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**In celebration of actionable theory
(trying to practice what we preach!)**

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Introduction

Despite Lewin's dictum "There is nothing so practical as a good theory" (Sandelands, 1990), our research experience with common good organisations (CGOs) showed that many practitioners were unaware of the power that actionable theory can bring to effective practice. 'Theory' was something outside their everyday experience and seemingly unrelated to the practicalities of organisational transition and change.

The relationship of theory to practice and the extent to which theory can be readily put into practice has long been debated in academic circles. According to Gabriel and others the debate is still unresolved (Sandelands, 1990; Gabriel, 2002). As OD academics, however, we saw this was a contribution we could make to the common good: to bring research-based, actionable theory to Third Sector practitioners (managers, staff and board members). Our book *Stepping Through Transitions: management, leadership and governance in not-for-profit organisations* (2013) set out to address this. Our five-year study involved interviews with more than 80 practitioners: managers, board members, consultants, academics and commentators across at least 40 organisations. The result was an empirically-grounded, theoretically based model: the CGO Development Model (McMorland and Eraković 2013) which is being actively embraced by readers and workshop practitioners throughout NZ.

Our purpose in this conference paper is to

- Define (and celebrate) what we mean by 'actionable theory' and how our model fits this endeavour
- Discuss the value of a generic development model for organisations in the midst of change and transition
- Revisit some of the insights gained from our NZ study and anticipate some developmental trends CGOs will face in the future.

Actionable theory: recipes or maps?

Stepping Through Transitions was written intentionally for practitioners. Our research started off as an exploration of 'good governance', but it very soon became evident in the stories of development we were being told, that there patterns of change and transition that needed unravelling beyond the traditional concepts of management, leadership and governance, and that further concepts could evoke understanding amongst practitioners of the range of complexities they were experiencing. As academics trained in organisational theory and development, we saw life-cycle elements in the case study histories we were gathering, but also how mission, the defining purpose of a CGO, was being expressed in new ways through changing structural configurations as the organisation grew in size or complexity.

Throughout our study we wanted to provide a map of development which practitioners could use in their own way and for their own purposes. At no time were we attempting to provide a 'recipe for action', nor to write (yet another) book about management, leadership and governance extolling a particular perspective. Nor were we reporting on yet another academic research project. Our concern was with the dynamics of *organisational* development. We wanted to map process as well as structure, suggest some explanatory tools, as well as stimulate understanding through application (theory-in-action). Though we inevitably started from the legacy of our respective academic trainings, interrogation of the data for patterns of change and processes of transition meant that the conceptual framework we eventually adopted emerged from, and was informed by our respondents' stories, just as our interpretation of those stories was informed by the concepts we brought to the interpretive task. We settled on three conceptual 'building blocks': five stages of development, five levels of work and five key concepts that have to be taken into account in the processes of transition and change. These are discussed briefly in a later section.

Taking an early stance on the power of theory was problematic: initial reviewers doubted our ability, as academics, to appeal to practitioners; publishers turned us down because it was 'too theoretical' and did not provide simple recipes for action. The challenge for us was to hold true to the conceptual basis of our work and to find ways to explain new ideas that excited readers and workshop participants that provided a platform for action. This meant finding our 'voice' and finding ways of turning abstract ideas into language that practitioners could use.

'A theory, a piece of information, an idea or even a story may become actionable because of the way it is disseminated, rather than because of something ontologically or epistemologically intrinsic to it.' (Gabriel, 2002: 136)

A year on since publication, we have had enthusiastic reviews from practitioners and academics, and strong affirmation from dozens of workshop participants that our **Common Good Development Model** is 'very useful and applicable' in many contexts.

