic countries to offer people from all social classes non-formal and general adult education. The Danish founder of the Folk School system, Nikolai Grundtvig, highlighted student-centred learning and the building of cultural and historical identity. It was soon after the civil war in 1918 after Finland became independent from Russia, that the state legislated a 50% support for folk high schools.

In many ways Folk High Schools, together with other civil society organisations, laid the foundation for the society that we became.

After a year in Folk High School, Hilja continued studying childcare and gained a profession. Her teacher was a visionary and pioneering professor in childcare. My grandmother had no difficulty finding a job at a nursery for small children of factory worker women.



### The Civil War

My grandmother was 17 years old when the civil war broke out. There had been long-time tensions between population groups and from the radicalization of the workers' movement. I never heard my grandmother speak about those times when neighbours and community members fought against each other. As the nation polarized, so did civil society organisations. It was only several decades later that these wounds were healed and the division into two political camps ended. Leftist organisations were forbidden during the rightwing radicalism in the 30's, and after losing the war to the Soviet Union many rightwing organisations were forbidden.

## Welfare

In comparison to my grandmother, I was born in the years of great transition and the development of the welfare state. When I was a child, I often heard a saying “it’s like winning in a lottery to be born in Finland”. People who said that had witnessed the building of a welfare society which gave equal access to all citizens of a whole range of services, like education, healthcare, pension plans, sickness insurance, unemployment insurance, workmen’s compensation, family aid for struggling families, free and supported child-care, services for the disabled and services for substance abusers.

I can also join associations and express myself freely, even when I’m not satisfied with the decision-makers and public institutions. Taxpayers’ money is used also to support organisations whose role it is criticize and keep an eye on politicians and civil servants. These important foundations for my educational and societal possibilities were already built during the time when most of the people were economically poor.

When looking back at my grandmother’s youth and adulthood, I see that these possibilities have some background that was much more than just a random lottery. One of my questions is why Finland, which did not colonise any other nations, was able to develop economically and socially and avoid large-scale corruption?

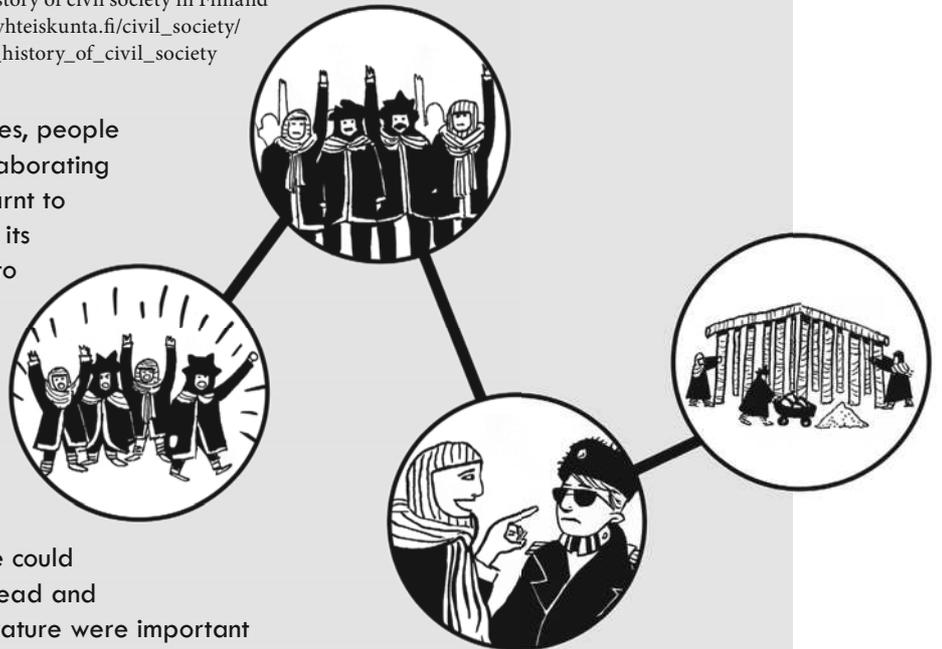
I can say that independence and the welfare state were built on the basis of strong civic action and civil society.

*“People’s activities in organizations, political parties and trade unions influenced the intellectual, spiritual and economic development of the entire country. With the help of the Folk High Schools and their non-formal adult education, people acquired knowledge and skills and grew into active citizens.”*

– Aaro Harju: The history of civil society in Finland  
[http://www.kansalaisyhteiskunta.fi/civil\\_society/the\\_history\\_of\\_civil\\_society](http://www.kansalaisyhteiskunta.fi/civil_society/the_history_of_civil_society)

By participating in civic activities, people learnt democratic ways of collaborating and making decisions. They learnt to hold institutions responsible for its actions. People got motivated to act for common goals through associations. Voluntarism gave both meaning to life and developed the society.

Churches and religious organisations also had a big role in developing the educational foundation. People could not marry before learning to read and write. Local language and literature were important and encouraged by reading societies. Enterprises needed capable workers and social stability. The Women’s Movement was active and for example in the first parliament of 1907-08 there were 19 women out of 200 representatives, a lot for the time. Today 40% are women. Sports, educational, political, labour, youth and women’s movements emerged in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s.



### Control of power

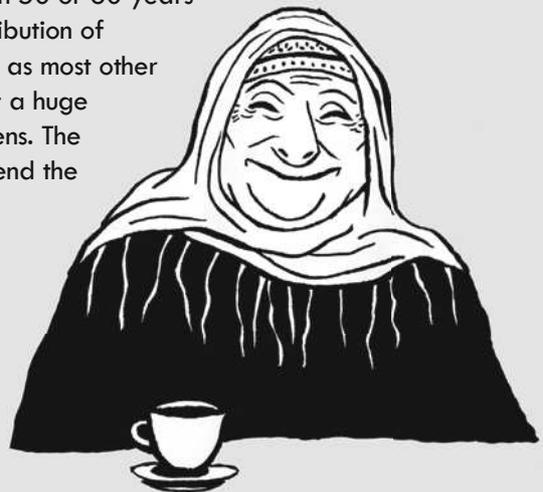
Why has Finland been one of the least corrupt countries in the world? We were a poor country at the time of independence, but state institutions, or bureaucracies, were already well-developed during the Russian regime. Bureaucracy sounds negative, but strong institutional structure is also a basis for democracy, where institutions control the use of power of other institutions and people in positions of power. Formal and non-formal education was developed already before independence and the need for education was well appreciated. Civil society development was strong, with people participating broadly in civic action and civil society organisations, holding government accountable.

