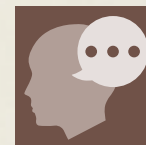


CAMINO

LEADERSHIP NOTES ON THE ROAD

LEANDRO HERRERO

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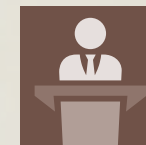
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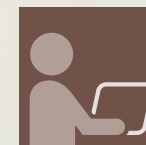
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CAMINO

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BASE CAMP

Philosopher Martin Heidegger requested before his death that the collection of his writings be called 'paths, not works'. He had used the word 'paths' several times. It provides, according to some interpreters of his 'works', an image of 'leading' but not necessarily to anywhere in particular; like many paths do in the woods.

The great Spanish poet Antonio Machado said it well in one of his most acclaimed poems. It would read in English something like this: 'Walker, there is no path, you make the path by walking'.

The allegory of the path, whether Machado's path making or Heidegger's 'paths, not works', is a good metaphor for leadership. I really believe that cartography and leadership are twin sisters.

Pilgrimage is also another good metaphor for the leadership journey, a journey that can be done in solitude but also accompanied by followers. The pilgrimage has both the personal and the collective, all in one. The journey contains all sorts of challenges and discoveries for the pilgrim, as it does for the leader. The difference in the pilgrimage is that it has a fixed destination. But arriving is never landing by helicopter. You have to walk, to go, to move, bit by bit, and then sense, learn, live.

Every year, about 300,000 people walk the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St James) a network of routes starting in France or Portugal, or Spain itself, and that ends in Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia, Spain. Probably a minority will walk the 'required' last 100 km on pure religious grounds. But most will talk later about the transformative effects of the Camino, the route, the pilgrimage.

Constantine P. Cavafy is one of my favourite poets, and *Ithaca* my favourite one. He describes the perils of the journey to the mythical Ithaca. A destination. 'Keep Ithaca always in your mind. Arriving there is what you're destined for'. But he says that most of those perils may be in your head. And then he recommends to take your time, not to rush, go slowly, stop in all the ports, learn from the locals, and buy their perfumes. And he warns, maybe when you finally get to Ithaca, you'll be disappointed. It has nothing to offer compared with all you've learnt and lived and changed. 'Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, you will have understood by then what these Ithacas mean'.

