A Radical Revisioning of the Leadership Lexicon.

"When the stories a society share are out of tune with its circumstance, they can become self-limiting, even a threat to survival. That is our current situation." David Korten (2006: 251)

A number of key writers and thinkers in the last twenty years have shown us how our language shapes not only the way we think, but also the way we behave. This work has developed from the ground breaking work of Claude Levi-Straus (1968) and Noam Chomsky (1968), to Gareth Morgan's (1986) seminal text on "The Images of Organisation" and Lackoff and Johnson's (1980) book on "The Metaphor's we live by". More recently the American researcher, writer and philosopher Robert Romanyshyn described to me how it was not just obvious metaphors that rule our thinking, but almost every word we use, for as he put it: "Our language is a cemetery of dead metaphors – we have forgotten the original metaphorical allusion, but they each still affects us unknowingly." (Romanyshyn 2014)

Even more recently I finished reading Naomi Klein's shocking and awakening book: "This Changes Everything" (Klein 2014) and was struck how she too points to how our language supports our exploitative and extractivist way of living and feeds our denial of the way we as the human species are destroying the planet and our blindness in carrying on despite the enormous risks to so many living ecologies that support our very existence.

This led to me examining again some of the key words in our current leadership lexicon, that we can toss about so casually and to examine their metaphorical roots and their impact on our epistemological perceptions. I have chosen ones that are in common parlance in both the academic leadership literature and leadership development practice, as well as used by leaders in their own discourses. The ones I have chosen, I believe, will be all too familiar to those reading this paper. The words are: Resources, and its counter-part Human Resources, Resilience, Authentic, Transformational, High Performance, Value Creation and Excellence (and its modern equivalent 'Good to Great'). For each word I offer another term which I believe is more congruent with an ecological world view and in hopefully will help move our way of thinking to one that will make possible a systemic response to the ecological crisis.

In doing this I am following the great polymath and prophetic thinker Gregory Bateson, who in 1972 said:

"The most important task today is, perhaps, to think in a new way." (Bateson, 1972, p. 437).

Now over forty years later this is even more true.

Bateson went on to list what he saw as the most dangerous of our human epistemological errors these are: *"the ideas that dominate our civilization at the present time [and which} date in their most virulent form from the industrial revolution. They may be summarized as:*
a) *It's us against the environment.*
b) *It's us against other men.*
c) *It's the individual (or the individual congregation or individual company, or the individual nation) that matters.*
d) *We can have unilateral control over the environment and must strive for that control.*
e) *We live in an infinitely expanding 'frontier'*
f) *Economic determinism is common sense.*
g) *Technology will do it for us.*

(Bateson, G. 1972 p468)

Resources

We constantly talk of the resources that we need for our businesses and organisations: the financial resources, the material resources, the operational resources etc. One of the key Team Roles listed by Meredith Belbin's is that of the "Resource Investigator" the team member or members that go out and scout out the necessary resources to make what has been decided possible(Belbin 2004),.

Underpinning the way we talk of resources is the deeply held belief that originates from at least the time of origination of the mon-theistic religions, that Man (sic) was given dominion over the world, the animals, the birds, the fish, the trees, their fruits, the earth, the fossil fuels laid down over millennia, and even the air we breathe which could become a dumping ground for our industrial effluent and anything else he could lay his hands on.

We talk of natural resources as if they are ours to command and use as we will and more shall be given unto us. This leads to what Klein (2014) calls an extractavist thinking and mode of operating. No matter how deep we have to dig, or whatever we might destroy on our way, we will find and extract whatever we want from Mother Nature.

The unspoken companion of 'resource', its ever-present shadow, is 'waste', and it's the coupling of these two, the resource/waste nexus that leads humans to over exploit so called natural resources and return to the natural world waste that does not support life.   In the more than human world there is no such thing as waste, for the waste of one part of the ecology is the food for other parts, as falling leaves create the nutrients for the woodland earth and habitats for many creatures.

Klein argues that the world that supports and sustains us is our **source,** not our **resource** and as such needs to honoured and respected, not torn apart and polluted.