### Dissonances

I don't believe that some generations can be wiser than generations before. Finland developed enormously during my grandmother's lifetime, but not without cost and suffering. Some minority groups, like the Sami and Rom people suffered inhumane treatment, their rights seriously violated.

Nowadays, although the welfare state is still intact, the mainstream ideology lets economic power rule over political power. Finland seems richer than 50 or 60 years ago when the welfare society grew rapidly, but the distribution of wealth is more and more unequal, though still not as bad as most other countries. Finland is one of the least corrupt countries, but a huge amount of tax money of the rich now ends up in tax havens. The struggle of civil society will always be to continue to defend the gains we have made.

My grandmother never became rich money-wise, but she was surrounded by loving relatives and friends. She raised three children and got to see a number of grandchildren. She was humble, but strong, she never demanded things for herself, but didn't get repressed, she was decisive and worked hard, she trusted others and was open-minded. She had a strong social consciousness, built in the Folk High School and her life experiences and she helped to build the welfare state, as an active citizen.



*Bureaucracy sounds negative, but strong institutional structure is also a basis for democracy, where institutions control the use of power of other institutions and people in positions of power.*

### Some ideas to consider...

What struck us when we heard this story was the emphasis on citizen-centred popular education in Finland, where people learned to collaborate and to make decisions together, where cultural and historic identity were as important as learning practical skills. Scandinavia as a whole benefitted from the Folk High School approach which brought together all sections of society and embedded the importance of citizen engagement in social, economic and political life. We agree with Laura that this story is not a fluke or happy accident. Many forces converged to create the opportunity for change which the Finnish people embraced, although the story, as Laura reveals, is not without its dark side. Across the globe, including Finland, the rights of indigenous people have been trampled for the sake of progress, profit and development. It took decades for the Finnish people to heal the divides between people with different political beliefs.

The Folk High School system continues to operate in Scandinavian countries. This informal citizen-centred educational system strengthened civil society across the spectrum and influenced the way countries like Finland approached their economic and political lives, rather than the other way around. We seem to want to create social change economically and politically without having invested in people, building a new culture and strengthening the web which holds it all together. We seem to want to have the most important part of strengthening and changing civil society to happen by magic and through economic and political means.

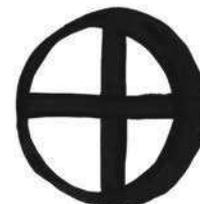
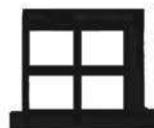
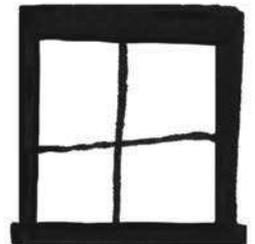
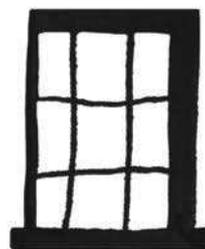
These days the emphasis is not on a deep notion of “popular education” but on technical “capacity building” which feels like such a mechanical notion, rather like installing new software on a computer! But in Finland there were many pieces in the puzzle, including the role of churches, the part-funding by the state and the critical role of the Women’s Movement. And we have been reminded that achievements have to be protected or renewed, as these rights can become eroded, especially by those who find them unprofitable.

### What kind of social change matters?

Social change is our common striving to become more humane and civil. At one level this striving is quite simple. We all want to eat, to sleep, to be healthy, to be safe, to have families and friends and to do useful work. But to be fully human we need more than these, things that are less tangible but no less real. We can sleep and eat equally well under a democracy or a dictatorship, but can we be equally human?

In our striving to be more human, what really matters to us? We explore a few ways of looking at this question, some windows to look through at our lives and circumstances and see what this suggests about what to do.

The first window is a brief history of the world.



‘ We explore a few ways of looking at this question, some windows to look through at our lives and circumstances and see what this suggests about what to do.

## A. The Changing Shape of Society: Political, Economic and Civil Society over the Ages

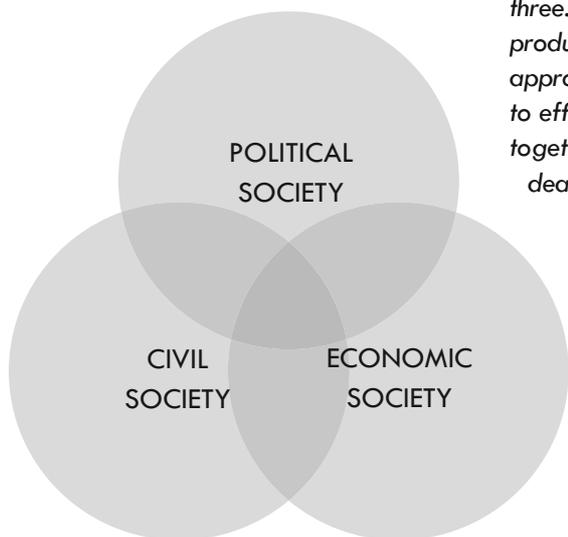
As human beings we have, within each of us, different lives: a mental life, an emotional life and an intentional, energetic, physical life. We are thinking, feeling and willing beings. These three interact to give shape to our behaviour and responses to the world around us. At a grander scale society has similar lives or societies: Political society, civil society and economic society.