These affirmations are great for sustaining our sense that this was a worthwhile project, but neither book nor workshop is where 'theory' informs action. That can only happen as practitioners make the framework meaningful for themselves, and as understanding and insight deepen, and their mastery of action, and the scope of their practice also grow. In this sense, we follow Brown (1976) and Morgan (1986) seeing theory as metaphor/map rather than explanation. Explanation *denotes* rather than *evokes*, preventing readers/participants 'from becoming actively and imaginatively involved in the process and thereby interferes with his/her grasp of what is going on' (Sandelands, 1990:253). Gabriel (2002) argues that organisational theories are used by practitioners in a variety of ways to meet their own purposes. He suggests theories get adopted through improvisation and elaboration, by people applying sets of open-ended ideas to

their own situations. The actionable component is therefore the creative outcome of practitioners' own adaptations and insights, appropriating a 'bricolage' of ideas which may be new to them, or name things intuitively understood, but not surfaced conceptually.

'Theories are not programmes of action or solutions to problems, but may become such through creative improvisation and bricolage. They represent a stock of potential solutions to future problems and a source of confidence once used in a free and flexible manner.' (Gabriel, 2002: 146)

Model development as a process of bricolage – a three dimensional dynamic

Our process of 'model' development is also a bricolage of concepts drawn and adapted to our own purposes and tested in the field. We interrogated our data, sought to understand patterns and processes therein, and looked for ways to understand and explain what we saw. The marrying together of three different conceptual frameworks or building blocks wasn't an easy task. We had to satisfy ourselves of the intellectual integrity of this unorthodox 'menage à trois' to address our particular purpose – namely to provide ways of conceptualising the systemic dynamic of organisational change that made sense to common good practitioners.

Each conceptual component of our model addresses a practical aspect of organisational design and elaboration.

Building block 1. Stages of development

As our first theoretical building block, we identified five stages of development, naming them, from the data, in terms of purpose and process:

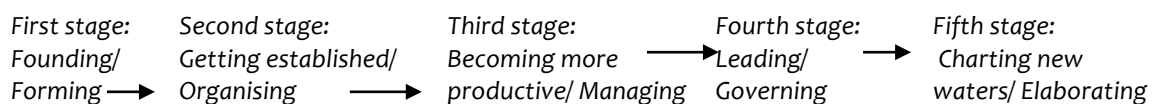


Figure 1 Stages of organisational development in CGOS

'Stages of development' is a theoretical frame employed in organisation theory to explain organisational evolution. It is an essential element of a life-cycle approach, according to which organisations undergo four or five major phases: birth (initiation), mid-life (growth), maturity (consolidation), and rejuvenation or decline. Different authors have contributed their own explanations for this pattern of change emphasising the problems of (non)linearity of the development process, unequal duration of each stage and different pace of transition from one stage to another. The classical works of Greiner (1972), Greenwood and Hinings (1988; 1996), Nelson and Winter (1982), Quinn (1980), Tushman, Newman and Romanelli (1986), Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) and Van

de Ven and Poole (1995) provided informative and useful contributions for our purpose and audience.

From this literature we adopted an evolutionary model of organisational development according to which organisations undergo gradual, continuous and incremental process of change. We felt this model best fit most changes in CGOs. This does not mean that the organisations do not also experience strategic, transformational or disruptive changes. They do, but such changes have to be implemented through careful negotiations with internal and external stakeholders.

CGOs have specific characteristics that not only make them distinctive from other types of organisations, but also define their patterns of change. One of these characteristics is that CGOs are profoundly dedicated to their mission. Radical and rapid change that is not mandated by stakeholders may affect the intrinsic values of the organisation, meet with individual and collective resistance and, more importantly, may ultimately be destructive of what the organisation stands for. Characteristics such as a multiplicity of stakeholders, interests and accountabilities, and the fragility of most CGOs' organisational fabric (e.g. uncertainty about revenue streams and reliance on volunteers) further support a perspective on change that emphasises the contingent and evolving nature of CGOs.

The stages model gives a way of thinking about movement across time, helps us understand the importance of organisational history and memory, and points to how the purpose for which the organisation was set up, gets (re)interpreted and (re)enacted in different times and in response to changing external factors.

Rigorous demarcation of each stage is not possible. Movement into a new stage is often well under way before we really notice that significant change is already occurring. Demarcation is less important than understanding the challenges and importance of each period. Our contribution has been to identify the transitional aspects of such movement and flow.

In practical terms, organisations working with these ideas have reported how useful it is for them to revisit their history, to assess the legacy (and burden) of past decisions, and to make informed choices about continuity or change in practice and culture.