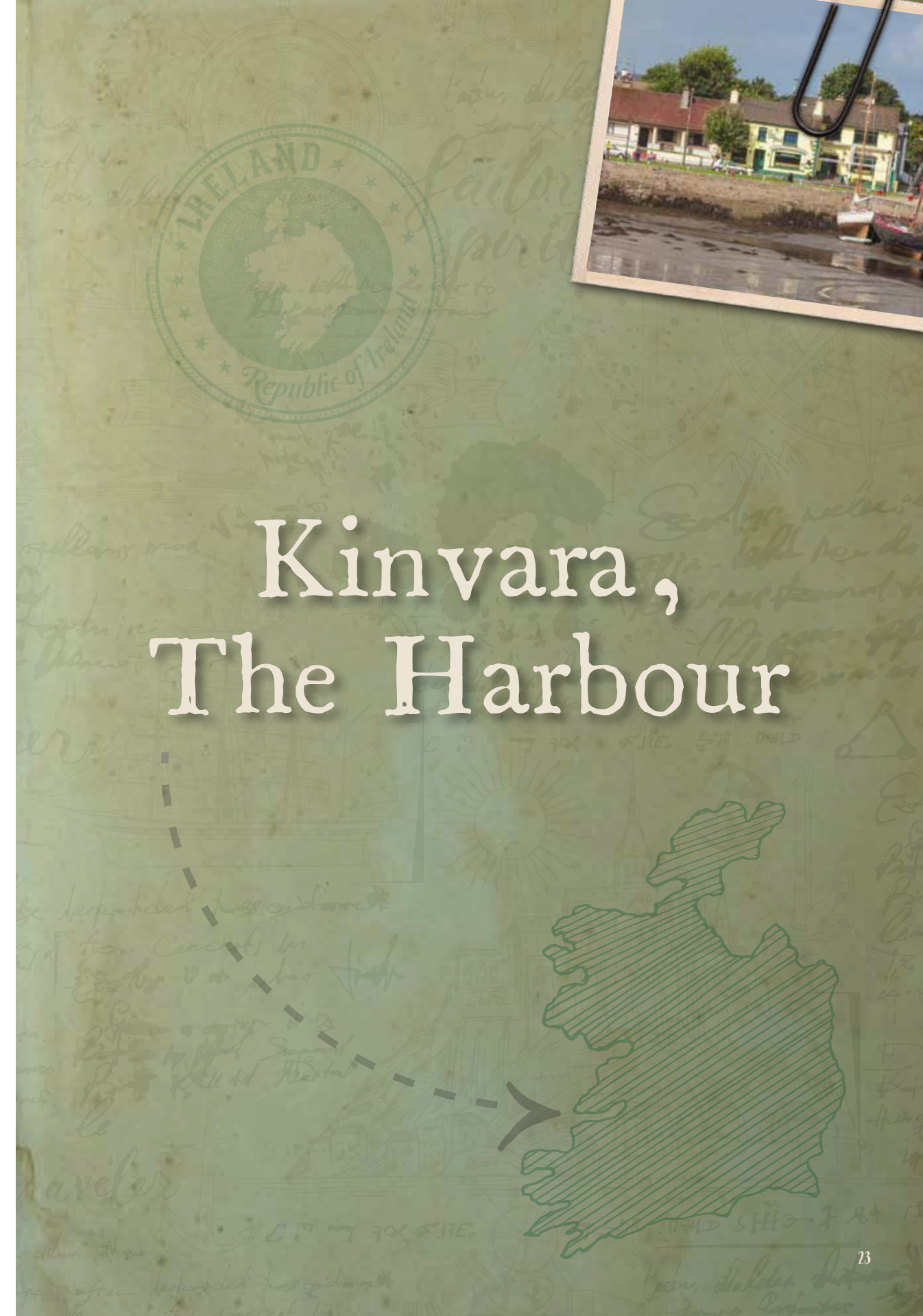
Good leaders are good path makers. Sometimes the journey is not clear. The destination may still be ambiguous. Again, it's all about cartography. For me, a leader is the cartographer in chief who, whilst walking with others, also becomes an architect and a builder. If this is about journeys, and maps, and building, and Cavafy's 'enter (ing) harbours you're seeing for the first time and stopping at Phoenician trading stations, to buy fine things', then there is almost no end to it.

On my imaginary journey inside my head, I took notes and articulated ideas. Most became a Daily Thought, a blog I have been running for years. This is a collection of those notes. Don't look for Harvard here, there are only harbours and other places that have generously adopted the content between them.

In this Camino of mine, I have also learnt to spot the real things, the fundamentals, the rocks. These are my Rules. A small collection of warnings, strong views and discoveries that I do not intend to be transferable. After all, the journey is not transferable, nobody can walk the Camino for you. Liberated by the idea that I don't need to impart universal wisdom to end in a sterile case study and that I can share these rules like one shares a meal without having to explain the chemistry of the ingredients, here they are, still full of dust from my journey. The one I have only just begun.

