

Video-Seminar "Transformation"
(2011)

Lectures 08

Claus Leggewie: Agents of Transformation

- Episode 1 - Values, knowledge and action
- Episode 2 - Change agents
- Episode 3 - Interview

Change Agents

*Excerpts of transcript
corrected version of the YouTube transcript
Numbers, e.g. 5:49, specify times in the lecture: text is the one spoken at that time, e.g. 5 minutes and 49 seconds after start of lecture.*

5:45 I'm saying here that we are really talking about a kind of revolution.

5:49 The structural preconditions for the conversion of such dispositions
5:53 into action were already elaborated on the basis of historical examples.

5:59 what I'll be saying here next deals with how and why
6:02 which actors - like the above mentioned and others - this difficult to predict and
6:06 difficult to plan can be initiated shaped and supported

6:11 In our view turning awareness into requisite action
6:15 cannot succeed through knowledge transfer alone
6:18 but also includes participative dimensions and
6:22 feedback.
6:24 knowledge is nothing without those who know and knowledge is disseminated only
6:30 through actors. The transformation process is bound
6:33 to fail if the experts only rely on the
6:36 self-evidence of the reasonableness of their suggestions
6:39 arrived at after much theoretical debate
6:43 and then hope to motivate laymen
6:46 with information campaigns an incentive systems to accept
6:50 the relevant measures after the event

6:53 As far as climate protection and adaptation and
6:57 even ultimately the creation of acceptance are concerned
7:00 it is probably that - according to participation and innovation-
7:04 research findings, policies and social movements
7:08 that rely on early consultation
7:11 for deliberation of those concerned and their active participation
7:16 to legitimize political administrative measures
7:19 would be more successful than any attempts by
7:22 political administrative institutions alone.

7:28 Technological innovations and political legal steering must find the
7:32 mobilized citizenship to fully develop their problem-solving potential.
7:36 The supplies in normal times but even more so
7:39 in escalating crisis situations and in view of the time pressure due to the
7:47 crisis of our system.
7:48 This is the challenge for 21st century democratic policies.

The Concept of Change Agents

7:55 Let me talk a bit about the concept of change agents:
So how can we define what kind of roles are included and then
8:01 come to a typology.

Transition research
8:05 results suggest that individual actors can play a far larger role in the
8:10 transformation of
8:11 social systems than one that has been accorded to them
8:15 for quite some time during which academic interest has usually
8:18 ... for boundaries for action and the effect of systemic
8:22 emergence.

The analysis of historical examples shows
8:27 that social change is characterized not only by the emergence of new
8:31 technologies and
8:33 new major economic industries but above all
8:36 also by changes in mentalities and institutions driven by aspiring social
8:41 classes.

8:43 identifiable actor constellations with sufficient power, resources and creativity
8:50 prepared to welcome innovations and reforms in order to overcome the
8:54 established
8:55 obstructive powers, emerge that drive the change.

8:59 The speed of a transformation or whether it can be seen at all
9:03 depends largely on the involved actors availing themselves
9:07 on the existing opportunity structures.

9:11 However examining contemporary and historical transition or transformation
9:15 processes also clearly shows that actors can not only profit from the
9:19 window of opportunity that open
9:22 but that frequently they are also actively involved
9:25 in the opening.

Strategic groups and alliances
9:30 function as role models and trend setters during this process in this way.
9:35 They provide isolated innovation impulses
9:38 with a culturally hegemony.

9:41 We know from diffusion in transition research that change agents...

9:45 -and let us define them as

*"strategic actors who are sometimes unconscious
9:51 pioneers of social change spreading an awareness of the chances
9:55 it offers"*

... that they play a key role
9:58 when new technologies and ideas are introduced.

10:01 The role of these change agents in initiating and shaping change
10:06 processes
10:07 has been examined in various disciplines dealing with diffusion and innovation
10:11 processes

10:12including some business studies, sociology and
10:15psychology.

The concept

10:19of this approach is based and summarized by a German scholar as follows.

10:23"Change agents have a convincing idea for change
10:28and an initial concept for its realization.
10:31They network and gain important fellow campaigners, in this way
10:35managing to win the critical mass over
10:38for change. Subsequently they gradually develop the idea
10:43further together. The changing of routines and framework conditions,
10:48the establishment of new institutions and a paradigm shift conclude
10:52the process."

You will

10:55find this represented on slides.

10:59Change agent support certain changes actively

11:02driving them. Initially change agents are for the most part

11:07single individuals and small groups.

They propagate innovations

11:12by questioning business as usual policies

11:15and creating alternative practices, thereby

11:18challenging the established worldviews and pathways,

11:22attitudinal and behavioral patterns as well as

11:25providing others -who think as they do-, followers,

11:29early adopters with the constant motivation for

11:32self-sustaining change.