### **We have spoken about this in Barefoot Guide 1:**

*Nicanor Perlas, a Filipino activist, writes about the three fold nature of society. He sees society as being made up of the three interacting spheres, namely, civil society, government and business. He refers to this as the three fold nature of social life. He makes a case for the importance of the creative tension between these three subsystems for the healthy development of society. The creative forces in society come alive where the three come together in their attempts to shape each other. Society gets stuck when any one of the three becomes too dominant to the point where they are no longer fulfilling their unique purpose.*

*Perlas starts by describing the important functions of each of the three. He sees economic society e.g. business as dealing with “the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services for the appropriate satisfaction of human needs”. Its role is “to harness nature to efficiently meet human needs” through organising society to work together. Political society, largely government, is the “subsystem that deals with equality in all aspects of human relations”.*

*Perlas views civil society as the “culturalsphere” of society and describes it as “that subsystem of society concerned with the development of full human capacities and the generation of knowledge, meaning, art, ethics, and a sense of the sacred. Culture is the realm that gives identity and meaning, that represents the deeper voice of community. This is the realm that develops the full human potential of individuals and organisations and enables them to be competent participants in the economy, political life, culture, and society at large.” Civil society, as the people and organisations, thus plays a unique and deeply humanising role in the development of society.*



Let us briefly examine how social change, over the ages, has been governed by the relationship between the three:

## A Brief History of the World

### Hunter-gatherer and early agrarian societies of early history: the unity of the three societies

In the clans of hunter-gatherer and early agrarian societies political, economic and civil life were unified – people worked and organised themselves where they lived. In other words, governance, work and cultural expression were done by the same people in the same place. Families and clans who did the work also controlled the land and tools, and made their own decisions, all governed within a community culture.



### The age of feudalism and slavery: political society comes to dominate

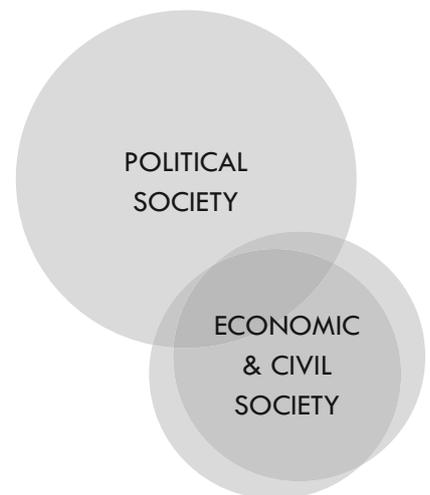
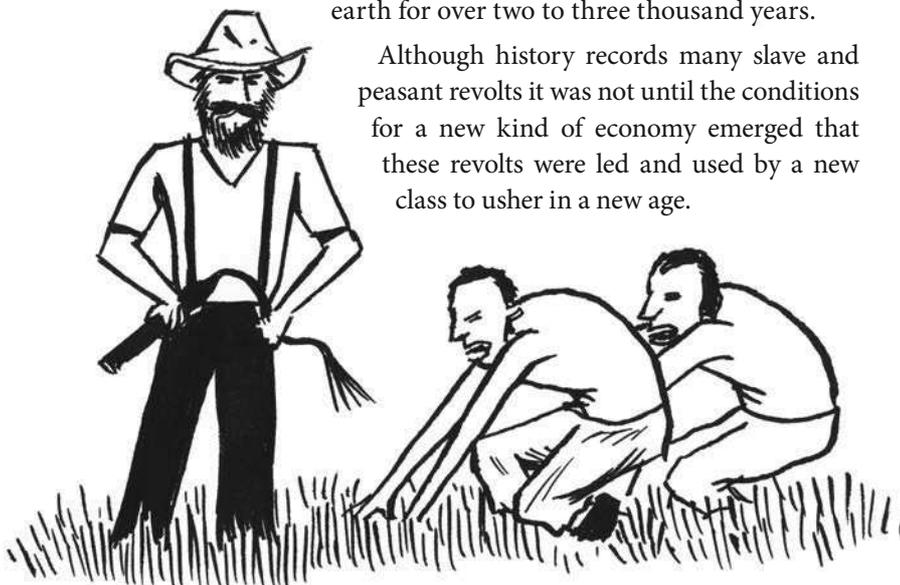
From a few thousand years ago these hunter gatherers started settling, farming wild grains and domesticating animals. On all continents, over time, human creativity, learning, sharing and organisation enabled agricultural productivity and military technology to grow and develop. Surpluses from agriculture and warfare or raiding supported and enabled a **political class** (chiefs, lords, kings and emperors) to emerge which developed various forms of feudal serfdom and slavery through which they perpetuated their power.

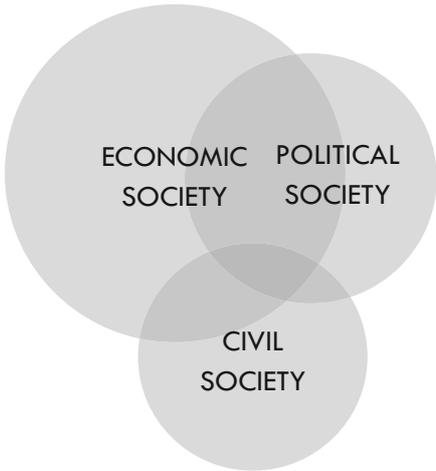
Civil society expressions of culture and religion came to support and justify their political rule.

Economic society, the world of work, continued to be located where people lived in community – so people also usually lived where they worked, still connected to the land.

Huge feudal and slave-based empires grew in South America, Europe, West and North Africa, the Middle East and Asia, dominating life on earth for over two to three thousand years.

Although history records many slave and peasant revolts it was not until the conditions for a new kind of economy emerged that these revolts were led and used by a new class to usher in a new age.





## The age of capitalism: Economic society comes to dominate

In Europe some 500 years ago the political monarchies or royalty started to lose power to a bourgeois **economic class** of traders and capitalists who emerged to challenge the oppressive and economically stifling power of the feudal states. They needed some freedom to enable them to make profits. Riding on the backs of popular discontent, they and their followers campaigned and fought for political reforms that “freed” up labour and land to be more easily exploited, enabling a vastly more productive economic system that laid the basis for the modern age of industrialisation.

By the 1800s, many of these bourgeois movements mobilised the starving and angry masses to carry them to power, only to further exploit them under new capitalist economies, as both agricultural and industrial workers.

