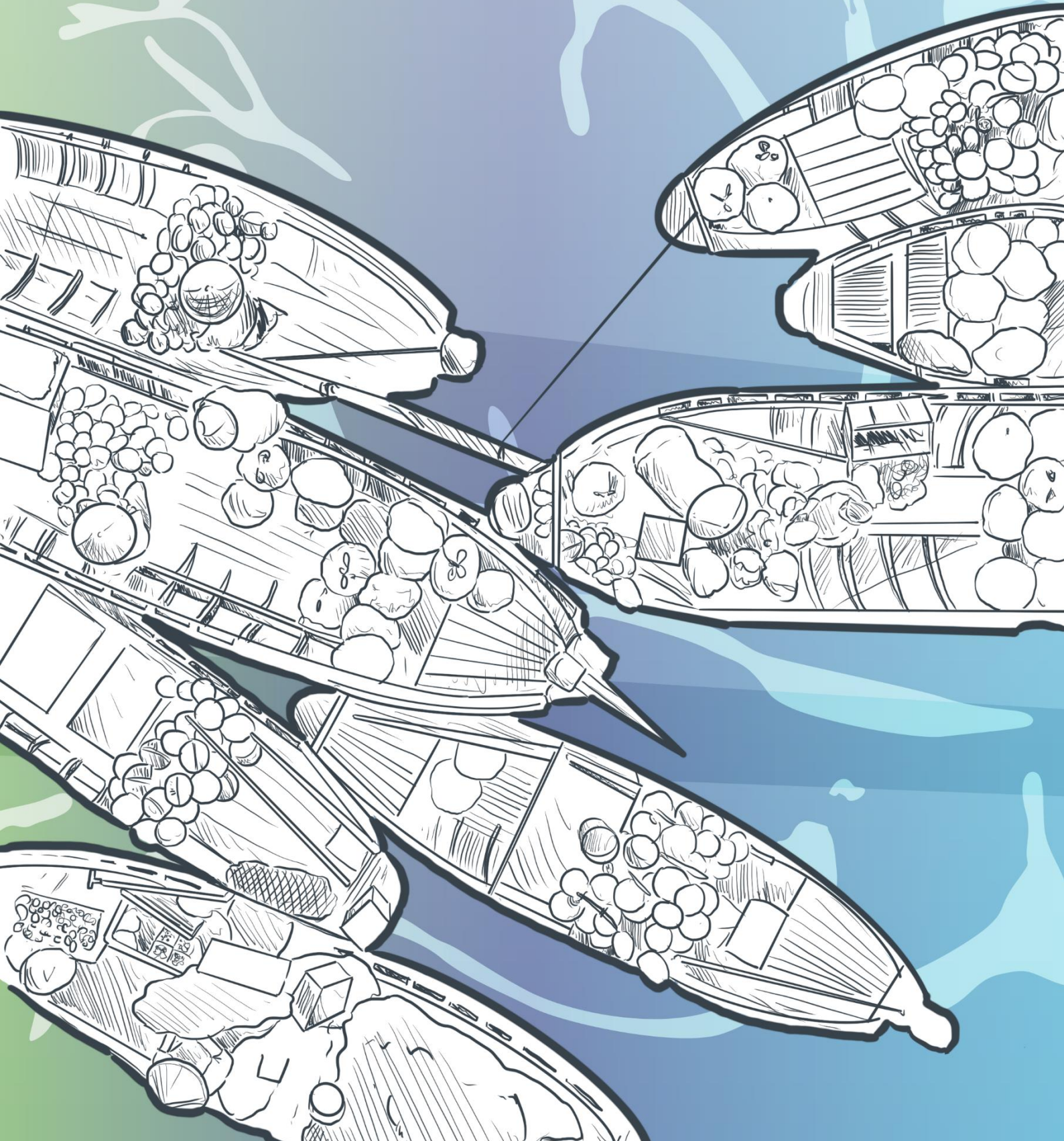


# Chapter 9: The Worldly Organisation

Worldly organisations are open, tolerant, curious and diverse. How can we ensure that we are genuinely connected and interconnected with many different communities, societies, cultures and peoples across the sea?



