



Cultural Leadership





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Annual

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EDITORIAL

By Ron Soonieus
Managing Partner Camunico

Change is a constant. However the pace and direction of change are not. Both are largely unpredictable.

We are currently experiencing a period of change that is almost unprecedented in its scope, speed and global reach. This change is not only technological but, more specifically, cultural. It is change that is neither linear nor predictable but which affects many interconnected aspects of our complex system in surprising and unforeseeable ways.

For many, these are exciting times, as change is the wind that fills their sails of exploration, discovery and innovation. For some, such a period of rapid change is disconcerting and threatening. In putting together this annual, we have tried to bring together a somewhat eclectic mix of articles that, taken as a whole, provide a flavour of some aspects of the cultural changes we are all experiencing.

The way we have put this magazine together is also intended to be a reflection of what we consider to be contemporary culture. We have avoided a linear approach - in which one article follows on logically from the previous one in the structured, didactic format - typical of modern culture. Rather, by taking a more post-modern approach, we have tried to bring together a series of articles that initially may seem unrelated but which, we believe, all contribute to offering perspectives

from which readers are invited to allow their own ideas to develop; ideas about the nature of the change that surrounds us, and how we, as individuals, organisations and institutions, might thrive within that change.

In the article on cultural leadership, we call for a leadership approach that puts at its centre the interdependence between organisations and the cultural context in which they operate. This implies a substantial shift in awareness and requires leaders to view their role in a much broader context.

We also recognise that getting there is not easy or something which can be achieved quickly. It will not be reached through a 'perfectly constructed management development programme', so many of which we have seen come and go. Yet we see many organisations that are well embedded in our contemporary culture. They have finely tuned 'cultural antennae' and ways of organising themselves and doing business that, at a very fundamental level, are different from traditional organisational structures and approaches. For such organisations rapid, radical cultural change is their source of excitement, creativity, exploration and business success.

We hope that you will find this annual interesting and thought-provoking. And that will inspire some ideas and initiatives that will contribute to your continued success.



Cultural Leadership

**Towards a Cultural Leadership for the
21st Century; How leadership teams can
succeed in the culture of our times**



By Joseph Zammit-Lucia

Changing leadership outlook to incorporate the new cultural necessities is not as easy as it might seem. It takes the development of new skills that can help re-set business leaders' perceptions of who they are and why their organisation even exists.

When he was UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair once said that it was not the role of business to solve social problems. Business should just get on with the business of making money and leave social issues to others. How things have changed.

Today, business, especially big business, is not popular. Social enterprise is the new buzzword. Rather than being seen as the engine of the economy and the prosperity we all seek, business has allowed its image to become tarnished such that it is now seen as the evil-doer responsible for many of today's social ills. It is failing to play its part in addressing the complex social issues we all face. Big business has become the luxury mansion of 21st century robber barons. Or so the narrative goes.

So what has changed?

The 21st century culture in which business operates is evolving into something that is fundamentally different from that which Tony Blair referred to in the dying days of the 20th century. Then business could afford to keep away from messy ethical and social issues, follow the rules and get on with the business of making money. That is no longer so. Today, businesses, and their leaders, have no option but to become closely involved in the cultural, social and ethical issues affecting our society – and to shoulder some of the responsibility for addressing these issues. This requires a different kind of leadership – one that is more deeply embedded in contemporary mores. What will it take to develop this new leadership style?

Is big business
the luxury
mansion of 21st
century robber
barons?

Not easy

The answers seem clear to some commentators. Business leaders should change the culture of their organisations to make them more socially aware and responsible. This is a reasonable starting point. But it is no more than a starting point. How can we get there? It seems only like yesterday that the newly-appointed CEO of Barclays Bank, Anthony Jenkins, announced (like many other CEOs of many other corporations) his 'transform' programme that was intended to regain the public's faith in the banking system. A year or so later, his decision to increase bonuses in the face of collapsing profits was described as a 'shameful' confirmation of everything that is wrong with bankers today.

Why do so many leaders fall flat on their face?

So what is the problem? We have to assume that individuals like Jenkins honestly wish to bring about change. Yet he and others fall flat on their face at the first turn. Why do competent, high-ranking leaders with seemingly good intentions

have such difficulty in breaking out of the tired old ways of doing things – ways that we now find culturally unacceptable?

Moving towards 'cultural leadership'

We use the term 'cultural leadership' to describe a leadership approach that puts at its centre the interdependence between organisations and the cultural context in which they

operate. It implies a substantial shift in awareness that requires leaders to view their role in a much broader context. Such awareness extends beyond concerns about survival, growth and shareholder value, to encompass the more far-reaching impacts of their decisions on the well-being of the community and society as a whole.

Two elements are necessary to move towards effective cultural leadership.

Abandon 'Strategy'

The first is to abandon 'strategy' as the driving force of long-term business direction. In a fast-moving, ever-changing, uncertain, post-modern world, 'strategy' – in its traditional interpretation – has little inherent value. The idea of planning a long-term strategy and painstakingly executing it over time is based on two implicit assumptions. The first is that we have a pretty good idea of what the longer term might look like. The second is that there is a modicum of stability in the business environment. In today's world – and, very likely, even more so in tomorrow's – neither of these assumptions holds true. Business strategies need to be fluid and adaptable

to ever more rapid change. While we now all understand perfectly well the need to have adaptable strategies that can respond to the rapid changes caused by technological disruption, there is less understanding of the impact of cultural disruption. In particular, many have difficulty in dealing with the effects of living in a post-modern culture where concepts like stability, continuity and authority are themselves counter-cultural. Difficulty dealing with a cul-

Strategy must give way to purpose as the highest order of leadership focus

**What is happening
around us is one of
the most dramatic
cultural shifts
seen since the
Enlightenment.**

ture that is utterly unpredictable, almost totally opaque, empowered, uncontrollable and even chaotic.