Although the common folk became more politically free, they endured huge hardships as they were also “freed” from their connection to the land, losing access and ownership to become labourers who could be hired and fired at will. This also led to mass migrations to the cities where they became workers, spurring the growth of industrialisation.



At the same time the European economic and political elites developed the African Slave Trade and Colonialism which, apart from the enormous devastation and misery these caused, provided vast resources to fuel Western economies to enable them to take off and become the dominating force of history in the past few centuries.

Thus the whole world became transformed as economics and the profit motive came to dominate.

Of course people in the colonies did not sit back, but fought doggedly for their freedom and independence which they eventually gained. However, whilst they became free from political domination they continued to be dominated economically by the same system. The leaders of almost all victorious anti-colonial movements, many with visions of social emancipation and equality, became nationalist political and economic elites, often developing their countries in the image of their former colonial masters. Those who tried to steer their countries in another path were either undermined or assassinated.

Today economic society through multinational banks and corporations continues to dominate and shape political and civil society, globally bending political and civil society to its needs. A shallow form of political democracy exists through which some of the excesses of capitalism are sometimes tamed.

So, while there is some form of political democracy, this has not led to any form of economic democracy as inequality continues to grow. At present the richest 1% of people own half the world's wealth, more than at any time in the history of the planet.

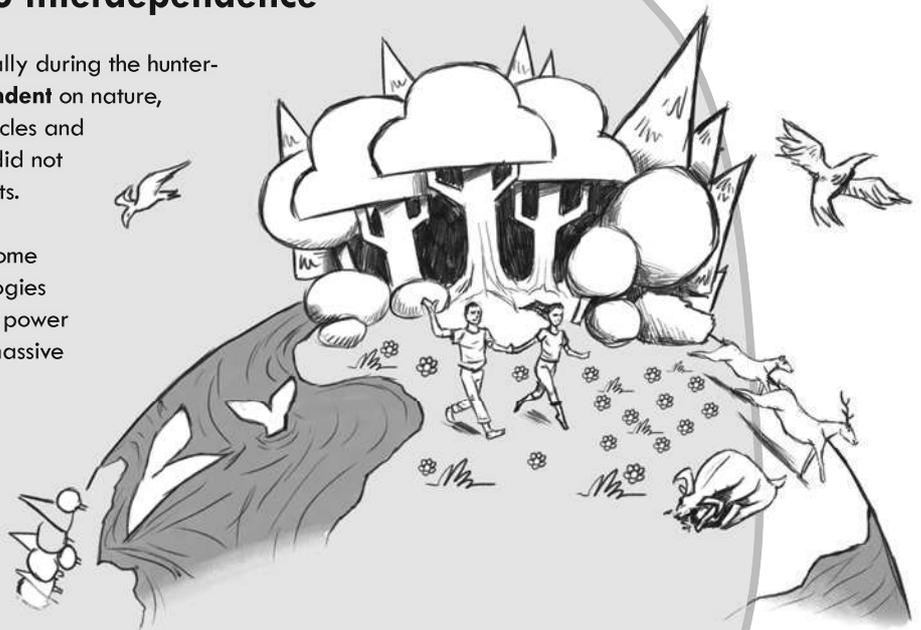
This has enabled those with money to shape culture, media and opinion and therefore votes towards supporting their interests. Successful politicians increasingly owe their positions to corporate sponsorship while global culture (music, film, sport etc.) has become big business that not only makes massive profits but also defines what matters most to billions of people – elevating music, film and sports stars to demi-gods. The culture of civil society has become commercialised.

## The historical relationship between humanity and the earth: from dependence to independence... and now to interdependence

For much of human history, especially during the hunter-gatherer age we have been **dependent** on nature, shaping our lives according to its cycles and rhythms, whatever it provided and did not provide, at the mercy of the elements.

As technology and organisation developed we have gradually become more **independent** through technologies like irrigation, fertilisers, antibiotics, power stations etc. This laid the basis for massive productivity and industry, but in this separation we have damaged and over-used earth's resources and triggered a potentially cataclysmic change in earth's climate.

Part of the real work of social change is to recognise the **interdependency** of all living forms, including human beings, and to transform our technology, organisation and consumption to live in a sustainable balance with nature, one that is mutually supportive.



## Coming of Age: is Civil Society beginning to emerge as a force?

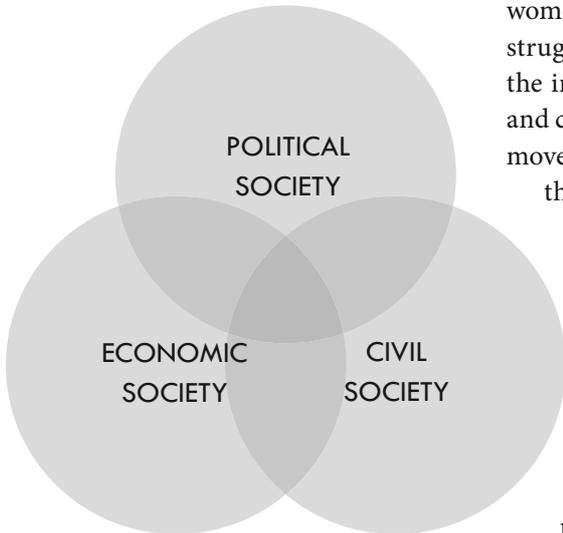
The story of the rise of modern capitalism did not happen in front of a passive population. Driven by the strivings of ordinary people to be free, equal and to live and work in solidarity, civil society has continued to emerge as a historical force. Witness the anti-slavery, trade union, women's and civil rights movements and the many anti-colonial struggles. Civil society struggles like the banning of child labour and the introduction of the 8-hour working day, were led by trade unions and citizen's movements worldwide. More recently huge environmental movements have emerged to challenge the destructive and planet threatening nature of purely profit-driven economies. These movements and struggles have shaped and continue to shape the nature of society.

Make no mistake, free health-care, schooling, human working conditions, support for culture, civil rights and many other humane laws and services, which some of us take for granted, were seldom gifts from the ruling elites but rather victories of civil society organisations and movements led by and mobilising ordinary citizens, against fierce opposition from politicians and businesspeople.