# 9

## THE WORLDLY ORGANISATION

*"In diversity there is beauty and there is strength."* Maya Angelou

In this chapter we introduce the Worldly Organisation and what it means to have a "worldly mindset". We look at some of the blocks that prevent inclusivity, diversity and creativity inside many organisations and some of the ways we might overcome these blocks to make our organisations more sustainable, future proof, and worldly. Worldliness enables cross-cultural partnerships and collaborations. In this chapter, we offer some tools and models for enhancing these partnerships: the Six Senses of Partnerships and the Culture Tree.

### The External Environment

*"Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance."* Verna Myers

The world is becoming "flat" according to Thomas Friedman's (2005) seminal book. In this, Friedman points to the acceleration of globalisation, the breaking down of barriers that had hitherto separated and privileged Western economies, and the enhanced internet connectivity that we now enjoy worldwide as a result of advances in digital communication technologies. Friedman was indeed prescient too about the rise and economic growth of China and India, and the increasing contribution to the global economy of other fast-growing economies. On the other hand, many have criticised Friedman's one-sided enthusiasm for globalisation, and his lack of attention to the billions who still live at the "bottom of the pyramid" without access to the wealth created by our increasingly connected capitalist world (Collier, 2007). Inequality, racism, exploitation, hunger, migration, and most recently Covid-19 all conspire against Friedman's flat and equitable dream for globalisation. Indeed, it could be argued that inequalities have got worse as the effects of the global pandemic become apparent. We still have much to do!

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So that is why we believe we need a chapter in our book called the “Worldly Organisation”.

We should first explain that we have deliberately avoided the use of the words “global” or “international” in our discussion, and instead adopted Jonathan Gosling and Henry Mintzberg’s (2003) term: Worldly. Global and globalisation along with “international” are terms that can cause misunderstanding and reinforce stereotypes. For instance, globalisation is often described from the perspective of the developed world looking out at the opportunities in the rest of the world, the “Other”.

For us, a “worldly organisation”, by contrast, is one that is open, tolerant, curious, anti-racist and embraces difference. Worldly organisations care strongly about our planet and seek to address the injustices and inequities in our world. Worldliness does not privilege one culture over the other but embraces the rich tapestries of our many cultures. Gosling and Mintzberg (2003) have defined a “worldly mindset” as embracing the many different worlds within worlds that make up our globe and taking action. For them, simply understanding “the other” is not enough. Worldliness is what we do with that knowledge, and how we act in and for our world to advance progress towards a fairer and more inclusive society. We are now seeing such “worldly” action taking place through the Black Lives Matter movement. The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis was a pivotal moment that symbolised the racism and structural inequalities that are embedded at the heart of our societies, and the response to this action will hopefully advance a fairer and more inclusive society.

Like connected organisations (Chapter 6), worldly organisations are genuinely connected and interconnected with many different communities, societies, cultures, and peoples in our world, and care passionately about the future of the planet as a whole. With internet technology such connectivity is possible, even for those not able to immerse themselves physically in other geographical locations. We share the perspective of Gosling and Mintzberg that worldliness is about creating a shared and collective web of endeavour across our planet to collectively provide a sustainable future for the next generations. It is about building shared understanding, and the empathy that is derived from seeing the situation of the “other” from close up. We admit that this sounds an idealistic notion. But we firmly believe and have evidenced first-hand that the cumulative effect of many local connected and interconnected actions lie at the heart of this common endeavour. Our organisations today are well placed to contribute, and in the next section we reflect on how they can do this.