In such a cultural milieu, strategy must abandon its out-dated position as the highest order of leadership and management endeavour to become a second order element, subordinated to, and driven by, higher order considerations of purpose, values, beliefs, emotions, ethics, and other soft, intangible and difficult-to-grasp notions. These are concepts that make many senior managers uncomfortable because they do not lend themselves to 'rational' analysis and cannot be neatly slotted into financial models. While strategy still has a place, it becomes a much smaller and a very different one. Strategy becomes a short, adaptable and ever-moving set of bridges between purpose and operational excellence.

Looking from the outside-In

The second necessary change is for leaders to learn the skill of looking at their organisation from the outside in rather than the inside out.

Sometimes I think of most of us – including senior executives, policy-makers and other leaders – as not unlike the prisoners in Plato's cave; chained in such way that they could only see the wall in front of them. As the world outside passed by, all they could see were the distorted shadows of that reality cast on the wall of the cave. They came to believe that the shadows they saw were reality.

So it is with many major institutions. We largely all live in our own world – our own cave, if you like. We only associate with people who are mostly like us. We read those papers that

largely reflect our own views. In large corporations, distorted shadows are brought to senior management through third party market research studies, the results of which are filtered and re-filtered before the so-called 'findings' make it to senior management. And senior leaders interpret all this 'information' through the operational lens of their own organisation. We all end up spending much more time looking at spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations and well-designed reports rather than at the realities faced by ordinary people in the real world, and the attitudes, cultural norms and beliefs that are spreading outside the hallowed walls of our own ivory towers.

We look at the world from the inside out. From the perspective of the corporation, the institution, the tribe or professional association to which we belong. Our past successes create yet another filter that convinces us that our way of looking at the world is the right way. What we fail to see are the major changes in contemporary culture that are altering the very framework in which we operate.

Cultural leadership implies developing the ability to look at our organisation from the outside in. Instead of having the culture and society in which we operate presented to us filtered through our own organisational lens, we need to develop the ability to learn to look at our organisations as others perceive them. Such an understanding needs to go beyond the sterile pictures painted by financial models based on market analysis, customer segmentation, customer preference surveys, customer satisfaction reports and all the many other tools corporations use. They need to provide a more vibrant, albeit necessarily ambiguous and incomplete, understanding of a social ecosystem

What is not
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We all tend
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own world

that is organic, fluid, dynamic, unpredictable, driven by a culture that is changing at a revolutionary rate and populated by human beings that in no way fit the economist's fantasy of 'rational actors'. In other words, an organic system that is human and not purely financial. This will not be achieved by commissioning yet more studies and reports. Rather, organisations need to build what I shall call 'cultural antennae' into their DNA.



'Modern' 20th Century Business Leadership

Changing who we are

Set out here, in black and white, it seems like common sense and a simple thing to do. This, of course, underestimates the challenges that business leaders face to get there – which is why most 'change programmes' continue to fail. The challenges are not just operational ones (those are the easy bits), but challenges associated with something much more deep-seated – the re-framing of self-identity; first of all, among the senior management team and then for the organisation as a whole.

For those who have spent their entire working life in a business community, this represents a fundamental shift. It requires shifting the needs of the organisation and its shareholders from being at the centre of thought and action, and placing them in the wider context of society and contemporary culture. It goes against everything they learned in business school, contradicts everything they perceive as having been the basis of their personal success, and requires a fundamental sea-change in leaders' perceptions of who they are.



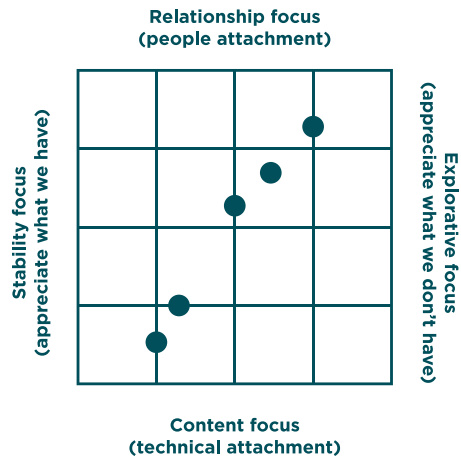
'Postmodern' 21st Century Leadership

Going beyond the individual

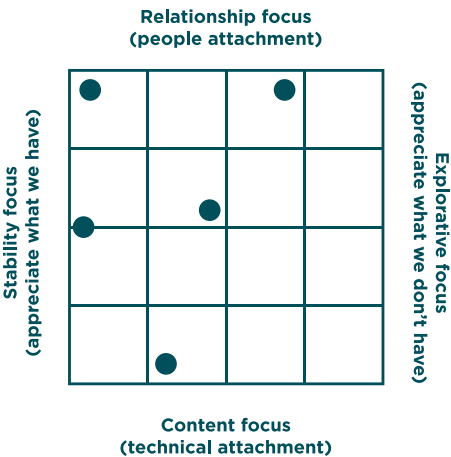
Much has been written about the psychology of change and the role of shifts in awareness in leadership success. From the importance of double-loop learning frameworks to describe how a person interprets events and attributes meaning, and ways of addressing adaptive challenges to which there is no known answer, to – more recently – the growing use of mindfulness training, there are many tools available to business leaders to enable them to thrive in the new environment. However, while these approaches help to move things forward, they remain incomplete because they continue to focus primarily on the individual rather than the team.

While corporations have become pretty good at assessing the technical and management skills of individuals, less developed are the skills necessary to build a senior management team that transcends the individual and has all the components necessary to drive the organisation towards cultural leadership. Work we have undertaken with different

organisations clearly shows that some leadership teams, while comprised of highly able individuals, lack the team balance and structure that is appropriate for what they are trying to achieve. Building a team that will be successful in today's cultural milieu needs to go beyond simply accumulating a group of highly capable individuals.