The second conceptual building block helped identify the organisational elements that change impacts.

Building block 2. 5C concepts

It is often difficult to pick out the significant indicators of change and where interventions can be made. From our data we discerned five factors, 5 Cs:

capacity, capability, composition, context and complexity. We found these were relevant at each transition, though the relative importance of each factor was determined by the actual stage of development.

There are multiple, often conflicting, definitions of each of these terms in the literature and public policy documents. *Capacity building* and *community capacity building* in particular have become potent terms in international public policy developments over the past 10-15 years (Kaplan 2000). *Capacity* and *capability* are frequent used synonymously (see for example Collins Dictionary) but we follow Jaques (1989) and Stamp (1993) in differentiating between the two terms. We define *capacity* as the scope of action an organisation can undertake and the resources needed to deliver on its mission determined by its systems, processes, and structures, (a usage echoed by the Office of the Auditor-General, NZ in their discussion of public funding of capacity building (oag.govt.nz/2006/funding-ngos/scenario1.htm accessed 22/10/14). Having the appropriate infrastructure (capacity) to deliver on your goal depends on the activities of the present, and on the sustainability of resources needed to deliver on that goal in the future. *Capability* we define in terms of the motivation, mental processing ability, skills, knowledge and healthy personal attributes that individuals bring to their engagement with the organisation and its purpose. Capability is both an individual and a collective attribute (Swieringa and Wierdsma 2003). Jaques and Stamp both relate capability differences closely with preferred levels of work and tolerance of complexity. (Jaques and Cason 1994, Stamp and Stamp, 1993)

We posit that capacity and capability have to be understood situationally to be useful for practical application. Without the specific referents of organisational purpose and developmental intention, capacity and capability are ungrounded terms. Organisational capacity to do what? Individual and collective capability of whom to do what? Organisational change literature has long established the importance of understanding context (Lawrence and Lorsch 1986, Van de Ven and Poole 1995, Pettigrew 1990, Weick and Quinn 1999). Such studies can be differentiated from multiple OD and strategic planning tools which alert managers and board members to social, economic and political impacts within their current and likely future contexts. Getting the right *composition* of skills, knowledge, interests and networks available to organisations is a further dimension of importance, especially as responsiveness to change requires new approaches and perspectives, (Iecovich, 2005; Bradshaw, Murray and Wolpin, 1992; Bradshaw and Fredette, 2011).

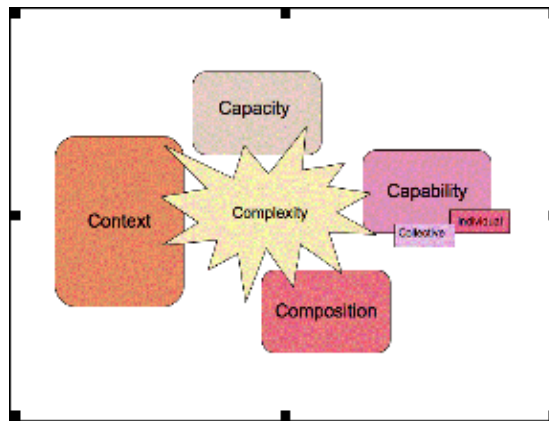


Figure 2 5Cs - signifiers of transition

The dynamic of change is increasing complexity (Jaques, 1989; Jaques and Clement, 1991; Stacey, 2001; Meek, De Ladurantey, & Newell, 2007). In organisational design terms this requires recognition of new configurations of work roles, and the formalising of broader, deeper desired outcomes, discernable over extended time frames. One of the most debilitating aspects of current public service policy is the insistence on measuring ‘outcomes’ long before any tangible results can possibly be seen. Central to our model is the need to articulate what ‘work’ means when a developmental perspective is adopted, and intentionality is expressed across a range of time frames, from the immediate present to 5, 10 or even 25 years hence. For this, we introduced building block 3: Levels of work.