Worldliness, of course, starts “at home”. Inside aspiring “worldly” organisations, real fairness a level playing field for all, calling out racism and acting on racist practises is a top priority. This means looking at the practices and cultures that perpetuate such inequalities and having the courage to embark on a journey of transformation. As worldly leaders, we aspire to always improve our equality and diversity practices. For example, we act to abolish the gender pay gap. We name and combat racism, whenever and however it is manifested. We go beyond compliance to make our workplaces accessible and supportive to those with disabilities. We are enlightened about mental health issues. We act and offer support when we see people suffering from health issues in our workplaces, whether these be physical or mental. We act to stamp out bullying and harassment so that everyone in our organisation can thrive and be themselves with pride.

A worldly organisation is inclusive, both internally and externally. Externally, we seek out novel collaborative relationships wherever they might bear fruit, and wherever we see that together we can create more than the sum of the parts. We look for partners who bring different skills, viewpoints, and outlooks, and offer the same opportunity in return. A worldly organisation knows that the most impactful learning and entrepreneurship can often come from embracing and working with difference, even though this takes more time and effort: we seek to learn from and work with different cultures, different backgrounds, different sectors, nationalities, faiths, technologies, and generations (and so on!). Some of the most fruitful and most innovative partnerships are the product of such different worldviews.

And yet, becoming a worldly organisation is not easy and there are many barriers that can derail us from the outset. Unconscious biases, fiefdoms, silos, fear of difference, fear of losing power, and resistance to change all pervade every day organisational (and indeed all) life for us all, and, unless we take action, these very understandable human responses will prevent the seamless flow of collaboration and knowledge creation we are seeking.

So how can we combat these human instincts, and the resistance to diversity that erects so many barriers between humans, whether inside our organisations or across the world as a whole? How can genuine “worldliness” be developed, and how can each of us apply these ideas in practice?

## The Observatory

*"Collaboration has no hierarchy. The sun collaborates with soil to bring flowers on the earth." Amit Ray*

Organisations have been organised for a long time in roughly the same way. Hierarchies have been the default position for many years, until in the nineties this type of organisation was challenged. A fashion for “matrix organisations” (networked, fluid forms of organisation) then took off, designed to free people from the constraints and inflexibility of hierarchies. At that time, many people found themselves with more than one reporting line, one being functional, and one that was product or project based. The aim was to break down silos. This structure did succeed to some extent, but it also led to confusion. People experienced conflicting objectives and conflicting loyalties. Burn-out often ensued, and some organisations reverted to hierarchy once again. Since then, new organisational forms have been slow to take hold. Those that foster creativity and inclusivity, and flatter structures that encourage shared leadership are not yet widespread.

This is why ideas from thinkers such as Charles Handy have become so popular. Handy has long challenged the rigidity and impersonal nature of corporations and argued in favour of federalist models that support the co-existence of local decision-making with national or even global connectivity. There is some evidence that organisations are starting to follow this sound advice. Decentralised models now favour a smaller staff core combined with a larger peripheral, more flexible workforce, but managing this peripheral and sometimes voluntary labour, particularly in the not-for-profit sector is often poorly executed, resulting in demotivation and lack of engagement.

In the Observatory, we aim to look to the future of organisations and ask to what extent they are fit for purpose in the future. The answer is that most organisations are still not maximising the potential of their people. Our belief is that despite many years of research into organisational forms, the value of empowerment, shared leadership, and other ways to tap into the potential of our people, only a fraction of the ideas that exist inside our organisations are ever expressed and still fewer are heard. And of those that are heard we reject, bury or dismiss still more! Of course, it is not our intention to do this. As leaders, we start each day

with the intention of being open-minded to alternative thinking, whether this comes from inside our organisation or from outside. But this intention can be derailed. When our own ideas are challenged by those with different viewpoints, open-mindedness and inclusivity can often be harder to practise than we imagine!

## The Library

*“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”* Helen Keller

So, what are the blocks that prevent inclusivity and creativity inside our organisations? And what are the blocks that prevent us from exploring what those who are different can offer us? And how might we overcome these blocks to make our organisations more sustainable, future proof, and worldly?

The following ideas come from many years of conversations with leaders in many different organisations across the globe.