Team 1: good balance, likely to be able to achieve change over time



Team 2: poor balance, unlikely to be able to drive change

Success in 21st century culture

I believe that what is happening around us is one of the most dramatic cultural shifts seen since the Enlightenment – more than 500 years ago. The central ‘de-realisation’ ideas behind our often confusing post-modern culture were possibly first explored as long ago as in the 18th and 19th centuries (Kant, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard) and made explicit by Lyotard in 1979. But it is only now, accelerated by the digital revolution, that we are feeling the true force of that cultural transformation; a transformation that is leaving many uncomfortable and disorientated. How can leadership adapt and continue to be successful in the face of such revolutionary change?

I have suggested that a move towards cultural leadership can be achieved through a comprehensive programme that, among other things, examines

whether existing senior management teams are capable of achieving change, as opposed to maintaining operational success under the current paradigms (which is usually the main reason why they have been successful). Working to build ‘cultural antennae’ into their organisation’s skill set; helping organisations define a broader, more motivating and resilient sense of purpose; and re-defining strategy as the malleable and adaptable link between purpose and operations.

It will be a long haul and won’t be achieved in the time frame of the typical ‘culture change’ consulting programme. But some corporations are already showing the way forward and reaping the benefits as a result.

Dr. Joseph Zammit-Lucia is a leadership advisor, a Partner at Camunico and President of WOLFOUNDATION.ORG

Interview with

Anish Kapoor

**an artist's
lessons for the
business world**

‘The more ‘I don’t know time’ one can have, the deeper one can go. Experimenting is extremely important. Continuously opening up and breaking through boundaries are crucial to making interesting work’.



By Carlijn Vis

Creativity, performance and social good: an artist's lessons for the business world

Anish Kapoor is one of the most renowned and successful sculptural artists of our time. In his wide-ranging discussion with Camunico, he raises many thought-provoking points for leaders in business and other institutions. Combining organisational effectiveness with the ability to innovate; break boundaries; tear down the existing order and re-construct anew; a society that depends on more than just economics. These are among the many issues facing a business world that often remains ill-equipped to address them.

The Kapoor Studio in South London is tucked away between a park and the River Thames. But, as with all of Kapoor's work, nothing is what it seems. 'Tucked away' are not quite the right words, because Kapoor owns this street. From the outside, the terraced row of buildings look like a collection of working class homes, but behind the tiny doors, quite unexpectedly, we find Kapoor's studio. The place where he creates, sits, thinks and constructs his sculptures.

On art, economics and social good

Though an economically successful artist himself, Kapoor rails against what he describes as the 'philistine' nature of those who set policy, where everything is reduced merely to the economic without giving much thought to what is essential to a properly functioning society or organisation - the social, emotional and spiritual needs of human beings.

"We live in a time now where governments and the people who think they rule us have been savage, philistine even, in their misunderstanding of culture and its social and economic role. In the UK it is beyond belief, really. Such ignorance, it makes me mad. Less and less money is spent on art, budgets from all kinds of government institutions have been cut. It's absurd to have to put oneself in a place where the only measure of what artists do is an economic one. Senseless! From a

social point of view, it's unbelievable."

"It's just nonsense to take the view that culture can be pushed into the background and that it will be privately funded. It won't be. Private money always has an agenda. It demands a return. Public money says: 'here's some money, now go and experiment and we'll see if something comes out of it'. No return is demanded. The art world needs that kind of money, it's only by experimenting that we can get to new places."

"Our endeavour is not just to preserve old culture, but to make new culture as well. If all the culture budgets are cut, in the long term it will affect cultural heritage. In the UK we used to have 400 art schools, we now have 12. In China they open 400 art schools a year."

"We seem to be losing the understanding that what comes out of art school is a way of thinking, a way of thinking that makes great businessmen, pop stars, theatre directors and artists, of course. It's a huge mistake to cut art school budgets simply because art is not an academic study. We should stand up and make a fuss about these idiotic policies. I can do that in my position, of course, but all of us can stand up and make a difference."

Kapoor also has a different take on the more fundamental underlying causes of the crisis currently enveloping Western society. His perspective goes far deeper than the merely economic.

"I think the current crisis doesn't have to do with money, but with aspiration.

We tell our young people that they should aspire to have all the material possessions in the world, a nice car and a nice house, lots of pretty clothes. All these objects further stimulate an economic model of production. And all the economic models of production are based on the idea that nature is infinite, that it will provide forever.”

“Society seems to think that all this production is consumed and will lead to more production. Nobody talks about the aspiration to happiness. Or the aspiration to contentment. These are very important human values. Spiritual values. So, in my opinion, we need to rethink the whole question of ‘crisis’. We live in a world where millions of people are starving every day. Crisis is a matter of how you define it.”

On creativity and innovation

Corporations talk ceaselessly about the need to encourage creativity and innovation, yet few have mastered the art of effectively and consistently encouraging them. What can we learn from artists about the process of creativity and innovation?

“I have no message with my art objects. As an artist, I have literally nothing to say. Because if you have something to say, then you can just say it. We spend our whole lives being educated to be good citizens, do the right thing, be good husbands and wives etc. We are educated to death, really. It kills us. It

destroys all creativity.”

“Society requires us to be certain things. The only freedom an artist allows himself is the freedom to not know what you’re doing. To start the day with no agenda and to let every day be an ‘I don’t know’ day. The more ‘I don’t know’ time one can have, the deeper one can go. Experimenting is extremely important. Continuously opening up and breaking through boundaries is crucial to making interesting work.”

“There is this perception that an artist is a fool, that he sits around all day smoking and drinking. Well, first of all, some of us have normal working hours, but besides that, whatever the case, even out of things as stupid as these something deep arises, something unexpected and unknown which may have never been seen before. So when I say that I have nothing to say as an artist, I mean that having something to say always gets in the way of the creative process.”