Of course, within the elites and the institutions they control, there are people who share the strivings of ordinary people and who play an important role in helping to shape society. But history shows that the elites themselves need to be shaped by civil society, to be civilised.

What will the future bring? Civil society continues to advocate for societal change because we can see that through the ages humans can change, societies can change and politics and economics adapt to new visions and values.

What might this new world and its values look like? Let's look through another window:



## B. The Max-Neef Model of Human-Scale Development – The Wheel of Human Needs

Manfred Max-Neef is a Chilean economist who has worked for many years with the issues of social and economic development. For him conventional models of development have led to increasing poverty, massive debt and ecological disaster for many. Max-Neef and his colleagues have developed a classification of diverse human needs and a process by which communities can identify their “wealths” and “poverties” according to how these needs are satisfied. He distinguishes between “needs” and “satisfiers”. Human needs are seen as few, finite and classifiable (as distinct from the conventional notion that “wants” are infinite and insatiable). Not only this, they are constant through all human cultures and across historical time periods. What changes over time and between cultures is the way these needs are satisfied. It is important that human needs are understood as a system - i.e. they are interrelated and interactive. This is not a hierarchy of needs (apart from the basic need for subsistence or survival) as postulated by Western psychologists such as Maslow, but rather a system where different and diverse approaches must be taken to satisfy them.



## The Max-Neef Model of Human-Scale Development - And the Wheel of Human Needs

Needs are also defined according to the existential categories of being, having, doing and interacting, and from these dimensions, a 36 cell matrix is developed which can be filled with examples of satisfiers for those needs.

<b>NEEDS ↕ and SATISFIERS ➔</b>	<b>BEING (qualities)</b>	<b>HAVING (things)</b>	<b>DOING (actions)</b>	<b>INTERACTING (settings)</b>
<b>Subsistence – we need to physically stay alive</b>	physical and mental health	food, shelter, work	feed, clothe, rest, work	living environment, social setting
<b>Protection – we need to be safe</b>	care, adaptability, autonomy	social security, health systems, work	co-operate, plan, take care of, help	social environment, dwellings
<b>Affection – we need love, of various kinds</b>	respect, sense of humour, generosity, sensuality	friendships, family, relationships with nature	share, take care of, make love, express emotions	privacy, intimate spaces of togetherness
<b>Understanding – we need to understand and be understood</b>	critical capacity, curiosity, intuition	literature, teachers, policies, educational	analyse, study, meditate, investigate,	schools, families, universities, communities,
<b>Participation – we need to be actively part of community</b>	receptiveness, dedication, sense of humour	responsibilities, duties, work, rights	cooperate, dissent, express	associations, parties, churches, neighbourhoods
<b>Leisure – we need to relax, breathe out</b>	imagination, tranquillity, spontaneity	games, parties, peace of mind	day-dream, remember, relax, have fun	landscapes, intimate spaces, places to be alone
<b>Creativity – we need to be artistic and inventive</b>	imagination, boldness, inventiveness, curiosity	abilities, skills, work, techniques	invent, build, design, work, compose, interpret	spaces for expression, workshops, audiences
<b>Identity – we need to know who we are</b>	sense of belonging, self- esteem, consistency	language, religions, work, customs, values, norms	get to know oneself, grow, commit oneself	places one belongs to, everyday settings
<b>Freedom – we need to be free to be ourselves, not oppressed by anyone</b>	autonomy, passion, self- esteem, open- mindedness	equal rights	dissent, choose, run risks, develop awareness	anywhere

## Satisfying needs

Satisfiers also have different characteristics: pseudo satisfiers, inhibiting satisfiers, singular satisfiers, or synergistic satisfiers. Max-Neef shows that certain satisfiers, promoted as satisfying a particular need, in fact inhibit or destroy the possibility of satisfying other needs: e.g., the arms race, while ostensibly satisfying the need for protection, in fact then destroys subsistence, participation, affection and freedom; formal democracy, which is supposed to meet the need for participation often disempowers and alienates; commercial television, while used to satisfy the need for recreation, interferes with understanding, creativity and identity - the examples are everywhere.

Synergistic satisfiers, on the other hand, not only satisfy one particular need, but also lead to satisfaction in other areas: some examples are breast-feeding; self-managed production; popular education; democratic community organisations; preventative medicine; meditation; educational games.

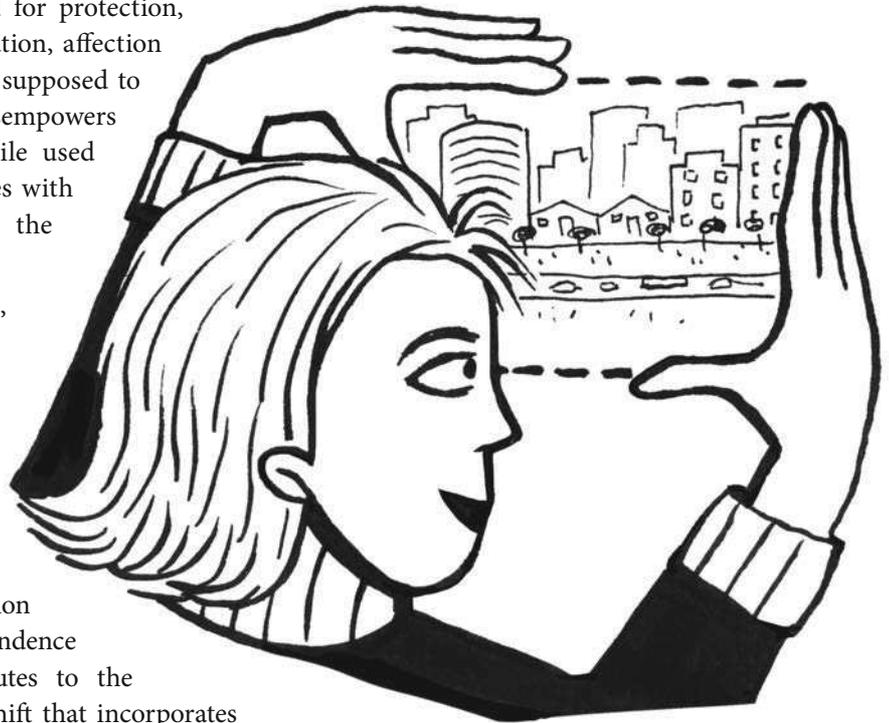
This model forms the basis of an explanation of many of the problems arising from a dependence on mechanistic economics, and contributes to the understanding necessary for a paradigm shift that incorporates systemic principles. Max-Neef and his colleagues have found that this methodology “allows for the achievement of in-depth insight into the key problems that impede the actualisation of fundamental human needs in the society, community or institution being studied” (Max-Neef et al, 1987:40)