Building block 3. Levels of Work

‘Getting the right people to do the right work at the right time’ is a universal organisational issue. To address this issue of organisational design, we adapted work from Elliot Jaques and Gillian Stamp reframing some of their terminology to apply specifically to the common good sector. The Levels of Work Model (Jaques and Clement, 1991) shows what new work is required as organisational complexity increases. This concept of work is much broader than tasks. It refers to the gamut of responsibilities carried by people charged with delivering results over different timeframes; that is, putting mission into action. The longer the timespan, the greater the cognitive abilities required to handle the increased levels of complexity and intention, the ‘bigger’ the role. Capacity and capability are situational to the level and size of the work role: the right capability has to be available to fulfil the demands of increasingly complex work. Whether this is individual or collective work, the requisite capabilities have to be defined and developed.

Level	Timeframe	Theme	Typical Roles
5	5-10 years	New directions, purposeful intent	Governing Body & CEO
4	3-5 years	Innovation, change and continuity	Senior Executives and Boards
3	1-2 years	Effective work practices and systems, productivity	Service leaders
2	12 months	Effective co-ordination, collective improvement and efficiency	Team leaders
1	3-6 months	Purposeful activity and service contribution	Frontline staff

Figure 3 Levels of Work framework

The Levels of Work tool gives people a way to map the actual work they are doing, against the work that needs to be done for their level of responsibility and assigned discretion. Collectively the organisation sees its own strengths and weaknesses: gaps and overlaps, and areas of over-stretch or under-development. For many organisations in our workshops, this tool above all others, freed people to discuss what was needed to make effective structural change without being personally focused on individual capability.

CGO Development model

By combining these three conceptual platforms we were able to devise a generic model of organisational development for CGOs, and to populate in broad terms, the sorts of issues that need to be addressed at each stage, each box in the model, providing some examples of interplay of the 5cs at each level of work (see figure 4 attached). The model attempts to characterise increasing complexity and requisite organisational responses to it, and adds weight by showing how the five dimensions (5Cs) play out in each stage and level. Specifically we highlight the tensions that arise from the availability (or lack) of capacity and capability, and the implications for changes in composition and context as complexity increases. The playing out of these forces resulted in our insight that, developmentally, transitional change has to happen laterally, as well as vertically, if organisations are to remain well-grounded in appropriate capability.

The model is a heuristic device, a *paragramme*, to use Gabriel's term (2002). It is designed to encourage investigation and learning, rather than prescribing recipes for action. Its validity is in its usefulness, rather than its exactitude. We see this very much as a dynamic model that comes alive when people play with the ideas in the process of application. We want to emphasise what organisations are 'becoming' (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) rather than what they have been; where intentional actions are taking them, rather than how mission has been expressed in the past and how the development of strategic imagination is an essential

ingredient of sustainability if managers, leaders and governors are to discern what to do in situations where the answers cannot easily be discovered from continuities with the past or present.

Our theoretical assumptions suggested, and our empirical data confirmed that the complexity of work increases at each stage and embedded level. Lack of congruence between capacity and capability is a major source of difficulty for organisations unable to adapt to changing complexities. Vigilant attention to changes in context and climate is essential for successful navigation of transitions. These insights encouraged us to indicate skills, knowledge and relationships specific to the not-for-profit sector and to show when and where the development of these skills needs to occur, laterally and vertically, in the process of transition. We do not know if individual and collective capability in strategic and generative thinking is an inherent or learned capability, but we do know that people's potential can be stimulated through great realisation of transitional processes.

Though we do not have direct evidence of individuals' responses in fields of practice, we do see how people embrace the CGO Model in our workshops. We also get anecdotal feedback on how they make their own adaptations and applications. Several of our participants had some prior experience of the *Levels of Work* framework (through earlier work with us). Promotion or job changes bring fresh opportunities: it is interesting to have these participants bring new colleagues and board members to our workshops in order to introduce concepts they "have been using for years" into their new workplaces. Many experienced CEOs readily embrace the model because of its comprehensiveness. It gives them a language with which to engage staff and board members in structural, non-personal ways, and a map of where new directions may take them strategically.

Some people with less organisational development experience find the full model a bit daunting, but respond enthusiastically to one or two of the Building Blocks. Providing a way to map one's own level of work and size of job is often the most useful beginning point for organisations looking to restructure, expand or retrench.