“In my case, the more ‘I don’t know’ time I have, the more creativity comes out of it. One has to find the time to sit and wonder. The less pressing the agenda, the deeper the work. If this can be done properly, freely, then in the end, there is more space for the observer.”

Maybe there is no greater contrast between Kapoor’s attitude to creativity and the realities of corporate life where everyone seems to be busy and time for thinking, reflection and, indeed, being creative, is squeezed out; where ‘I don’t know’ is seen as a sign

**“Are our systems,
processes and
modes of thinking
appropriate for
tomorrow’s world?”**

of weakness rather than an opportunity to explore; and where everyone is 'educated' in how to do things through endless training programmes that often simply perpetuate yesterday's knowledge while destroying the imagination to create anew.

On "pressure"

The business world is obsessed with the pressure to perform. Performance metrics are looked at monthly, weekly, daily and sometimes hourly, despite all the accumulated evidence that this is counter-productive. How does this contrast with Kapoor's attitude to performance?

"The biggest hurdle I took in life was trying to establish a practice that gives me freedom. I have a luxurious life now. Imagine, I can come to the studio and do whatever I want, all day, every day. It's incredible. That's real freedom. When I was a beginning artist, I didn't have the freedom to do that. I swept the dirt in the corner and made something from it because I didn't have any money to buy materials. Now, I have achieved this freedom, I have earned it. That is a measurable reality."

"As a successful artist, I don't necessarily feel the pressure to perform over and over again. I'm aware of it, but I don't feel it to be a pressure. Artists

need to maintain the right to contradict themselves. All human beings have that right, but artists in particular. We can say something and then in another piece of art do the opposite - and we have the right to make bad art. It's necessary. And it can certainly leave the studio. Bad art is part of what we do, we conduct our education in public."

"Sometimes I look back and reflect. I can see that I have had periods where I've been stuck or lost, but that's fine. The whole point is that these periods are necessary, otherwise I can't do the rest. I love being in the studio. Rather than travelling the world and setting up an exhibition somewhere, I prefer being at home in my own studio."

As businesses large and small struggle with the rapid cultural change that is affecting us all, perhaps the insights of artists like Anish Kapoor can help us pause for a moment and take stock. Are our systems, processes and modes of thinking appropriate for tomorrow's world? Can we continue to operate with the same tools as in the past or do we need to incorporate a few more 'I don't know' days into our lives?

"There's so much to change, it's unbelievable. I believe that each of us can make a contribution. We live in a time where governments and countries are unable to do so, which means it's up to us. It's up to individuals to make a difference," says Anish Kapoor.



**THE POWER
OF THE
TRADITIONAL**
*Japanese tea
ceremony*

Margret Wibmer,
*assistant with water
vessel*, 2013. Fine art
print, 50 x 54 cm.
Limited edition;

Do ancient rituals have any relevance in the modern world? Or do they just indulge our sentimental attachment to a past that we romanticise as some idyllic state that never really existed?

Visual artist Margret Wibmer and art curator Akane Naka-Mori have developed an exclusive event based on the traditional Japanese tea ceremony. The event premiered at the Nishida Kitaro Museum of Philosophy in Kanazawa in

February 2013. Camunico asked them to develop a tailored event for an invited group of leaders in Amsterdam. The aim was to create an environment where past and present meet.

What is the relevance of an ancient tea ceremony to contemporary leadership?

A ritual based on Zen Buddhism, the traditional Japanese tea ceremony is more than mere form. The slow, deliberate and ritualised nature

of the tea ceremony provides participants with the space and time to reflect; to step back from the everyday in a ceremony where ritual and aesthetic deliberately slow things down to provide mental space. Japanese leaders often used a tea ceremony to create space for reflection before taking important decisions. Many of today's leaders are realising that the entrenched habits of ever more busy lives and rapid-fire decision-making do not necessarily lead to sustained success. They are seeking reflective space, whether through mindfulness training or various other approaches.

Rituals have social, political and legal dimensions. Since the 16th century, political leaders in Japan have used tea as part of a ritual of peace and consensus. Tea huts and tea rooms became the antithesis of war and violence.

They were known to be the only places where the samurai did not bring their swords inside. At Camunico we believe that there is much to be learned from ancient rituals, the arts and the humanities. As we enter an age of ever increasing uncertainty, it is those corporations and institutions that can create the space for creativity, imagination and reflection that will be able to sustain success. Others will be too busy doing things at breakneck speed to devote time to thinking and reflection.

Today, many different approaches have been developed to create space for creativity and reflection. Yet all of them can gain something from the traditional Japanese tea ceremony – make time and space, do not rush, be meticulous, and recognise the importance of aesthetics, acting from your heart and leaving your sword outside.



Akane Nakamori and Margret Wibmer, *absence of the teamster*, Ishikawa Nishida
Kitaro Museum of Philosophy / Japan, 2013. Participatory art project.

Essay—

Playing to tie

**adopting a
sustainable
mind-set**

Sustainability in its current form cannot solve the global ecological crisis

By Isaac Yuen

We've all seen the messages at the end of documentaries and in CSR programmes on how to save the world. Turn off the lights. Plant a tree. Switch to more energy-efficient systems. Improve supply chains. We leave the auditorium feeling empowered and good about ourselves. Then we go on with our lives. We go to a smart restaurant, indulge in factory-farmed steaks and imported wines. No connection is made between actions and consequences or if it is, it is ignored. We placate ourselves with minor deeds, but nothing substantial is changed.

Nor are dire warnings particularly effective in driving change. Walk into a bookshop and you will see rows of books espousing the perils of uncontrolled climate change, of oceans being emptied of fish, of rampant deforestation and the destruction of the earth's life support systems. People become desensitized to the doom and gloom. The end is nigh. Be prepared for zombies and the post-apocalyptic future.