### **Block: Suspicion and rivalry**

The blocks that prevent synergies from emerging across the internal silos inside many organisations usually stem from suspicion, competition, or rivalry. We often inadvertently encourage these behaviours when we promote and reward individual, local, or a specific team’s performance instead of focusing on people’s contribution to the whole. Insufficient resources can lead to political manoeuvring by leaders seeking to safeguard their own performance or that of their colleagues in their immediate team. We have all experienced this. But this need for self-preservation or promoting a narrower team performance above organisational impact can in turn lead to lack of trust. As the leader seeking to deliver results for the whole organisation, this can quickly become self-defeating as energies are turned inwards towards defeating the internal opposition, instead of outwards towards producing innovative solutions for our clients.

### **Solution: Build networked holistic thinking**

Break down and disenfranchise the silos wherever they appear. Lead on this by example. People will note what you do, not what you say! Wherever possible, the stories and symbols of the organisation should engender pride in the “whole”, through success by the “whole”

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organisation. Behaviours that manifest internal rivalries or competition should be outlawed and actively discredited. Reward people for their service to the “whole”, especially behaviours that demonstrate active support for the work of other departments, services, or regions; or simply seeing and acting to progress the big picture. Reward and give credit to shared leadership models and pay less attention to local heroes building local fiefdoms. Whilst these people may deliver good results locally, fiefdoms can be highly damaging to organisations seeking to become more connected and worldly.

### **Block: Fear**

It seems to be part of the human condition to fear the unknown. From an early age we learn the values, beliefs and behaviours of our parents and those of our wider society and culture. These values and beliefs become deep rooted and are what guides our actions, choices and decisions. They have many benefits in that they provide us with a moral compass, provide stability and a framework for living. Inside organisations the same pattern is evident. So, unless we have a compelling reason to do otherwise, most people choose like-minded colleagues to work with. This inevitably reinforces the very beliefs and values that we have already brought to our work. This is generally unconscious, of course. We most notice our own beliefs and values when we are confronted by difference. At that point, we might reject the new or embrace it. Our natural position is likely to be to fear them.

Only the bravest will test out these new ideas and adopt those that work into their own repertoire. The timid, however, will unconsciously shut out the new ideas, and often encourage others to do so too.

### **Solution: Immersion**

The antidote to fear of difference is to deeply immerse ourselves as close up as possible in the worlds of the “other”. Reading about the other is not the same as experiencing it ourselves. When we experience another organisation from close up by immersing ourselves in it for even a few hours or days, we gain a proper glimpse of the culture and its underlying values and beliefs and start to understand its internal logic. This does not (necessarily) mean travelling the globe in search of other cultures! We co-exist with other cultures in our own backyards. There are different sub-cultures inside our own organisations, our clients and our

partners. Let us start with understanding the cultures in our close proximity first. It is the only way to build lasting trust-based relationships.

### **Block: Fake news**

In today's social media we are all subject to fake news at some time whether we know it or not. Often this is aimed at discrediting particular viewpoints or organisations and can make the likelihood of collaboration or partnership much less likely. It also prevents us from gaining a real understanding of the "other". The media are prone to focus on the negative, the risky or the different, rarely on building harmony and collaboration. Leaders may therefore become risk averse when it comes to new partnerships or alliance.

### **Solution: Invest time and effort to find the right partner for you**

If you believe that a partnership with another organisation will help you to achieve your future goals, it is worth investing some time to find the right partner. Complementary skills, knowledge, expertise, markets or products are likely to be what draws you to each other and tempts you to partner. You might have expertise, for example, in different parts of the globe. Or you may be known for different, but complementary services. Your leadership capabilities might be in different fields, filling an identified gap for the other potential partner. First signs indicate that this potential partner is worth exploring further. First, however, check for the cultural compatibility of any potential partner. If they are from different national cultures, they are likely to do things very differently. However, this does not mean that partnership is not possible. There are more meaningful checks to undertake first beyond their surface behaviours. Ask, do you share the same values? Do you share a common purpose? Is there transparency in your communications? Can you build shared trust? If the answer to these questions is yes, it is worth investing time to get to know each other and to reduce risk by exploring any areas of tension or doubt early on. If the signs look good and if there is a win-win for both parties, it will be worth progressing to the next steps.