Stages of Development is a simple concept to embrace. Being able to identify the stage the organisation has reached enables people to assess progress to this point and whether or not further development is desirable or necessary. Marrying the *Stages* and the 5Cs gives people a way of anchoring the experience of transition. It gives clarity about where the issues lie – organisational capacity issues require completely different solutions from individual or collective capability shortcomings. When an organisation is in disarray, it is sometimes necessary to go back and work on issues from previous stages. The concept of transition, both lateral and vertical, enables managers and boards to take intentional actions in the right places: using the 5Cs it is easy to see if structural changes (capacity building, composition realignment, responsiveness to context) are required (vertical changes) or if lateral input in the form of new or further

training and development (capability building across all levels) is a required developmental step. The interdependence of the 5Cs adds to the emergence of complexity and highlights the multiple sites where intentional action is required.

Practitioners applying these ideas, in their own ways, help build and strengthen individual CGOs and the sector at large. Our contribution to sector development has been to share the insights we gained from our study. We are also challenged to continue conceptual improvement of our model and its application across fields of practice. The feedback we get from our readers, practitioners and fellow teachers show that this is very much a work in progress.

Insights gained from our NZ study

At the time of publication, we identified five major development themes across the range of our respondent organisations:

1. The need for continuous reappraisal of mission. As an organisation adapts to internal and external changes, so its statement of mission needs to be expressed in terms relevant to its time and people. In most cases, this will encompass an increasingly wider view, or a more long-term ambition. Mission as cause galvanises action in the Founding/Forming stage; later, it provides a focus for identity and credibility. In the later stages, mission articulates governing and guiding principles. Mission determines direction and stakeholder interests. It is also the yardstick against which risk can be evaluated. Review of mission requires assessment of its ongoing accuracy and relevance to the organisation at each stage, and evaluation of the congruence between what an organisation espouses to be, and what it actually is.

2. The importance of adequate infrastructure to support and be informed by frontline work.

It is easy in organisations undergoing change for managerial enthusiasm to go faster than frontline people can accommodate. In most of our examples, we were conscious of speed wobbles, brought about by lack of appropriate gearing of changes across the various levels of work. Maintenance of infrastructure is essential if systems and processes are to keep pace with the need for good communication. This is particular true of review processes and feedback systems, where information from the frontline is essential for strategic consideration.

3. The challenge of relationship management. Change is expressed in both task and relationship, in formal structures as well as informal networks of connections. Because organisations are set up to do things, the task focus is often dominant. Relationship building and relationship management are, however, the dynamic that binds people together into collective effort. Relationship requirements change over the lifespan of an organisation. The informality of connection that sufficed at start-up, is insufficient for complex organisations, which must devise ways to address the lack of face-to-face engagement earlier enjoyed.

There is an inevitable tension when formality is seen as the introduction of hierarchical authority, against the desire for (and satisfaction of) being expressively and emotionally engaged with other people as equals in the organisation. There is nothing in our model that undermines the equal value of individuals and groups – rather it reinforces such value. The emphasis is on different kinds of work. The flux and diversity of relationships that express that work do, however, have to be nurtured. Emotional intelligence and sound knowledge of group dynamics are important attributes for everyone working in CGOs. This, we have argued, is how collective capability is developed.

4. The investment needed for sustainability. It goes without saying that all organisations in our study were concerned about issues of sustainability. What is perhaps less well considered is the amount and kind of investment needed to prepare for an unknown future. This is not only an issue for the long-term – many organisations had issues of resourcing, in particular finding the right people to sustain high levels of commitment to the cause or mission. ‘Not-for-profit’ may signal the absence of shareholders with interests to be served, but CGOs must be able to generate resources beyond their day-to-day needs if they are to last. Investment is not only financial: considerable effort has also to be expended in sustaining relationships with sector and civic companions, in upholding reputation, and keeping mission alive, even through tough times.