It is true that the sustainability movement has made some gains in the last 50 years. Acid rain has been curbed in large parts of North Ameri-

ca. The Montreal Protocol represented a unified global effort to curb damage to the ozone layer. Recycling is a commonly accepted practice in many areas. Awareness of the impact that humans have on the world is growing.

But not enough. In recent decades, the problems have only grown in scope and complexity. Today we are confronted with the accelerating deterioration of our atmospheric, oceanic, and terrestrial systems. We face these challenges with an economic system founded upon a faith in growth that defies the hard reality of physical limits. The root cause that led us to exploit, alienate, and dominate the world remains. It stems from a mind-set cultivated by modern society: we are taught to play the game of life to win.

Winning at all costs

If life is a game, humanity is on the verge of victory. There are more people alive at this point in time than at any other in history. Our technological prowess is unparalleled; human

ingenuity and brainpower have reached an all-time high. We can now communicate instantaneously with anyone across the globe. The entire breadth of accumulated knowledge lies at our fingertips. We have the ability to shape our surroundings to an unparalleled degree, to make life safer, easier, better. But these victories come at a cost. In order to win, we have created something to beat. We win at the game of life at the expense of another. We win at the price of the oceans polluted and emptied. We win at the cost of the forests logged and lost. We win at the expense of 'our competitors' and, more recently, even at the expense of our customers, our friends and our neighbours, as the social devastation of the recent financial crisis has shown. Our mind-set to win and our drive to succeed blinds us to all else.

It is possible to continue along the same path. Indeed, we as a global species are closer to 'winning' - of ending the game victoriously in our favour - than ever before. But the price paid is our diminishment. Our livelihood. Our diversity. Our relationship with each other and the immeasurably complex tapestry of life that clothes this world.

A pyrrhic victory is no victory at all.

Thinking on the same level

Speaking as an environmentalist, I see many of us approach the sustainability crisis with the mind-set of winning. What nobler goal is there than to triumph as David over the Goliaths of faceless corporations? The thrill of underdog victory is immensely attractive, the glamour of being a people's champion impossibly alluring. There is no loftier achievement, no greater am-

bition. So we dedicate ourselves to the cause. We strive to be heard. We see injustice all around and must act. We throw ourselves into the work with the zeal and passion that is in our hearts.

Sometimes it works. Patches of forests are saved. A species is taken off the endangered species list. We relish these minor victories. But our efforts and actions, however well intended, are borne of the same motivation: a desire to win, the need to be right, to triumph over another. And so people who don't heed our calls become our enemies. We fight the good fight against them until our voice rings out above theirs. We forget that fighting fire with fire ends in the destruction of everything worth protecting.

Eventually, this catches up with us. We are dismayed when people fail to respond to our outcries against injustice and disaster. We become frustrated when they grow hostile to our good intentions. Each defeat is a grievous wound to our souls. In the meantime, greed and consumption goes on. Damage to the world's life support systems continues unabated. Apathy hinders any progress made. Genuine change remains elusive.

This struggle to succeed exacts a heavy toll on our spirits. Unable to cope with seeing lakes poisoned, forests razed, oceans acidified, many of us burn out. Some insulate themselves in a blanket of cynicism. Others become part of the system, attempting to work from within institutions of power to leverage change. But entrenched establishments, like climax ecosystems, are inherently resilient, designed to resist and buffer against radical change and paradigm shifts. So while we may do some genuine good, most of our efforts run aground and are wasted. Many of us become broken and jaded, exhausted by pitching between minor wins and

heart-wrenching despair.

How can we as environmentalists bring about a sustainable future when we ourselves are not sustainable?

Playing to tie: a different path

The road towards sustainability begins with the internal cultivation of a non-winning, non-opposing state of mind.

Instead of playing the game of life to win, we seek to tie. We go nowhere and seek no victory. We do not want the game to end. From this mind-set, a different approach to life and living can emerge. When we play to tie, when we perceive life and living as exercises in resilience and endurance, we can start to appreciate thinking that considers the long haul rather than just the short term, to value a slow burn over a scorched earth. We begin to stay behind to get ahead; we start to get ahead by staying behind. Equilibrium is struck. Homeostasis is attained.

One of the consequences of playing to tie is that it forces us to recognise our 'opponent'; we must stare across the abyss and accept the gaze returned. It necessitates that we understand the actions and tendencies of the other. Instead of continuing down the road of isolation, alienation and exploitation, we shift to a path that is more sound, rooted in awareness, integration and cooperation. We realise that there is no strength to be gained from exploiting another. Instead, we seek understanding - but not necessarily agreement - with differences acknowledged and difficulties negotiated.

Without the obsession to win, we can also afford to pause and simply be. We can rekindle the traits that made us a successful social species: compassion, modesty and cooperation - qualities that help us confront the fear, greed, and wastefulness within and around us. In times of deep despair, we can draw upon them to give ourselves hope; they serve as clear, profound, inexhaustible reservoirs of inner strength. It becomes easier to be content, centred, and prepared in the face of adversity. Unhurried, we have the time for introspection and wonder. We consume less and appreciate more. We want less and become more.

Sustainability from within

The shift towards such a mind-set may seem fanciful and impractical, especially in modern society. But examples of this way of being abound. Life itself innately plays to tie. Life is endlessly complicated, infinitely rich, tremendously resilient, but it thrives without the desire to dominate. It has only one goal: to live on.

The human body is a complex system that plays to tie. From womb to tomb, the body strives to maintain the conditions in which it can continue to function. An active community and complex ecosystem, it is the result of a wholly integrated relationship between us and the other. Only ten percent of what we think of as 'us' are human cells; the remaining 90 per cent are bacteria, fungi, and other micro-organisms. We constantly rely on them and they, in turn, rely on us to be there for them. Our minds would do well to learn from our bodies, and shift from the desire to win, to an aspiration to sustain.