As leaders we need to ensure that we are not talking of resources to bend to our will, but sources we need to honour and value and return to the source as much that is conducive to life as that which we have used. Only by this will we ensure our sustained and sustainable living.

Human Resources

Like Natural Resources, we talk glibly of Human Resources and set up whole functions to find, process, develop, retain, assess and discard them when they no longer meet requirements. The metaphor underpinning much of the H.R. models is an industrial processing model of: inputs, processes and outputs. To give just one example, team performance models were dominated in the United States for a number of years by the IPO model – Inputs, Process, Outputs. (Salas et al 2009).

When I was working with a global bespoke systems company, they happily told me that the delays in installing their effective bespoke I.T. systems were not caused by the hardware or the software, but that they lacked the skills to programme their customer's "live ware" – humans as programmable resources!

John Lewis the retail company whose governance is built on being an employee owned company, refers to all its staff as 'Partners' and has been very successful and establishing high levels of trust between Leaders and front line staff even in times of downturn and lay-offs (Hope-Hailey et al 2010). Partners is a term that indicates a reciprocity in the relationship, where together we can create more than we could if we were not in relationship.

Resilience

resilience, (noun) the physical property of a material that can return to its original shape or position after deformation that does not exceed its elastic limit, an occurrence of rebounding or springing back, the mental ability to recover quickly from depression, illness or misfortune. (Oxford English Dictionary)

The term resilience calls up images of a sea wall taking a pounding from the crashing waves and being able to withstand them, recovering from misfortune or depression, springing back, come what may. As economic, political and ecological turbulence becomes more global and endemic, then there is an increasing focus on resilient organizations and resilient leaders – one's who can withstand the vagaries of the VUCA world – (Volatile, Unpredictable, Complex and Ambiguous). But instead of focussing on how to survive the ecological, political and economic threats to organisational and leadership survival, we should rather be trying to understand how our human thinking and doing is stirring up these increasing storms.

Nassim Taleb shows how we need to move beyond resilience to anti-fragility, for as he explains:

> "*Antifragility is beyond resilience. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same.*" The Anti-fragile *gets better. This principle is behind everything that has changed with time: evolution, culture,…corporate survival.*" (Taleb 2013)

I would suggest that instead of resilience we could turn to the metaphor – regenerative. As Giles Hutchins (2012) suggests, we could create a more sustainable world by modelling our organisational systems on the way Nature operates where ecological systems have in-built regenerative cycles. We could usefully build on the work of Gunter-Pauli and the Zero Emissions Research Institute, which have shown how in Nature there is no waste, for the waste products of one system are the generative fuel of the next system (http://www.zeri.org/ZERI/Home.html)

Authentic.

The word Authentic originally meant: "genuine, of undisputed origin" and was most used to distinguish authentic pictures or works of art from ones that were fakes. When applied to individuals it has come to mean someone who is open and true to who they are and does not pretend or dissemble. In the last twenty years much has been written about the Authentic Leader, one who is reliable and author of their own statements. A leader who has a moral compass and who rings true to their followers. (George)
Much of this is laudable and of course we do need leaders who do what they say and speak their own truth. However, being authentic to oneself has a shadow side. Some of the writings in this area have their roots in Humanistic Psychology, which at its extremes can become a very self-centred approach, where we practice self-development to rid ourselves of our false self, which has been socially constructed and find our so called 'true self'. This can be heard in the Gestalt Prayer:

> *I do my thing and you do your thing.*
> *I am not in this world to live up to your expectations,*
> *And you are not in this world to live up to mine.*
> *You are you, and I am I,*
> *and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.*
> *If not, it can't be helped.*
> (Fritz Perls, 1969)

I was giving some feedback to an organisational development colleague that he was rather prone to impose his own beliefs on the leadership teams he was working with and at times even launching into giving the occasional short moral sermon. He replied: "I have to be true to who I am, to my true self." I asked him who was this true self and who was the self that was trying to be true to it? Was that a different self?" My intervention was not very helpful at the time, but hopefully planted a seed of unlearning for him as well as myself.