This model provides a useful approach that meets the requirements of small group, community-based processes that have the effect of allowing deep reflection about one’s individual and community situation, leading to critical awareness and, possibly, action at the local economic level.

Can you find which of your needs are satisfied and how? For those of us working in social change can we see where the work we are now doing lies and are there other things here that we have not considered, that might be worth engaging?

## What matters most? Exploring the relationship between Needs and Rights?

Understanding needs, their complexity and how they are connected, is critical for understanding how to deal with change. When women gather to fetch water from the river they are doing much more than that. Although it may take much time and involve drudgery, it can also be a time to chat, to deal with problems and discuss community affairs, to express affection, to participate, to be in community, to find their voice and power, away from their menfolk for a while – to satisfy several of the needs Max-Neef describes. When governments or NGOs propose to



Change must go deeper than laws and policies.

bring wells or pumps to relieve them of the long walk to the river, they may be unwittingly undermining many of these needs.

The way needs are satisfied is complex, and changing one dimension positively may disrupt another negatively. Single issue change approaches have severe limitations.

Understanding needs does not necessarily point to the right action for change.

Needs-based approaches can be too focused on the neediness of the poor as victims rather than as empowered actors. Rights-based approaches to change were developed to focus on “rights” rather than “needs”. Rights-based practice, now quite dominant in the world of NGOs, tries to bring democracy and the constitutional state to the community, arguing that all needs can be turned into rights, giving them more political punch, helping “rights-bearers” (e.g. children or communities) to find and assert their voice, and showing “duty-bearers” (e.g. parents or government)

where to take clear responsibility for respecting the same rights. The logic is strong but there is little consensus yet about whether it has been effective.

Part of the problem is letting “rights-based approaches” become shallow ideologies or quick-fix behaviour changes decreed by new rules or laws. Change must go deeper than laws and policies. And of course a right must be based on a real felt need; otherwise there will be no will to struggle for it.

Within families and communities, in their complex and intimate relationships, converting needs to rights can be destructive. We need love and affection, but cannot translate this to “I have a right to your love and affection!” In many circumstances obviously abusive and unequal behaviours between men and women or between parents and children can be dealt with through strengthening rights and responsibilities. The same may be said for the relationship between communities and local governments.

But we now know that this is not enough, because if only behaviours are changed through being declared unacceptable, it is common for other forms of abuse to emerge. Abusers and victims themselves often *need transformative change* or healing to help them to change how they feel about themselves and about others, not only how they must behave.

For us, both “needs” and “rights” are critical to our conversations for understanding the work of social change.



## C. Freedom, equality and mutuality – fundamental strivings for sustainable change

There are countless approaches to bringing about change that will satisfy the needs and rights of people. But what conditions *sustain* the satisfaction of needs and rights? We would like to focus on three values or strivings of being human that are necessary for sustained human change. Although these three can also be seen as needs and rights, they are more fundamental to our identity, living at the heart of what it is to be human and the will to be alive:

***We strive for freedom:*** of movement, expression, of association, of worship, to be ourselves. In freedom we stand open to give of ourselves and to receive the gifts of others. It is the condition of our creativity and of growth. If we are not free we are diminished and we suffer.

***We strive for equality:*** with fairness, respect and equal treatment regardless of birth or circumstance. Male or female, black or white, urban or rural. We may be diverse, with more or less experience, responsibility or capability, living different lives, but at the heart of it all as humans standing before life, we are all equal, all worthwhile.

***We strive for mutuality:*** we are social beings, needing to cooperate and associate, but also wanting to live and work with others and to do so in mutual harmony with the environment of which we are a part.

It is not by chance that one of the most significant revolutions of the ages, the French Revolution, which broke the back of the feudal order in Europe and paved the way for massive social change throughout the Western hemisphere, had as its rallying cry: *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* - Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood (which we update to mutuality being more gender and environmentally sensitive!).

These are not separate strivings – they support and balance each other. Unfettered freedom can be chaotic and exploitative unless it is balanced by equality and mutuality. Uniform equality can be deadening unless it is enlivened by the diversity or variety of individual freedom. Mutuality recognises that free and equal human beings still depend on each other and on the environment and need to co-exist and cooperate.

These three conditions provide for a sustainable humanity, at peace with itself in its equality, creative in its freedom and able to work together in the consciousness that we share the same future.

In all major movements in the history of human social change, one or more of these three qualities or strivings have been present. Peasant and slave uprisings, the anti-slavery and anti-colonial movements were mostly about freedom. Later on the Civil Rights movements and Feminism emphasised equality. The struggles of trade unions have been on many fronts – freedom to organise and to have a say. Lately, with environmental decay and crisis, mutuality with the natural world has been advocated and worked for.



“ These three conditions provide for a sustainable humanity, at peace with itself in its equality, creative in its freedom and able to work together in the consciousness that we share the same future.

Change will come, that is inevitable. The question is whether it will be through catastrophic crisis and breakdown or through a more conscious and deliberate rethinking and reworking about how we want to live together.

### Active citizenry – the missing ingredient

Politicians and businesspeople are key to the development of society. But when it comes to the significant questions of our age, like dealing with rampant inequality and climate change, politicians and businesspeople cannot be trusted, on their own, to take sufficient action, even in their own long-term interest. They are often too caught up in narrow, self-interested economic and political systems that are governed by short-term profits and 2 to 5 year election cycles. We need them to be incorruptible and far-sighted. Who will help them to become so?