1. Earn credibility all the time. Stocks deplete easily.
2. Act as if you do not have anything to lose.
3. Be unreasonable in your demands, the reasonable ones are taken.
4. Detect bullshit and become proficient at detecting it. Then, protect yourself and others.
5. Exercise provocation with panache and respect. Aim at being appreciated, not hated, for it.
6. Don't be a provocateur, rebel, maverick, contrarian or challenger for the sake of it. Have a good 'because' ready.
7. Infect others, don't do it alone.
8. Be restless, be uncomfortable (and foolish and hungry and the rest...). They're the only things that confirm that you are alive.
9. Watch your ego. Most of the time it is not your friend. Rule of thumb, most of the time it's not about you.
10. Never settle for one possibility only.
11. Don't waste your time managing the 'inevitable'. There is a lot of 'possible' waiting for a leader. Look for what would not happen without you.
12. Seek unpredictable answers. The predictable ones are already seeking you.
13. Don't be against anything. Don't create enemies. The exceptions are mediocrity and dishonesty.
14. Write down your little bit of daily legacy in a secret little book.
15. There is only one test: what will you tell the children? (that you do, you did, you didn't do).
16. More important than what you say is what people hear when you are saying it.
17. Practice 'I don't know', possibly followed by 'and I don't think you know either, so let's figure it out'.
18. Make things happen first, then clean up the process for the next time. In that order.
19. The unexamined leadership, like the unexamined life, is not worth living.
20. Play as many roles as you want, but never a victim or an enemy. Both being 'victim' or 'enemy', requires your full consent.

Off to the next harbour.



Kinvara, The Harbour

Why people 'with leadership traits' don't become leaders

THE LATE JACK WELCH, EX CEO OF GE AND SUZY WELCH, JOURNALIST, AUTHOR, AND JACK'S WIFE WROTE ON LINKEDIN, IN ONE OF THEIR MULTIPLE WELL-PROMOTED ARTICLES, ABOUT THE FIVE ESSENTIAL TRAITS OF LEADERSHIP. HERE IT GOES:

From our experience, the first essential trait of leadership is positive energy – the capacity to go-go-go with healthy vigour and an upbeat attitude through good times and bad.

The second is the ability to energize others, releasing their positive energy, to take any hill.

The third trait is edge – the ability to make tough calls, to say yes or no, not maybe.

The fourth trait is the talent to execute – very simply, get things done.

Fifth and finally, leaders have passion. They care deeply. They sweat; they believe'.

So, there you are: positive energy, ability to energise others, edge, talent to execute and passion. The five traits of leadership. Positive energy and ability to energise others are 'hard wired' or 'personality'. Passion is also inborn. The other two are more teachable and trainable.

218,759 views, 12,682 likes and 707 comments for the original LinkedIn post. 'Great post', 'totally agree' and 'Please also add...' are quite general comments.

Difficult to disagree. Imagine that we were to say that leaders have low energy, do not energise people, have no edge, don't know how to execute and have no passion. No article.

The trouble with these assertions that only people with the Welch surname and associated to GE can get away with, is that they are meaningless. Nobody can disagree. They could only become more solid (from their present state of gas, not even liquid) if you can tell what makes people within these traits become leaders, (and how, would also be helpful) and, more importantly, why probably many, many others with the same traits will never become a leader.

Yes, my hypothesis is that for each person with positive energy, ability to energise others, edge, talent to execute and passion, who is or has become a leader, there are many times where more people with the same traits don't become a leader.

Now let's throw in another five: clear communication of a destiny, ability to bring others along, stand on a

model of 'servant, that is serving others, humility, and ability to learn and change gears fast when needed. Another five?

By the way, there is no definition of frame of 'leadership' in that article, so I imagine the Welches have many cases and situations in mind, but my guess is that they are talking business organizations.

For the record, on the package of positive energy, ability to energise others, edge, talent to execute and passion, the following people I know fit the bill: the hairdresser at the end of the street (I don't know whether she leads people but she has lots and lots of customers; does that count?), a local priest I know, one of my kids' teachers (but he is a real pain though, and creates more antibodies than recognition), Mary in the Post Room of my client's HQ, oh, yes, Mary, and the manager of my local supermarket.

‘Self, us and now’: the very old, uncomfortable trio for a modern look at leadership

HILLEL THE ELDER, OR ‘RABBI’ HILLEL, THE JEWISH LEADER WHO DIED IN 10 CE, IS REMEMBERED OUTSIDE THE JEWISH TRADITION BY HIS SAYING ‘IF I AM NOT FOR MYSELF WHO IS FOR ME? AND BEING FOR MY OWN SELF, WHAT AM ‘I’? AND IF NOT NOW, WHEN?’.