I have written elsewhere of replacing the word authentic with the word congruent which is defined as 'corresponding', which is another useful word for Leaders and leadership. Congruence is less self-centred and more relational and implies being co-creative with the wider system. I wrote about four types of congruence:

- **Self-congruence:** alignment of all aspects of one-self, one's words, one's emotions, one's actions, what one is saying and how one is saying it.
- **Inter-personal congruence**: in alignment and rapport one with another,
- **Group Congruence:** congruent to the group, organisational and cultural setting
- **Congruence of Intent**: alignment to the purpose of the organisation, team, meeting, activity.

I also wrote about how full congruence required engagement and alignment on all four of these levels. I went on to use the image of a gyroscope, where the central pole was the self-congruence, the horizontal the inter-personal, the horizontal outer circle the social or group congruence and the vertical circle the alignment to over-arching and under-arching purpose. The gyroscope only stays upright when it is constantly turning on all four levels with the vertical self-pole constantly turning and leaning in each direction.

Now I would add a fifth cycle of congruence, that of ecological alignment, for as Gregory Bateson pointed out the unit of flourishing is never the individual, the team, the organisation, the nation, or the species, it is only anyone of these in dynamic co-creation with its ecological niche. If we are not congruent and co-creating with our ecological niche, we will gradual destroy it and ourselves into the bargain.

Sincerity Douglas Hinton.

Transformational

The first definition of Transformational Leadership I found on Wikipedia says:

> **Transformational leadership** is a style of [leadership](#) where the leader is charged with identifying the needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of the group.

This echoes much that was first written about transformational leadership, which was still part of the cult of the heroic leader, and centred on leaders not leadership, where the leader focuses not just on leading today's organisation but creating a vision for the future and then inspiring their (Sic) people to follow.

More recently writers have shown how transformational leadership is more relational and is co-created between leaders and followers:

"leaders and followers make each other to advance to a higher level of morality and motivation." (MacGregor Burns 2003).

The movement and trainings in Transformational Leadership have made great contributions in increasing the emphasis on the role of leadership in "leaning into the future" (Scharmer &Kaufman 2014) , orchestrating change, engaging their employees and other stakeholders, empowerment of others, building trust. Writers like Bass et al (2003) and Burns (2003) and Kanungo (2001) have also emphasised the positive ethical practices that they see at the heart of transformational leadership.

However, the word still has a heroic and agentic emphasis, a leader or group of leaders and followers transforming the past and creating the future. We need to move beyond seeing leadership as what is done by leaders, or even done jointly by leaders and followers.

Leadership becomes necessary when there is something that needs doing that requires focussed, orchestrated collaboration from several people. This needs to be an endeavour that cannot be done by individuals working in parallel, or by simple spontaneous collaboration.

So leadership is always triangulated; it requires leadership, followership and a collective endeavour that needs complex collaboration. The collective endeavour is the important and seminal apex of the triangle, as the other two entities, leadership and followership, are both created by, and in service of, the collective endeavour.

Triangulated Relational Leadership 1

COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOUR

LEADERSHIP

LEADER   FOLLOWERS
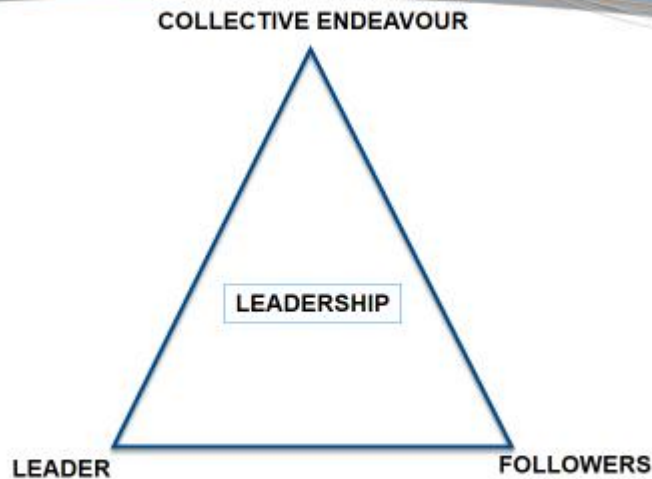
Currently leadership language talks of how leadership teams go off-site to create a new vision and strategy for the organisation and then engage and inspire others to buy-in to this. But we can also look at this from the another end of the systemic lens and see that the vision and the collective endeavour pre-exist, the challenge is out there in the wider ecological and human systems waiting for a leadership group to respond. From this perspective the leadership team do not create the vision, the latent challenge and vision create the leadership team.