A historic role for citizens, working together, to change the power equation and to help us rebalance life on this planet, is emerging. Change will come, that is inevitable. The question is whether it will be through catastrophic crisis and breakdown or through a more conscious and deliberate rethinking and reworking about how we want to live together.

We don't know how this will happen but it is becoming clear that citizen action through the development of deep democracy, governed by principles of freedom, equality and mutuality, is the only hopeful and sustainable way forward.



Countries like Finland strengthened their civil society through the Folk High School system. How can we support and strengthen civil society to be an active engaged citizenry in countries where radical change is needed?

Ordinary people throughout the world, working with government and business, are already starting to make changes at the local level. How can these separate initiatives and energies be both strengthened and come together in a way that brings change to the planet as a whole?



*“Resistance is essential, but it’s not enough. As we fight the injustice around us, we also have to imagine – and create – the world we want. We have to build real alternatives in the here and now – alternatives that are not only living proof that things can be done differently, but that actively challenge, and eventually supplant, the power of the status quo”.*

Naomi Klein, *“This Changes Everything”*

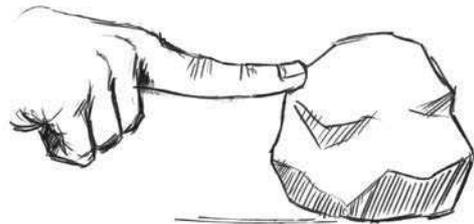
# Working with Questions:

## What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

### “Cause and Effect”

“Cause and effect” analysis tries to explain how things change. It is a useful tool for understanding how inanimate objects move or how technical systems work. In these cases externally applied force has predictable and measurable effects or impacts. If I push this object here it predictably moves there. This is the science of physics and many people like to apply it to social change because it feels tidy, visible and accountable, or at least it has the illusion of being so. This is the great appeal of Logframes and similar methodologies.

Inanimate objects and systems have to be externally driven or energised because they contain no innate life of their own. But people and social systems are animate, alive and therefore internally driven beings, and do not react predictably to external force. Thus how they change cannot be explained by logical “cause and effect”. People cannot be pushed to change as if they were pieces on a chess board. Indeed to apply an external pressure for change is more likely to provoke resistance or further passivity. As Peter Senge observes: “People don’t resist change. They resist being changed.”



### “Flux and Constraint”

The concept of “flux and constraint” is more accurate and helpful. We observe that living beings, organisations and social systems are always in a continuous flux, alive with potential change, from within. But this does not mean they are always changing. There are a series of constraints, internal and external, which hold us back, and that when lowered will enable the flux, releasing potential movement, driven from within. The dam wall breaks, and so change happens.

What are these constraints? Sometimes they are external conditions, lack of resources, a difficult law, oppression. Sometimes it comes from inner blockages, like fear, self-doubt or hatred.

If women in a community are stuck, seemingly passive, and unable to break out of dependence and subservience to their husbands or fathers, it is not because they are internally passive as a natural state, but because their will and capacity to change is held back by external customs or by internalised fear or lack of confidence. If they can be supported to remove or lower these constraints they may be able to change themselves and their power relationship to the world.

“As Peter Senge observes: “People don’t resist change. They resist being changed.”

# Working with Questions:

## What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

### Three Kinds of Change

In working with communities, organizations, or networks, before we ask, “How do we change things?”, we like to ask, “How are things already changing and how is change being constrained?” In this way we are able to acknowledge and work with the innate forces for and against change.

In our work we have identified three dominant kinds of change that people, communities, and societies tend to go through.

### Emergent change

This describes the day-to-day unfolding of life, of adaptive and uneven processes of unconscious and conscious learning from experience and the changes in attitudes and actions that result from that. This applies to individuals, families, communities, organizations, and societies adjusting to shifting realities, of trying to improve and enhance what they know and do, of building on what is there, step-by-step, uncertainly, but still learning and adapting. However successfully or unsuccessfully.

This is a natural form of the Action learning Cycle described in Chapter 5 of the Barefoot Guide 1 – Working with Organisations and Social Change.

Emergent change exists most strongly in unpredictable and fluid conditions. These may be a result of external uncertainties like an unstable economy or a fragile political dispensation, or from internal uncertainty where things are fragmented or still in formation.

In peri-urban areas around Cape Town, like many cities of the South, rural migrants arrive every day seeking work, health services and schools for their children. They gather and group on spare pieces of land, illegally occupying them. Some are connected through rural ties and some make new connections, for protection and support. They are emerging communities, still fragile and fractured and vulnerable to rivalries and exploitation. With time and experience leadership and a sense of place, trust and identity begins to form. Patriarchal and tribal rifts are still prevalent.

The Federation of the Urban Poor, built over time from organized shack dwellers, allied to the Shack Dwellers International, and supported by some NGOs, often begin work in such emergent communities through supporting women to form “daily savings groups” through which they elect trusted collectors (emergent leaders) to collect a small amount of change each day from each member. This provides a seedling foundation of local organization and leadership on which larger programs of change can be built in the future.



# Working with Questions:

## What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

### Transformative change

At some stage in the development of people and organisations it is typical, and natural, for crisis to develop. This may be the product of a natural process of inner development: a young teenager starting to question her parents and torn between wanting to make up her own mind about things, yet still wanting to be a child; or an organization reaching the limits of its pioneering phase with its family-like structuring, roles and relationships, stuck and unable to grow without adopting a more systematic way of working, letting go of its informality and becoming more conscious and planned about the way it works. Crisis happens when it's hard to let go of things that we are familiar with but which no longer work for us. Crises may also happen when the world changes around us and we do not change with it.