There are some variations of the saying depending on translation liberties, but the three pillars ‘myself’, ‘only about myself’ and ‘now’ have remained intact. It is often simplified as “If not us, who?” If not now, when?”, and, as a commentator put it, ‘it involves discussion from Hillel to George W. Romney to Robert F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama to Saturday Night Live’. In other words... the triad has resisted time magnificently and it constitutes perhaps the simplest model of leadership thinking.

It starts with reflection about oneself. The first time you read it, it even sounds a bit selfish and self-centric. But it isn’t. It’s looking inside oneself. The second part is very direct and bold. It does not ask for who you are but ‘what’, as in what kind of beast? The third part, is a part in a hurry: so, if not now, when on earth?

Marshall Ganz, father of modern social activism and leadership for collective action (Kennedy School of Government) uses a matching trio when it comes to the use of storytelling as part of that leadership development. He talks about ‘the story of self’ (personal introspection, testimonial, sharing with others); ‘the story of us’ (the collective, the group, the activists) and ‘the story of now’ (the sense of urgency, the now). These are Hillel’s translations.

This terribly simple trio has helped me enormously in the framing of my leadership work. It also reminds me of the need for us in managerial and leadership positions of some sort, to tap into historical sources of wisdom, as opposed to, say, the Twitter feed!

Of course, all this can be trivialised, packaged and Mcdonaldised, and yes, since ‘all that is solid can melt in the air’, (Rabbi Marx?) all that is wisdom can become a car sticker.

BUT FOR ME, THE ‘IF NOT US, WHO; IF NOT NOW, WHEN?’ IS A CONSTANT CALL TO ACTION, SMALL OR BIG. A SHOT OF MOTIVATION DIFFICULT TO RESIST. ‘SELF, US AND NOW’, COULD BE THE BEST LEADERSHIP SLOGAN IF YOU NEED ONE. I HAVE ADOPTED IT.

There is something only you can do: be yourself

Everything else can be outsourced

**THERE IS SOMETHING ONLY YOU CAN LIVE: YOUR LIFE.
SOCRATES SAID THAT 'THE UNEXAMINED LIFE IS NOT WORTH
LIVING'. BEING ONESELF, LIVING YOUR LIFE AND EXAMINING IT,
ALL THESE THINGS NEED REFLECTION TIME. CALL IT
HOW YOU WANT, BUT IT'S 'STOP AND THINK'.**

Reflection is for me the key ingredient of leadership. A super doer, super achiever, super energetic leader with little reflection attached is not a good leader. An energy-sucking machine is not the same as a strong leadership.

So, what's reflection time? You can have it in many forms and shapes. The universal way is a myth. Some people need to disappear to a remote and exotic land to do that. Great! Well, great for them if it works. Other people, more prosaic ways of life, need 'time outs'. But not all time out is reflective. It may be restful, or energising, but not necessarily reflective. Long journeys or short ones, you need to find your way.

There is a tradition in many spiritual writings (and, as such, attributed to many authors) that says that the true spiritual journey is one inch long. That is, look inside your head. My geometrical version of this is that instead of a 360 degree feedback system, so overused and abused in

management; people need to learn the 45 degree feedback first: look yourself in the eye in the mirror. Small angle, short journey, you see? All manageable!

To be reflective is to ask questions. It sounds simple but, since we have been educated to produce answers (look at the state of current education systems) more than in the art of questioning, it may be harder than we think. It's inevitable that some psychological conditions such as lack of distractions are required. Again, spiritual traditions of many sorts practice the 3S: silence, stillness and solitude. These are the hardest things you can ask many leaders to do. Trust me, I try. I run a leadership retreat based on them. In the absence of perfect conditions, I ask leaders to practice very small tricks as 'initiation' (!): drive with the radio off is a very popular one.

There is no obvious substitute for reflection in leadership. Perhaps the first steps are about reflecting on all these topics! The best books on leadership are books of questions. The best leadership development programmes are programmes full of questions. One of the greatest investments we can make in personal and professional development is the art of questioning.