5. Resilience in the face of change and development. Complexity has many faces. Adaptation and responsiveness to increases in complexity is an ongoing challenge for all organisations at any stage of development. Balancing the 5Cs is a juggling act, requiring keeping an eye on several things in motion at once. The transitional issues identified above are a constant challenge, requiring people in many different positions within an organisation to notice signals of change, and disruptions or incongruities requiring attention. Courageous organisations will anticipate transition points before they are needed. There is in reality, however, considerable inertia in all organisations, and understandable resistance at individual and collective levels. Overcoming resistance takes time and patience and a clear sense of purposefulness. In the not-for profit sector, the energy for change comes from the inspiration and optimism of many people with a passion to keep doing good work, for the common wellbeing of society.

Concluding reflections

So what do we celebrate as CGOs make such conceptual considerations their own through practice? How can the insights from our research inform others? We concluded our book with five reflections (the number five seems to have resonated with us particularly!!)

1. Each organisation’s journey will be different. Our model, however incomplete, can provide a useful foreshadowing of territory to be encountered ahead.

Each step in an organisation's journey will be its own step. The length of the journey is a matter of choice or circumstance. The breadth of the stage and the depth of the tread to the next stage cannot be known in detail in advance. Nor is it certain that organisations will only step forward. Transitions may not be successfully completed. Changes in personnel may mean capacity and capability no longer fit, that adjustments have to be made, that choices for consolidation may be necessary. Whilst this might seem like going backwards, retracing one's steps may be the wisest thing to do before getting irrevocably lost. Consolidation is a surer step than over-reaching one's resources (as many an adventurer has discovered).

Civil society is not a competitive market place (whatever government policies would have us believe). The goal is not to *win*. The goal is to *do good*. Passage through one transitional stage does not determine passage through the next. Each of the rapids in the river of contextual challenge has its own characteristics. We recognise that generic and specialist skills are required to navigate these passages, but what is accomplished depends on alignment of capacity, capability and complexity within a particular social, cultural, economic and political context.

2. Reframing mission is important at each stage. 'Who are we?' and 'What do we stand for?' require answers that speak into contexts of time and place.

There is an inevitable systemic tension between service delivery and advocacy. The potency of advocacy will change as the political, economic and social context changes. Debates about the meaning of charitable purpose, and the dominance of government funding in the third sector, render CGOs vulnerable to being silenced.

A further question is needed to stimulate mission review: What or who have we become? Over-dependence on government funding, especially if there are contractual obligations to be politically neutral, makes an organisation an adjunct of the state. We see the power of mission to mobilise civic action as a fundamental attribute of CGOs. Denial of the right to advocate for one's cause is counter-democratic. There is no free society that can be taken for granted: the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.¹ Part of that vigilance is continuously creating and sustaining that which is for the common good.

3. Management and governance is a partnership. Our tracking of emerging partnerships and evolution of governance supports our initial premise. The meaning of governance in the CGOs is different from legal and corporate definitions from which the dominant paradigm of governance stems.

We learned that embryonic activities of governance (steering, guiding, directing, and responding) are present from the outset. It does not, however, take the traditional form of separation from management until the level of complexity is sufficient to require separation of strategic and operational thinking. Strategic thinking grapples with the deep questions of an organisation's long-term

purpose, social contribution and sustainability. Good stewardship and being a good steersman go hand-in-hand. The partnership is expressed through mutual exploration of strategic development and intention. We see governance as the *pou tokomanawa*ⁱⁱ – the centre post from which the fabric of the rest of the organisation hangs. Governance is set within and at the heart of the organisation, not outside or above it.

4. All organisations are embedded in a context which has consequences. A wide understanding is needed of the legal framework, social attitudes, direction of political will and state of technological knowledge that constitute that context. Context is the canvass on which competitive and collaborative relationships get played out. There is competition not only for resources, but also for the minds (and pockets) of citizens. Context is a kaleidoscope of relationships.

The interfaces between the three sectors of society (public, private, civic) are blurring. CGOs now compete, in some instances, with corporates who have taken on board diverse social responsibilities. Government is both funder and provider of social services. Boundaries between CGOs and government become less watertight. The impact of political will on the scope of CGO action is not matched by a commensurate CGO capacity to influence government policy.