This fundamental change in thinking starts with

**“The road towards
sustainability begins
with the internal
cultivation of a non-
winning, non-opposing
state of mind.”**

the individual. It can only be cultivated from within. We must realise that only when we are sustainable in life and in how we live can we begin to address the problems around us. Only when we move beyond our desire to win and dominate will we be able to address the ecological crisis. Only when we feel whole and connected with others, our surroundings and ourselves, can we make a real difference. Whether we can save the environment or not then becomes an irrelevant question, because genuine sustainability will arise if we can play the game of life to tie.

Isaac Yuen is an author and creator of the blog Ekostories. This essay is an edited version of his shortlisted essay in the WOLFOUNDATION.ORG annual essay competition.

The background of the slide is a teal-colored geometric pattern composed of various triangles and polygons of different shades, creating a modern, abstract look.

‘Euro-peana’

– what is it exactly?



A discussion between
Joseph Zammit-Lucia and Roy Kahmann



JZL ► This is a series of images I am putting together to pose the question: is there a European identity? When we see imagery from the US, Asia or other parts of the world, they clearly have an identity. Images from the US give us a real sense of 'Americana'. Images from Asia are also very distinctive. But what about Europe? Is there a 'Europeana' that transcends the visual identity of its individual countries?

RK ► This is an important question for all of us, and particularly for businesses that operate in Europe. Corporations are used to exploring the needs and wants of consumers. However, they operate in the context of a prevailing culture and imagery of this sort could be useful in generating a discussion within companies about what constitutes the European culture and how they can leverage that. As Europe integrates and national borders become less relevant, companies need to understand the changing patterns of the broader cultural picture: what does greater European integration really mean? Quite apart from the rules and regulations of the EU, how do we operate in Europe's changing cultural framework?

JZL ► When you look at this series of images, how does it make you feel about 'Europe' in the cultural and commercial context?

RK ► Each of the images tells a different part of the story. This image (Image 1), for example, is interesting on many different levels. First, the overall imagery is so obviously European in character. But there are specifics too. The open display of alcohol is something that reflects liberal European values and is something that you will not readily find in many other parts of the world. The image also has many layers to it – blurred layers – that perfectly reflect the complex, multi-layered cultural melting pot that is Europe today.



IMAGE 1

JZL ► You mentioned Europe as a cultural melting pot. Multiculturalism is one of the issues under debate in Europe at the moment – both politically and in business. It seems to me that in a multicultural society the days when corporations organised themselves along national lines would be long past. Shouldn't they be thinking more along cultural lines? The article on Cultural Leadership in this magazine speaks to that question.

RK ► If we look at this image (Image 2) we see some women who are Muslim, a black-skinned baby and a blonde-haired baby, and a girl wearing a Barcelona FC T-shirt. And you say that this image was created in France. It would be hard to find a better image of multiculturalism than this. The idea of corporations whose Dutch subsidiary understands 'the Dutch consumer', with a French subsidiary that understands the mythical 'French consumer', and so on, is one that seems outdated. We now have a mix of cultures that are not concerned with national boundaries, juxtaposed with the notion of a 'European identity' that you are attempting to explore with this series.



IMAGE 2

JZL ► But what is this 'Europe' we speak of? Is it just an arbitrary and meaningless geographic definition, is it a shared history, or is it something else?

RK ► Our common history is clearly an important aspect of the European identity. And as this image shows (Image 3), it wasn't always a positive history. To me this image also tells us other things. The two faces we see show that perhaps we are still struggling to come to terms with our shared history in an age of coming together. But here we also see a bright shirt dominating the foreground. What that suggests to me is that we have emerged from the darkest days of our past to become a bright, hopeful and prosperous region that can serve as a beacon of hope to those who are going through troubled times at the moment.

JZL ► How much of this is generational? Is the idea of a European identity something that will be lost in the rush towards a bland, homogeneous – and frankly, pretty boring – global culture?

RK ► There are indeed generational differences. This image (Image 4) shows two generations. And here we can see the differences. However, even the younger woman in this image has a look that is definitely European. It's hard to draw out the elements which constitute that, but we immediately know it when we see it. This reflects the deep underlying culture that still persists – and that is also something important for businesses to understand.