**REFLECTION AND QUESTIONING ARE BROTHERS.
AGAIN, NON-OUTSOURCEABLE. NOBODY CAN REFLECT
OR QUESTION FOR YOU.**

My contradictions are my friends, and they come with me as leader

WE PRAISE PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THEIR 'CLARITY OF MIND'. WE SAY, 'SHE IS A GOOD MANAGER, SHE KNOWS WHAT SHE WANTS, AND WE KNOW WHAT SHE WANTS'. WE APPRECIATE, WELCOME AND, PERHAPS, EVEN EDIFY CERTAINTY. 'THAT MANAGER'S CERTAINTY GIVES US COMFORT'. WE SAY: 'IF EVERYBODY WAS AS CLEAR AS SHE IS, WE WOULD BE IN A BETTER PLACE'. CLARITY AND CERTAINTY ARE SUDDENLY MARRIED.

The trouble with certainty is that, whilst it spreads and injects comfort, it may be simply misleading. In a complex world, full of uncertainty, some of the people who are apparently blessed with 'clarity' and 'certainty' may be just wrong! Or maybe not.

In any case, it is more 'dangerous' and more politically (managerially)

incorrect to declare your doubts or undecided views. Having doubts sounds like a lack of clarity about things. So, it takes even more leadership maturity to hold contradictory views, acknowledge them, and avoid a 'premature closure' declaring a position absolutely and unequivocally correct. Doubts? Contradictory views? Mmm!

I have always loved F Scott Fitzgerald's quote: 'The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function'.

Many people are too intolerant to contradictions, mostly those of other people. As leaders, we are 'expected' not to have them. We are expected to project 'clarity, confidence and certainty', a 'package' traditionally associated to good stewardship.

To acknowledge our own contradictions and even, dare I say, share them, makes us vulnerable. We have also been told that vulnerability is not good. Certainly not for a good leader! But a child is vulnerable, a person in a new relationship is vulnerable, a leader pulled in many directions makes him vulnerable.

To be human is to accept being vulnerable. A non-vulnerable

leader is a robot. Trust, by the way, is linked to vulnerability. 'I trust you' means I can be vulnerable and you will not abuse me.

Bringing your own contradictions to the table, your own clouded or untidy areas of thought, your own uncertainties, is a first pass to showing the human side of leadership (is there any other?). Your people will have a human role model of leadership, one that anybody (other than robots) can relate to.

BRINGING YOUR OWN CONTRADICTIONS TO THE TABLE IS BRINGING YOUR BEST FRIENDS TO DINNER, ONE TO WHICH YOU HAVE ALSO INVITED THE PEOPLE REPORTING TO YOU.

My shopping list for new leaders :

1. DEPOLARISATION

F. Scott Fitzgerald is one of many who have described this, but his articulation is the one widely quoted: 'The test of a first rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function'.

It turns out that there are some cognitive studies that tend to validate this ability, whether related to 'intelligence' or not, as something of great importance in 'cognitive power' terms.

For me, the opposite is something we are all seeing everywhere: polarisation. The extremes or the tendency to the extremes. In political ideas, in society, and also in positions of views and behaviours in organizations. This or that. You can't have both, we are told. We have built an entire management system that is bipolar: cost or differentiation, quality or speed, leader or manager. It does not hold water today.

Depolarising people's views is a key transformative skill of leadership. Having a critical view of those poles and being able to bring others to assess them on their own merits, is a gem of a skill. 'The ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function' may or may not be first rate intelligence, but it sure is first rate leadership, circa 2020 AT (Anno Trumpini).

The key, however, is not to default to the 'halfway fallacy' either. The idea that, systematically, one has to agree that somehow the truth is somewhere in the middle. Most of the time it isn't. Which is not a popular assertion.

Note that the sentence reads 'ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function', not 'the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind and find a lower common denominator'.

Depolarising is de-dramatising. It's cleaning up an emotionally charged idea confronting another emotionally charged idea about to reach a bland, plain vanilla common ground. Once uncritically landed in that common ground, you are stuck with its anxiolytic effect. 'All is fine now, in fact we are saying the same with different words'. Most of the time this is not true. We are not saying the same at all, but our minds are crying for mercy.