Context also includes international forces as society itself becomes more globally connected. There is competition for external philanthropic funding, as well as searching to find suitable investment areas where organisations can secure their long-term funding opportunities. Organisations need capacity and capability to address new contextual issues, and to prepare for future generations whose way of life will be very different from the present. Survival may rest upon which organisations best fit and refit themselves to unknown futures.

5. Generative thinking is under-developed and under-valued in CGOs (and in wider New Zealand society). Generative thinking requires conceptual understanding and knowledge of the issues we have discussed above. We found some strong strategic thinkers amongst our respondents, but not many. Individual capability is not enough. It is collective strategic thinking that is missing. This is true at both organisational and sector levels. We do not know if individual and collective capability in strategic and generative thinking is an inherent or learned capability, but we do know that people's potential is not adequately developed through current organisational practices. CGOs offer huge opportunities for innovative management and courageous governance that are open to few in the private and public sectors. Strengthening the capability of ordinary citizens to participate more fully in crafting the strategic intention and vision of society is a challenge ahead of everyone who wants to foster the common good.

Future trends – the creative edge of theory and practice

From our research, we identified three areas (structural, relational and entrepreneurial) for morphological change, and gave examples of some typical adaptations. Different theories of action underlie each of these strategic initiatives. Each has to be supported by appropriately generative capacity (structures and processes) and capability (individual and collective) to take the organisation into an emerging and emergent future. This requires much more than the efficient and effective use of assets and the setting of policies. Frequently it requires CGOs to re-think the very notion of what it means to be an ‘organisation’ in the context of new challenges and new expressions of work and mission. It also requires recognition of the need to re-configure our measures of effectiveness, for at this level of complexity, and this cusp of transition, the outcomes organisations may achieve and the societal changes they are able to effect, may take a long time to be fully recognized. It is this courage and adventurous spirit that energizes the third sector to build and to ‘become’, intentionally, for a better future.

Rifkin (2014) in his latest book puts his hope in reclaiming the Commons; overcoming the dominance of market capitalism and seeing a wider view of society that technological, logistic and energy innovations in an open-source environment make possible. In this environment, the third sector in all its variety has a pivotal role to play.

“The contemporary Commons is where billions of people engage deeply in social aspects of life. It is made up of literally millions of self-managed, mostly democratically run organizations, including charities, religious bodies, arts and cultural groups, educational foundations, amateur sports clubs, producer and consumer cooperatives, credit unions, health-care organizations, advocacy groups, condominium associations, and a near endless list of other formal and informal institutions that generate the social capital of society.” (Rifkin, 2014: 16)

A long term dream, the creation of new action will be in the hands, he claims, of the younger generations who are *“just beginning to glimpse the opportunity of forging an empathetic civilization tucked inside a biosphere community”*. (Rifkin, 2014: 303).

In the meantime, as CGOs move into uncharted situations through growth of internal and external complexity and rapid social and economic change, they are challenged to devise new strategic responses and make decisions for a future yet unencountered. To do this, organisations have to become strategically creative, and make choices that impact the breadth of their influence, the integrity of identity and mission, and the extent of the societal contribution they are able to make. They also have to build appropriate infrastructures to ensure

tangible outcomes in both the long and short term, which keep pace with the rate of organisational change. This will require

- framing workforce development to meet changing standards of accreditation for service providers and governance bodies alike
- anticipating new organisational forms in the Third sector that meet the challenge of greater inter-agency collaboration, or the need for financial independence - reinventing the Collaborative Commons : organisational form and collective relationship capability
- challenging the separation of service and advocacy, currently entrenched in Charities legislation, which undermines the expression of mission for the common good
- reasserting the principle of the Common Good and letting this guide new forms of engagement across public, private and partnership endeavours.

These are all frontiers for new action requiring new concepts for new situations, or the re-invention of old ideas, such as the 'common good' for novel contexts. Seeing the energy of younger generations, with fresh entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to a global society, we believe there will be much to celebrate in the nexus of theory and practice in the years to come. If practitioners, politicians, activists and academics can join together in collective endeavour to forge new ideas and forms of expression that are indeed translatable into action across diverse domains of practice, communities and specialist knowledge, we can learn much from each other.