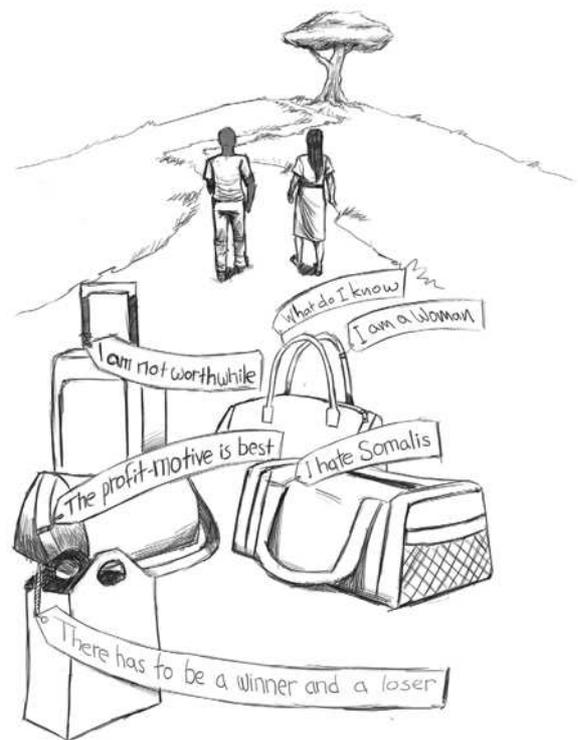
Crisis sets the stage for *transformative change*. Unlike emergent change, which is about learning our way into the future, transformative change is more about *unlearning*, of people letting go of those leading ideas, values, or beliefs that underpin the crisis, that no longer suit the situation or relationships that are developing.

This is known as the U-Process of change as described in Chapter 5 of the *Barefoot Guide 1 – Working with Organisations and Social Change*.

South Africa is riven by conflict and protest. Every day in scores of townships residents block the roads and march on their local councils, sometimes violently, to protest the lack of service delivery (water, housing, electricity). They feel cheated and expect the government to deliver. But the government cannot deliver on its own – its attempts at top-down delivery on the back of a bureaucratic infrastructure inherited from the Apartheid regime is failing amidst corruption and lack of capacity.

How easy is it to challenge the top down nature of the system and the assumptions that a passive citizenry must have its services delivered by an active government. Even the language of “rights”, which separates “rights holders” from “duty bearers” encourages the conception that local government and community have separate interests, and feeds their mutual alienation. Is it not increasingly clear that the endless cycles of protest and failed delivery will not end until communities and government let go of these notions and of the way they see each other? They may then be open to discovering more co-creative ways of communities bringing their resourcefulness and initiatives to meet the collective resources and larger systems of support held by the government.

At some stage in the development of people and organisations it is typical, and natural, for crisis to develop.



## Working with Questions:

What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

**What can we do to help either side to begin to see past this fruitless cycle? What new attitudes and values become important to the different parties, to meet the future, to transform themselves?**

### Projectable or Vision-led Change

Human beings can solve problems and imagine or vision different possibilities or solutions for the future. We can project possible visions or outcomes and formulate conscious plans to bring about change.

Where conditions of change, especially the relationships of a system, are reasonably coherent, stable, and predictable, and where unpredictable risks do not threaten desired results, then projectable change initiatives and well-planned projects become possible.

The fact is that many people in the Development Aid Industry, especially those who control and are responsible for finances and resource allocations, tend to like Projectable Change approaches because they give the illusion of control and accountability, even when the conditions for projects simply do not yet exist. Indeed few situations of marginalization, impoverishment, or oppression are projectable, by definition. Other work, often emergent or transformative, needs to be done before projects make sense.

The key is not to rush into any particular approach, but rather to observe what kinds of change are already at play and to see if there are ways to work within and out of these.

How can we build a sensibility to more accurately read the nature of change conditions and formulate approaches to change that can work with these?

*Other work, often emergent or transformative, needs to be done before projects make sense.*



# Working with Questions:

## What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

### Resistance to change

Working with resistance to change is at the heart of transformation. In our heads we may know we have to change but deeper down we are held captive, frozen in the current state and unable to let go.

Consider these three primary causes of resistance:



**Fear** of losing power, privilege, identity. Fear of being hurt, or worse. Fear of the unknown that will disrupt what we have become used to, even if these are just coping strategies for what has not worked;



**Doubt and self-doubt** that they or I cannot be better or do what is required, that we and our ideas are inadequate, that we do not have the capability;



**Hatred or self-hatred.** The bases of many forms of racism. Where there has been conflict, abuse or trauma we can be consumed by bitterness, resentment and revenge or paradoxically blame or even hate ourselves for what we have done or not done or even what has been done to us. We are not worthwhile.

All of these block the will or flux of change. There are no easy methods for working with these deep resistances. The real work here is to look for ways to surface and share them, to bring them to light, to give them perspective, to enable them to be expressed. Through naming and verbalising comes the possibility of release, of freeing ourselves. Helping people to share their stories is a well tried approach, often cathartic for tellers and listeners. Simply asking ourselves and sharing what we fear, doubt and hate, and supporting honest answers and conversations is sometimes all that is required.

On the other side of fear, doubt and hatred we can find courage, faith and love. Good ideas for change are useless without courage to make them happen and so central to our work is to en-courage each other to face our fears. Certainty is the opposite of doubt but hardly possible in the face of unpredictable realities. And so faith that human beings can rise above difficulties, helps us to deal with doubt.

And then love, one of the least spoken words in the books and workshops on social change, but without which little is sustainable or even worthwhile. Perhaps the mysterious and transcendent nature of love is too difficult for many to express explicitly or the scientist in us remains cautious of something that refuses to be measured and quantified. Imagine a report to a donor that states "we notice that people love each other 50% more than last year." But there can be few lasting transformations that are not centred on the transformation of the heart.

How do we work with doubt and faith, fear and courage and hatred and love more consciously in our practice?

*... there can be few lasting transformations that are not centred on the transformation of the heart.*

# It starts

One step forward  
One door opened  
One voice heard

Two people speak  
for the first time  
Each of them sees  
the other's humanity

Three join hands  
Four agree not to fight  
Five ask questions  
Six listen hard

Seven sing eight dance  
Nine create a space  
and invite ten in

Many reflect many connect  
Many share many care  
Many persevere  
Everyone changes

Tracey Martin