This process

11:36 typically includes long-term orientation and

11:39the overcoming of loss and risk aversion.

11:44Change agents therefore not only affect changes selectively

11:47within their own sphere of experience but also nudge (anstoßen) comparatively widespread

11:52transformation processes at local level and

11:55from below.

They find emulators

11:59and animate others to change their behavioral practices.

12:04Schematically a situation that is governed by

12:07business as usual policies can therefore be countered

12:11with an innovation scenario.

Change agents would replace veto players

12:16at the individual interest level acting as previously

12:20elaborated.

At the level of attitudes and dispositions

12:24a pioneering spirit would be prevalent rather than one of loss evasion.

12:29At a higher symbolic or framing level the tone

12:33would be set by a culture of innovation rather than

12:36culture barriers.

You can find this on the following slide.

Social Level	Business as Usual	Innovation	Analysis Level
Micro	Veto Players	Change Agents	Interests
Meso	Loss Aversion	Pioneer Spirit	Emotions, Dispositions
Macro	Cultural Barriers	Innovation Cultures	Symbolic Level, Framework

Source: WBGU, 2011

www.va-bne.de • World in Transition: A Social Contract for Sustainability
Lecture 8: Agents of Transformation • Episode 2 • Prof. Dr. C. Leggewie

12:44Change agents are not just individuals. They are also
12:47organizations in groups who could support and transport the transformation
12:51outlined in our
12:53ideas.

Based on precedence and synthesis

12:57the focus will particularly be on change agents who accelerate conversion

13:01processes,

13:02substantiating and shaping ongoing socio-technological changes,

13:06legislative processes and market development as consumers,

13:10entrepreneurs investors and of course as

13:14citizens, administrators and politicians.

The **conclusions** that can be reached

13:18are necessarily interim and tentative.

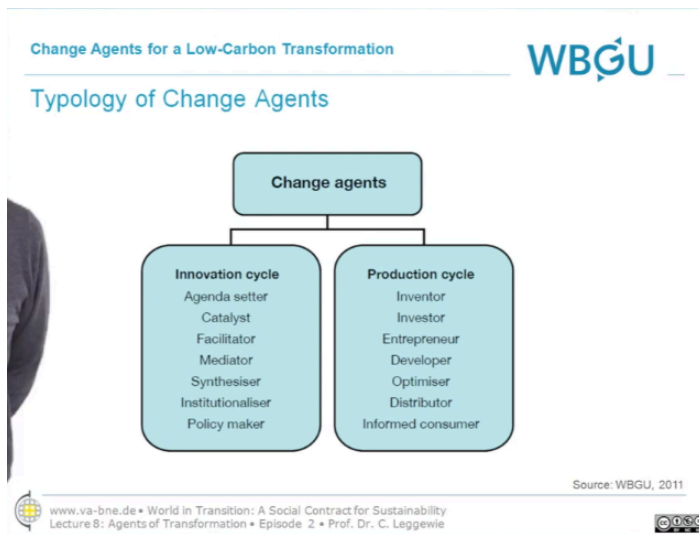
13:21These can be inferred from the findings of diffusion and transition research.

13:26With reference to diffusion research which has defined cycles of innovation

13:30and cycles of production.

13:32Various functions can be differentiated here and an

13:35analytical distinction can be made between types
13:39of change agents as you can see on the slide.



13:43In a **cycle of innovation** change agents act by defining open questions and
13:47challenges and putting them on the agenda
13:50by *facilitating* problem solutions as catalysts,
13:54by *mediating* between conflicting groups
13:58or by *freeing blockades* in
14:01the decision-making processes within groups,
by *integrating*
14:05disparate innovation requirements
or by nudging
14:09the institutional innovations which are required to solve a problem from below,
14:13or in the role of decision making elite from above.

14:17In the **production cycle** change agents are active as the inventors,
14:22investors, as the entrepreneurs, as developers or
14:25distributors of new concepts, products and services.
14:29but also -as we have already learned- as enlightened consumers through demanding
14:33new products
14:35and letting them circulate initially.

This is an analytical distinction. Obviously change agents can
14:43also fulfill several of these functions
14:46simultaneously.

Social science research suggests that
14:51profound social and cultural changes often go hand in hand
14:55with generational changes.

Effectively
14:59when major changes such as these occur something happens at the social macro-level:
15:06Younger group show more openness towards innovations in general and are in many
15:11cases
15:12early adopters of new technologies.

15:16This has been extensively documented in market and diffusion research.

15:20At the same time historical research shows that cognitive and emotional
15:24discrepancies
15:25between peer group in part expressed as generational conflict
15:30can mobilize social movements.

15:35One important question is whether actors have sufficient strategic
15:39competence, or whether they can join forces with other change agents
15:44in order to initiate or accelerate transformation processes.