There is no substitute for spending time in each other's organisations. Deep immersion in the other's context is usually more fruitful than many hours of meetings. For more information, read Chapter 6: The Connected Organisation.



## The Family Room

Sustainable partnerships are at the heart of becoming a worldly organisation. Some partnerships are stable, long-term groupings with well-defined tasks and partnership roles. However, other partnerships may be formed only for a set period of time, in order to complete a specific project or purpose, and then disperse to form other collaborations. Some partnerships may be located in the same place (or same geographical area), some may be geographically spread, whilst others could even be “virtual” partnerships, with very little day-to-day contact.

In the light of these challenges, what does it take for people to identify with a partnership and feel confident and capable of doing their best work?

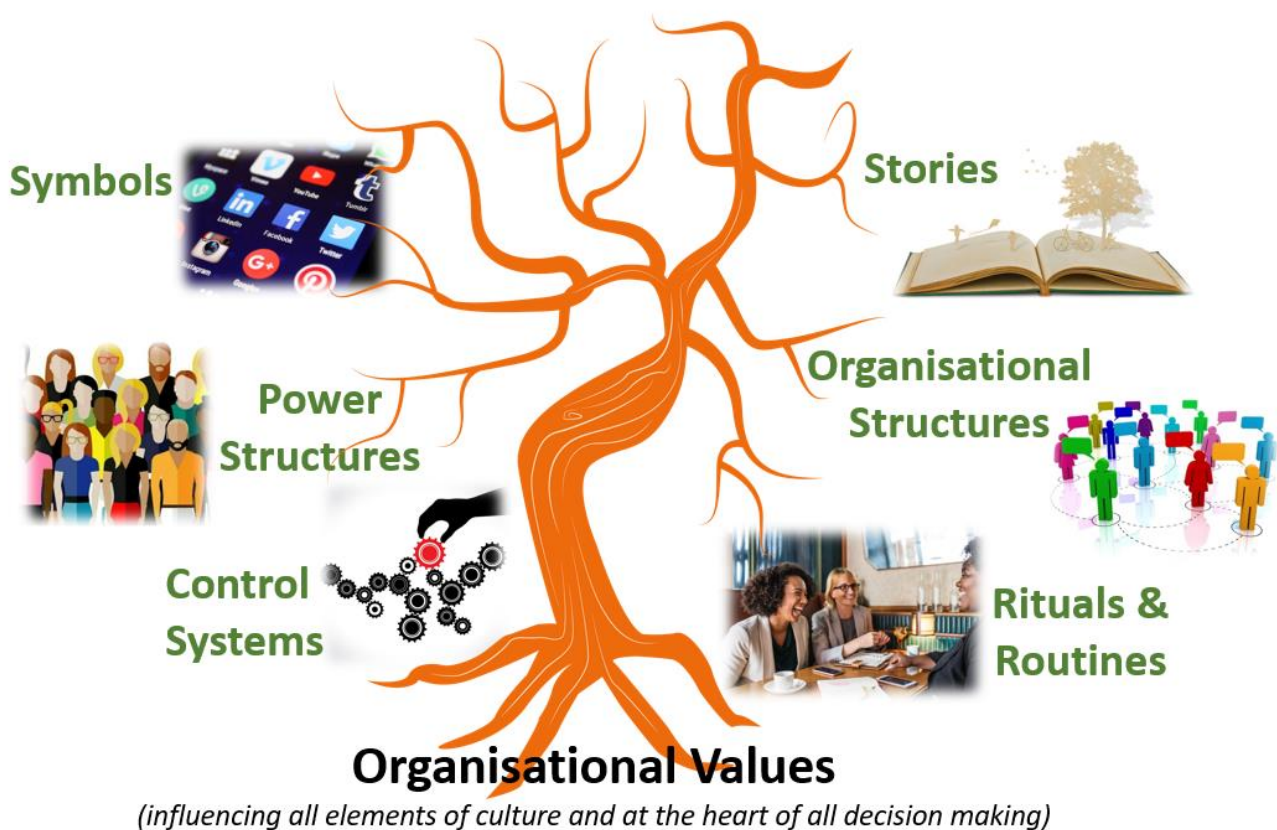
At Caplor Horizons, we believe that individuals need to have strong connections within a partnership – not only to all the people who make up the partnership, but also to its shared goals and objectives. We describe these connections in terms of six “senses”. These are: a sense of purpose; a sense of responsibility; a sense of generosity; a sense of integrity; a sense of inclusion; and a sense of trust. These have been developed from the research findings of John Adair.