IMAGE 3

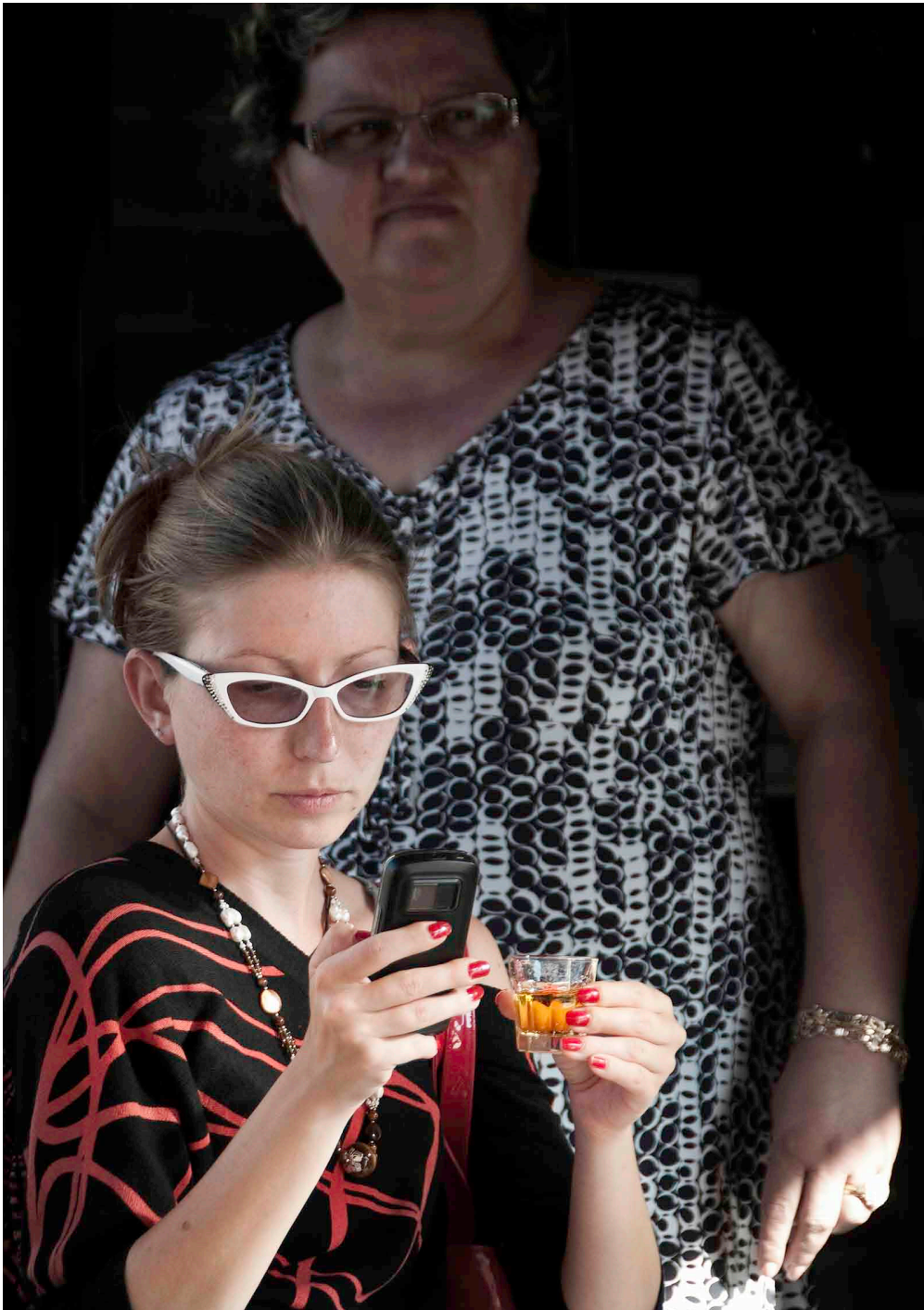


IMAGE 4

JZL ► Some time ago I wrote an article arguing that Europe's future economic success lies in drawing on its deep cultural roots. European businesses need to create products and services that are distinctly European and draw on Europe's strengths, rather than simply trying to 'globalise' thereby losing any distinctive basis on which to build their future continuity.

RK ► This image (Image 5) illustrates that point very well. The children in this museum are all dressed in the same 'global uniform'. There is nothing distinctive about them that we can see. The plain white walls of the gallery look like any art gallery anywhere in the world. But the painting is distinctly European. It reflects our European heritage. It is the only thing in the image that generates a sense of 'Europeana' in these otherwise insipid, uniform, globalised surroundings. What if we were to airbrush this painting out of the picture? We would be left with nothing distinctive. That is what will happen to European businesses if they do not draw on their heritage.



IMAGE 5

JZL ► This short discussion has taken us to places that many businesses may not spend much time exploring. These are not the sorts of questions one explores when discussions are based purely on traditional market research studies that reduce people and cultures to numbers, graphs and spreadsheets.

RK ► Market research is an essential part of what companies do. But it may not be enough. Visual exploration, as we have done today, can lead to a much deeper and more insightful discussion. It raises important questions and improves understanding.

JZL ► Thank you, Roy, for your fascinating and inspiring ideas.

Roy Kahmann is a graphic designer and creative director of advertising and design agencies. He collects photography for more than 35 years now. His vast collection is one of the largest private collections in the Netherlands. Kahmann is also owner of the Kahmann Gallery.

Interview with

*Rob
Wijnberg*

“I find the idea that something is good because we’ve always done it that way, a bizarre notion.”



By Carlijn Vis

Two years ago he was Editor-in-Chief of the Dutch newspaper nrc.next, a job he was forced to resign from because his ideas were too controversial. Today he has his own journalistic platform: de Correspondent, online journalism that “aims to put certain issues into context and show its readers what the world really looks like”. How did Rob Wijnberg break the shackles of journalism? And what will the news industry look like in 20 years time?

At age 32, Rob Wijnberg seems in a hurry. He speaks fast, one thought often moving on to the next, but always returning to the point he wanted to make. With his dark hair and dressed all in black, he is exceptionally clear about his views and intentions. He is a man with a mission.

“Newspapers are all the same. They all look the same and write about the same issues. These days magazines look just like newspapers and vice versa. Even TV talk shows base their in-

formation on what they read in the papers.” Being the same as everyone else is not what Wijnberg is about. Yet, as is increasingly commonplace, large, traditional organisations are not places that encourage or can even accommodate radical innovation. So, forced out of his job, he decided to set up De Correspondent.

Keeping away from greedy investors

“We started the platform using crowd funding which turned out to be the ideal method for several reasons. First of all, collecting a large number of

subscribers before the product even existed showed us there was enough interest for a paid online journalism platform. Secondly, it allowed us to set up our business the way we wanted to, which was quite important, because our aim was to organise our company as immaculately as possible, without it being contaminated by greedy investors or banks demanding a return on investment.”

This approach seemed to work. Even before launch, the venture had already gathered 20,000 subscribers. Now, almost a year later, 12,000 more have been added.

Realising that the technology platform was as important as the journalism content, Wijnberg decided to set up in full partnership with the developers

Interview with Richard Foreman book publishing re-invented

amunico spoke to Richard Foreman, co-founder of London based Endeavour Press. Having worked in the publishing industry for years and observed a seeming inability to break out of a business model that was headed for slow death, Richard and his business partner Matthew Lynn set up a new enterprise. Endeavour Press publishes only e-books distributed through Amazon and other platforms.