Depolarising is humanising. It's cleaning up the 'ad hominem' dust (character assassination) to bring the conversation to facts, truths and own merits.

Depolarising is re-polarising. It's acknowledging the poles but finding a non-plain-vanilla-common-lower-denominator ground, perhaps higher purpose for both poles.

And yes, still retain 'ability to function', or perhaps going beyond that to a new, unknown common territory in which the poles don't see that confrontational after all.

2. REFRAMING

I have referred before to George Lakoff's work and his little book *Don't think of an elephant*, which makes the point of how easy is to think of an elephant. If you want to learn reframing, read Lakoff.

On my shopping list of a-little-unconventional skills in the enormous supermarkets attributed to leadership, reframing scores very high.

We need leaders who have less answers and more ability to ask questions. But asking questions is an art, and the whole 'reframing plus critical thinking' lenses are more needed than ever.

1. The question on the table is A, what if the question were B?
2. We are about to make decision X. What are the preconceived ideas that we bring to the decision?
3. We all agree on Z. Are we agreeing too much?
4. We talk about the cost of doing N. What is the cost of not doing it?
5. We have a plan to succeed. Can we create a plan to completely screw up and compare?
6. Let's brainstorm for very bad ideas.
7. How much time do we dedicate to problem solving? What is it that we are building?
8. We have a list of competitors to compare ourselves with. Can we compare ourselves with anybody not on the list?
9. Can we compare all our 'why we are doing this?' Let's compare our own reasons. Let's get all the invisible whys visible.
10. What is the question behind the question? Why is X asking this? What if she is asking a different question but it has just come up disguised as this one?

These are 10 examples that require only practice to make them live. Not a special brain but going to the critical thinking gym frequently. Accountants relax: the cost of this is zero, the benefits infinite.

If leaders take upon themselves the role of master reframing practitioners, others will see it, and hear it, and feel it, and will copy, and will follow.

Taking the reality around us at face value only facilitates automatic pilot answers. We will never learn and will apply standard answers to predictable questions.

The Leader reframer may make some people restless and uncomfortable. And this is precisely a good outcome of leadership for our days.

3. BRIDGE BUILDERS

The word Pontifex (Pontiff in English) is the term associated with the Pope (Twitter account...err.. @pontifex, what else?).

I love this term for what it means. Historically, this has been equal to High Priest in Roman culture, a position occupied by patricians, never a plebian, until 254 BCE according to my search. But the etymology, the origins of the word, is fascinating. It's a combination of 'pons' (bridge) and 'fex' (maker or producer). So, literally, what it means is 'one who builds bridges'.

On my shopping list for new leaders, I want this in: bridge builder, broker between A and B, connecting ideas and people. OK, let's stretch it: making impossible associations, declaring and seeking connection, not isolation, mastering brokership, unifier.

Most good pontifex-leaders I know seem to work in the background. They are not the usual suspects with the PowerPoint pack. In some cases

that I know well, they are 'the second', not the first. The ones who facilitate the human encounters behind the Visible First.

Social Network Analysis (SNA), as we practice it, finds these individuals sometimes hidden more or less somewhere in the organizational chart jungle. Semi-invisible trees that the forest hides.

Whatever their position in the social network (which any organization is), what I have called in my book, *Homo Imitans* (our social GPS), bridge builders (pontifex) are a gem. A few of them solve an enormous amount of organizational dysfunctions.

Being at the very top, or close by, in the organization will make that brokership more visible and it's bound to be imitated as a role model of good leadership.

Yes, there are, of course, the bridge-builders and the bridge-burners, I know. But building is for me the quintessence of leadership. When many moons ago we in The Chalfont Project chose to call ourselves 'Organization Architects', I had more than one eyebrow raised around me, friends and colleagues. It was for a reason. Very simply, my obsession with 'building', as opposed to solving, fixing, changing, transforming or any other term in the Organizational Development Thesaurus.