So perhaps instead of transformational leadership we need Co-creative leadership that is not located within leaders, a leadership that can be responsive to what: the future; their stakeholder community; and their ecological niche need from them and dynamically co-create with these three inter-connected fields.

High Performance

I and many others have written extensively about high performing leadership teams how to develop them and the necessary characteristics they need (Hawkins 2011, 2014, 2014B Wageman et al 2008, Hackman 2002). Only more recently I have started to teach that there is no such thing as 'a high performing team' and that the term is misleading and can lead us into unhelpful thinking. The term implies that the performance of the team begins and ends with the team, that it is a bounded system, but the performance of any team is dependent on many other sources: those it leads; those it works alongside; the organisational context and its customers, suppliers and other stakeholders; as well as the ecological, economic, and political contexts it works within.

High performance also implies a destination, somewhere you head for and hopefully arrive at, rather than a natural recursive cycle where performance is co-created with all aspects of the team's ecological niche and goes through periods of growth, full blossoming and then decay and regeneration.

I now talk not of high performing teams, but of teams that co-create benefit for all their stakeholders including 'the more than human world'. These are teams that are not high performing but systemically beneficial.

Value Creation.

I once fell into the error of talking to my good friend Professor Peter Reason, while sitting in his garden, about organisations that create value. "Rubbish!" was his explosive retort, "the only thing that creates value on this earth is that.," pointing at the brilliant burning sun, the source of light, warmth, photosynthesis and all the thing that make life possible on this planet. "We humans don't create value" he added, "we just appropriate it and move it around."

There is currently an important sea change in thinking and writing about value creation. Michael Porter, one of the most successful strategy writers of the late twentieth century wrote a key paper with Mark Kramer on how we need to move from focussing on "shareholder value", to focussing on "Shared Value" for all Stakeholders. They point out that if we an organisation is not creating benefit for all its stakeholders it is not building its own long term sustainability (Porter and Kramer 2011).

I have written how the minimum stakeholders that an organisation must create on-going benefit for include: Customers, partners and suppliers, employees, investors, the communities in which the organisation operates and the more than human world (Hawkins 2014b). But the more than human world is of a different order to the other human stakeholders for the activity is entirely dependent upon it and it is the context within which everything else takes part.

Others like Prahalad and Krishnan (2008) have shown how innovation and added value is co-created through global networks that cross organisational boundaries and involve customers, suppliers and competitors.

So instead of the term value creation, we need to move to talking about **added value co-creation**, where we recognise the many contributors to the co-creation and that the 'more than human world' is always the greatest co-creator, who we ignore at our peril.

Excellence (and it modern equivalent 'Good to Great')

Tom Peters along with his colleague Waterman started a whole movement with the book "In search of excellence". Many leaders and their organisations rushed to follow the lead of the organisations that had made it to the top, become "market leaders" and even in some case market dominators.

Many of the so-called excellent companies soon failed leading to critiques of the original work by Chapman (2003) in his book "In Search of Stupidity" and Phil Rosenzweig (2008) in his book "The Halo Effect".

My own critique (Hawkins 2005:8) was much shorter and more paradoxical and tongue in cheek, and is encased in a Nasrudin story:

IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE

A group of senior managers came to learn from Nasrudin about excellence. He invited them all to come with him to the local theme park. When they got there he lead them all immediately to the most frightening ride called the "Loggers leap". They were ushered into small boats, which were pulled by a chain along a small channel of water.

They spent the first half of the ride, going up and down in the pitch black. When they got outside into the light they found themselves being slowly pulled up an enormous slope. As they got to the top, their hearts jumped into their mouths, as they saw what was to come. The boats were released from the traction of the climb and went shooting down at enormous speed through the water at the bottom.