15:49This means that not only the role of technical experts,
15:52political administrative decision-making elites, managers, entrepreneurs and so on
15:57must be examined,
15:59but also the role of other key groups such as
16:02consumers, smaller communal initiatives and informal networks.

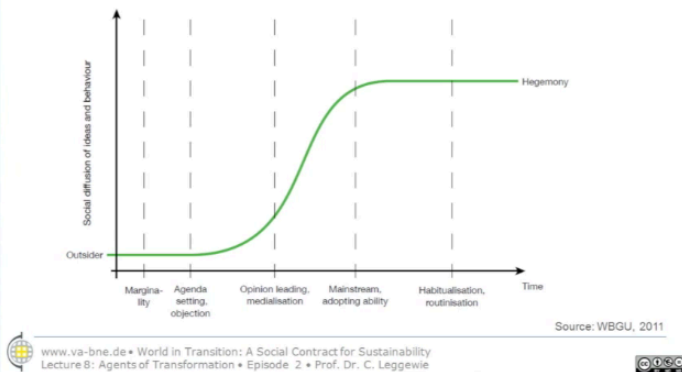
16:07Change agents can therefore be individuals who gain trust and repute
16:11at micro level as leader and role models
16:15and will then work together at the meso-level in
16:19manageable groups for example in study and working groups, members of
16:23a society,
16:24association, in interest-groups, professional associations, in
16:29voluntary teams. And finally they can also be
16:32major organizations like corporations,
16:35political administrative units from local to super and trans-national level
16:40and other cooperatives including certain professional groups
16:44or patrons.

This has a capacity for innovation and public spiritedness,
16:50the ability to communicate
16:53united and to engender feelings of
16:56identity and power awareness in their respective spheres of communication.

17:02These spheres of communication stretch from direct
17:05interpersonal communication to the cross-border virtual communication
17:10platforms of
17:11social and scientific networks.

17:14Change management and organization development teach us that the so-called
17:18soft factors like social behavior and qualification to manage processes
17:24are key to the success of change process.

Phases of Social Diffusion



17:30The significance of niche markets for economic development has already been
17:34noted
17:35in evolutionary economics. Transition research also assumes that for
17:41the most part
17:41transformation processes begin in niches
17:45where they are initially confined and almost
17:48invisible.

This marginality may have led to a significant
17:53underestimation or self-underestimation of the impact.

17:57However the decisive question is how isolated
18:01innovative impulses often initiated by
18:04minorities and alleged outsiders viewed as mad by the majority
18:08managed to be accorded cultural hegemony
18:11and succeed.

One aspect is that contemporary change agents in
18:16local and super-regional initiatives, non-governmental organizations and so on
18:21typically create role models to an attitude and behavior patterns,
18:26and action patterns and are capable of motivating
18:30others.

That's what we meant when we were saying we come from
18:33action to awareness.

18:37Considering the growing significance of strategic
18:40and/or sustainable consumerism the influence of smaller communion movement,
18:45so-called
18:46grassroots initiatives, is also under discussion.

18:50Initiatives such as these exist in various forms of losing associations
18:55from
18:55charitable associations to social enterprises.

18:59Local actors have the advantage of being able to refer to
19:03context bound knowledge and can appreciate what will work
19:07on their specific local conditions and what will not.

19:11This corresponds with the often documented
19:14connaissance that change process is initiated
19:17top-down frequently fail precisely
19:21because they do not take local knowledge into account.

19:25Taking local knowledge on board is a precondition for success
19:29in a specific cultural and social environment.

19:35Let's come to the question where and how to change agents
19:38are already shaping the transformation to date.

Transformation is nothing that
19:42we plan for tomorrow. Transformation is something
19:45that is already taking place and has already started long time
19:49ago.

So we have to look at change agents at different levels and in various
19:54fields.
19:56They can be found at all social levels and in various fields of activity.

19:59For example
20:01in thematically focused environmental citizens' initiatives
20:04and social protest movements,
20:07in governmental and non-governmental organizations including
20:10churches and foundations, or they can be scientists, engineers, town planners,
20:15architects.

Change agents can also be found in professional associations who
20:20make their members
20:22swear a kind of hippocratic oath, metaphorically speaking, from
20:26development corporation into care for the elderly and
20:29other aspects of voluntary and private sector entrepreneurial
20:33activities.

Finally, we would like to give you some examples (Fallstudien, im Wesentlichen der Elektrizitätswerke Schönau (EWS))

Anmerkung von J. Gruber:
Hier liegt "Das Schönauer Gefühl - Die Geschichte der Stromrebelln aus dem Schwarzwald".
Es ist ein Film des Fördervereins für umweltfreundliche Stromverteilung und Energieerzeugung Schönau (FuSS e.V., 2006).