I am not a natural networker, as in cocktail networking. And this characteristic in my list is not about this. I am not talking about the multiple and skilful networker, navigator in the jungle of weak and strong ties of ten new networkracies. These are, by definition, the new employees, the sailors in the new idea of 'work'. Leadership goes beyond that. Perhaps from the visible tribal cocktail campfires, to the less visible connecting the unconnected key people.

Perhaps I could say that Bridge Building is 'making it happen' by closing the encounter of otherwise distant people. And distant may be the

next office, or somebody in New Zealand, or two people/clusters/units/organizations that did not know they could connect, or did not feel the need, or combinations.

Bring the bridge engineers in anyway.

4. INVITATIONAL PEOPLE

I have held the view for many years that management is 'by invitation'.

For example, I am against Leadership Teams composed exclusively of the direct reports of the leader. A Leadership Team should be composed of people invited to be part of the Leadership team, not by the opportunistic presence in a particular geographical GPS position in the organizational chart. The Leadership Team could include, indeed, all direct reports and/or some, and/or invited advisers, or members of other teams, and dare I say external people, similar to the function of Non-Executive Directors on Anglo-Saxon Boards.

Being a member of a Leadership Team should not be an automatic entitlement given to a particular box in the organizational chart. Yes, that automatic pilot composition is handy in terms of sharing information, for example, but that's all. Having all the generals in the room helps. I get it.

OK, this is a conversation for another day. However, it's linked with the fourth theme on my shopping list: invitation.

Early in 2006 in my book, *The Leader with Seven Faces*, I talked about the invitational language (or lack of it) in leadership. 'Come with me, let's do it, I need you, join me, let's cook it together, invite Jim', etc. Most of our leadership language is factual weather forecast type.

Religious traditions, certainly the Christian one, have invitational language embedded. Come with me.

On my shopping list for new leaders, I put high in the list leaders-who-invite, as opposed to leaders who explain, or dictate, or read the weather forecast of the Strategic Plan. Come with me. Join me.

I remember the famous pitch from Steve Jobs to the then CEO of Coca Cola, John Sculley: 'Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling brown water, or do you want to change the world?' Sculley joined Apple as CEO. And then he did not change the world, but changed Jobs, firing him. Many moons ago I spoke to John Sculley about that paradox in a technology Congress party in the US. He did not find my observation amusing. At all. But he signed my copy of his book *Odyssey*.

Invite. Come with me. I need you. Would you like to change the world? I know some may find this a bit of a cliché. I am finding these days that more of the old clichés are more solid than the plain vanilla current leadership discourse.

(If you are in a leadership position in a corporation and find 'change the world' irritating, cliché and childish, you should 'reconsider your position', as used by political language).

We invite less than we should. We either take the guests at the party for granted, or they are already there occupying their chairs, or we tell them what to do, or read them the weather forecast. We have lots of uninvited people in management and leadership teams. We need to reclaim 'invitation'.

RSVP.

5. MOBILIZERS

Managing? Leading? Probably one of the worst dichotomies ever invented. Another day.

Engaging? Motivating? Committing?

Consider Mobilizing! It means...what it means. Get people in motion, act, stop the paralysis, the reservations, the permissions. It contains engaging, motivating and the rest.

Mobilizing also means organizing. Using language from social movements, 'organizing for collective action'.

In our Viral Change™ programmes, there is a particular role called 'Mobilizers' who are colleagues coordinating pockets of grassroots activities.

Mobilizing also means a road, a map, a direction, a pace, a sense of destiny. It also resonates with collective energy and common purpose. It refers to a sense of duty of addressing injustice, or simply shaping something better for the future. Hopefully leaving behind some legacy.

It's at the core of large scale behavioural and cultural change. That means culture. That means culture as a social movement. That's what my team does for a living.

On my shopping list for new leaders, my last in the list is Mobilizing. Mobilizer, leaders who invite, bridge builders, reframers and depolarisers, (as per my previous four) forgive my language, are a good bunch. I love their company.