They have mastered the art of low cost promotion using Amazon's own promotional tools and social media. “We have an army of people tweeting about our books and spreading the word in other innovative ways. The costs are substantially lower but sales volumes can be the same. We now have authors who have sold 20,000 books or more.” They sell their e-books for prices ranging from 99p to

at Momkai, a digital creative agency. “It’s a more expensive way to start a business and many advised against it. People said to me, ‘why don’t you just start with some cheap programmers? Start small, somewhere in an attic or garage, develop a beta-version and grow it from there’. But in the long run it has turned out better this way; now it is also in Momkai’s interests to continue developing the platform.”

During the setup, apart from the enthusiasm of supporters, Wijnberg also learned how to deal with negative feedback to his innovative plan. “Sometimes you can become overwhelmed by the comments, people say that what you want isn’t possible and you start having doubts, you start wondering whether you are on

the right track. When I reached that point, I remembered what Joris Luyendijk (a well-known Dutch journalist and Guardian columnist) once said to me: ‘Exactly the right people are angry. They wouldn’t bother if they thought it was a bad idea.’”

How we see the world

“If I ask you: ‘what’s going on in the world?’ it really depends on how you see it and what your world is like. But if you believe the newspapers and TV, it looks as though everyone agrees about what’s going on in the world and which subjects are most important. I find that odd.”

£3.99. After Amazon’s commission, the net is split evenly between Endeavour and the author. Everyone makes a little bit of money. “We are a low cost, high volume business.”

In a small office in the shadow of St Paul’s Cathedral, Endeavour Press publishes ten books a week with a full-time staff of two people and a number of sub-contractors. They deal directly with authors, as well as with agents. Their main obstacle to rapid growth is finding good people to hire who can work both producing and promoting books.

Is this the new face of book publishing? With a high cost base and their constant search for the next blockbuster

novel that is ever more difficult to come by, legacy publishers are in difficulty. Mergers that strip out cost may delay the inevitable, but they do nothing to change the business model in any fundamental way.

“We give many authors the chance to publish, get read and make some money.” It took the creation of a fundamentally new business model to achieve it. Many large businesses have great difficulty making such a fundamental change. Maybe creating new businesses outside of their existing corporate structures is the way forward.

And think of all the paper and ink that’s being saved and the carbon footprint avoided by not shipping books around the world.

Wijnberg explains how you can get people more engaged in how the world works by translating major issues or developments into a story close to people's everyday lives. "These days, most news seems to be about evoking an emotion: 'oh, how terrible' or 'what a scandal', but our intention is to provide insight into how the world works. If you want to explain the privacy dangers of the internet, for example, you can write an abstract article about the subject, but then people might ignore the story because they don't understand how the issue relates to them. A more effective way would be to illustrate the situation by bringing it close to someone's personal life. So, one of our journalists went to a bar, logged on to the Wi-Fi network and checked what information he could collect from all the people currently on that network. He turned an abstract problem into something people do every day. The next time one of our readers logs on to a Wi-Fi network, he or she will think about that story."

Sharing knowledge

Reader engagement is another significant element that Wijnberg believes brings greater meaning to how the world works. "Traditional newspapers have a great many subscribers with an interesting repository of know-how and experience, but there is no way for them to contribute to the medium that informs them. That is also quite strange really. We don't just collect reader's tweets and add them to our articles or let subscribers leave their comments at the bottom of an article and never do anything with those comments. We ask our readers to share their expertise and we integrate their voice in our published items. After all, 100 teachers know more than one education journalist. When this approach works widely, you change the news, and change the information that people get. That's our goal."



Wijnberg seems to draw on many sources for his inspiration. “Inspiration can come from anything around me, I unconsciously pick up impressions and thoughts, ranging from the people who started Facebook and grew it to become a complete global network, to small start-ups that think of something clever.”

Other sources of inspiration he mentions are comedians like John Stewart of The Daily Show and Bill Higgs, an American comedian popular in the 1990s. These comedians use humour to tell us something fundamental about the world we live in, is how Wijnberg sees it. “Stewart adds another layer, making the programme not only hilarious but relevant too. And visiting Bill Higgs’ show wasn’t just an evening of laughter and that was that. No, on the way home, you would think: ‘Jesus, I’m screwing up the earth and I have to do something about it!’ They both have a funny and light-hearted way of conveying serious messages that stay with you. In my work too, I look for the ideal way to combine being serious and connecting to people’s worlds.”

The future of journalism and the importance of experimenting

“Stagnation means decline. I find the idea that something is good because we’ve always done it that way, a bizarre notion.” Ordering an espresso and his legs fidgeting impatiently under the table, he seems eager to expand his plan and break down the boundaries of journalism. “To me, experimenting is the basis of everything we do here. And to the people working here. They all left their well-paid jobs because they had the desire to create something totally new. The idea that the world will still look the same a 100 years from now seems terrible to me.”

Wijnberg has strong ideas about what good journalism is, but he is far from prescriptive about appropriate new approaches – and certainly does not believe that his way is the only way.

“There’s no one right way to bring the world into focus. My ideal would be that instead of all the media shifting towards each other, they would all move apart, creating more and more different sources, websites and forums for journalism, all with their own scope. With more diversity, readers have more options.”

How can companies get there?
“When it comes to encouraging an innovative mentality in your company, I like the quote from John Welch, the former boss of General Electric. He said to his Research & Development department: ‘I have one task for you: kill General Electric. Don’t come up with something that saves us, but think of what will destroy us. Because if we don’t, somebody else will.’ That’s a mentality more companies should have; don’t think of ten new ways in which we can sell, market or package our product, but come up with the product that will replace us.”

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