They emerged rather white and wet. One of them enquired of Nasrudin what that had to do with excellence.

"You mean you missed it?" He asked. "Did you not enjoy the moment teetering on the top?"

Jim Collins (1994 & 2001), in his books: "Built to Last" and "From Good to Great" has followed in the same tradition, albeit with much better methodology and searching for companies that have succeeded over longer periods of time. But of course, nothing is built to last forever that is not how ecology works.

When I was young I was brought up with the little rhyme:

Good, better, best,

Never let it rest,

Till your good is better,

And your better, best.

The protestant work-ethic, where you are only as good as your last performance and never good enough, successful enough, rich enough. A philosophy of lack. Winnicot (1968) the famous child psychoanalyst, suggested we need to focus on being 'good enough', where we avoid blaming others or ourselves.

Success for organisations can also be dangerous as the market dominator can become complacent or arrogant and is also the last organisation in the sector to get the feedback that the world is changing. There are classic examples like Olivetti the King of the typewriter sector; IBM the dominator of the Main-frame computer market, Kodak in pre-digital film and many others.

Rather than seeing the goal as creating excellent organisations, teams or individuals we should instead look to create organisations, communities and teams that are life enhancing for all parts of the system (those who work within them, or with them or are customers or clients or investors) and for the ecological niches in which they operate. From this we can address ethical considerations by asking will this decision, choice and actions be conducive to life?

Back to Bateson.

The revisioning of these and other words from the leadership lexicon is in service of creating a language that makes a small but important contribution to helping us as a species move back into the right relationship with the 'more than human world' and help reduces our modern human tendencies to hubris, narcissism, greed, dominance, environmental extractivism and exploitation and potential self-destruction.

As Bateson (1972) pointed out that without changing our epistemological way of thinking we do not have

"a snowball in hell's chance" of surviving the ecological crisis of the 21st century. If we now revisit each of

the false and dangerous beliefs that Bateson outlined and which are quoted above, we can look at what we

might put alongside them as an antidote or cure, that would help us overcome the human/nature dualism.

a)	It's us *against* the environment.	**We are entirely dependent on the more than human world**

b)	It's us *against* other men	**Win-lose always becomes lose-lose**
c)	It's the individual (or the individual company, or the individual nation) that matters	**The unit of survival is organism in dynamic co-creation with its environmental niche. We are learning by bitter experience that the organism that destroys its environment destroys itself.**
d)	We *can* have unilateral control over the environment and must strive for that control	**Nature was before, will be after and is greater than that small part of it that is human**
e)	We live in an infinitely expanding 'frontier'	**There are limits to growth**
f)	Economic determinism is common sense	**90% of what is most important cannot be measured by economics. Money as the measure of all things, actually serves to impoverish us all.** **The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the ecology.**
g)	Technology will do it for us	**Technology, on its own, will merely accentuate our own abilities to destroy ourselves and our environment. You cannot solve a problem, from within the thinking that created it**

Conclusion

New times call for new leadership and we are now in a period where developing leaders to acquire the competencies based on successful leaders of the 20th century is no longer fit for purpose. We need to unlearn some of the inherited constructs and assumptions we have about leadership, many of which are embedded in our leadership Lexicon.

In this paper I have just addressed eight prevalent leadership terms that I believe need revisioning.

Current leadership word	Possible new term
Resources	Sources
Human Resources	Partners
Resilience	Regenerative
Authentic	Multi-level congruence
Transformational	Co-creative
High Performance	Systemically Beneficial
Value Creation	co-created added value
Excellence	Life enhancing

I am sure there are many more and it is not my intention to create a new Leadership Lexicon, but rather to awaken in each of us a greater awareness of the language we use and the assumptions and mind-sets that these are built on. The 'we' includes, leaders at all levels, leadership developers and leadership academics, and in my experience each of these three groups can have very different discourses, which need greater connection and inter-dialogue. My hope is that my offering will in a small way create helpful unlearning of some of our fixed assumptions and a more evolving co-created new language that is more helpful for the challenges of our time

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