*The Six Senses of Partnership*

If each of these six “senses” can be cultivated and strengthened, not only by each individual but also by the partnership as a whole, we believe that people will both demonstrate commitment to the partnership and offer positive and productive contributions.

Another model that can be used to map the compatibility of your organisation with another organisation is our “Culture Tree”. This is based on Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes’ (1992) Cultural Web and can be a useful framework for collating and sharing your findings.



### *The Culture Tree*

- What are the **Stories** inside the organisation and what do they tell you about who is valued?
- What **Symbols** around the organisation tell people that you value difference and embrace equalities irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age and so on?
- Is there a level playing field for opportunities and progression that is supported by the **Structures**?

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- Are your **Control Systems** measuring the right things or do they promote bias?
- Do your **Routines and Rituals** celebrate inclusivity and collaborative behaviours?
- Is the **Power** and influence in the system only vested in an “old boys’ network” or is it possible to rise to the top or influence outcomes on merit and irrespective of background?

Completing a Culture Tree for your own, and then for your potential partner’s, organisation as a way to compare them can reap quick rewards and prepare you both for a genuinely open conversation about the compatibility of your two organisations. Does the other organisation fill gaps in your own organisation? Does it offer expertise and “know-how” that you are lacking? And at the same time, do you share compatible values about what matters? Do the missions and visions of your two organisations support each other, or do they conflict?

Share and discuss your insights with your potential partner, bringing in relevant people from across your two organisations who can bring different perspectives and insights. Ask lots of open questions in the interest of establishing shared understanding of your and their values and goals. Ask what they want from a potential partnership. If you have concerns or doubts, air these gently in order to find out whether they are deal-breakers or not.

As the partnership progresses create an ongoing environment in which you can give and receive feedback regarding what is working and what is not working, addressing understanding early and clearly but with cultural sensitivity. Many misunderstandings stem from culture, so try to understand first, and frame your feedback with care. In doing so your aim is to build trust that will enable the deepening of a genuine long-term and sustainable partnership. Always remember this will only happen if there is a win-win for both partners, and, beyond this, if both partners are enjoying the collaboration, learning from it, and having fun!

### The Foundations

A truly worldly organisation will inevitably be a learning organisation (Chapter 4). Why? Because a worldly organisation is founded on curiosity and the desire to learn from the “other”. Worldliness means seeking out partnerships with those who see the world

differently, bring different skills and knowledge, yet share our values and purpose. Learning is embraced in all that we do.

A worldly organisation encourages creativity internally by blending different perspectives for innovation. Silos and competitive behaviours are actively discouraged. Fiefdoms and heroes are replaced by shared leadership and collaboration. Structures are flexible and can be re-configured with relative ease to respond to and learn from new external events.

Externally, a worldly organisation is purposefully connected to other organisations through building a complex web of interconnected networks. There is inherent learning across the systems. For a worldly organisation, learning is operating everywhere.

## The Roof

In this chapter, we have made the argument that inclusivity, diversity, curiosity and cultural sensitivity are the essential components of the worldly organisation. Worldly organisations are led by worldly leaders who embrace these qualities in abundance. In the previous section, we demonstrated how learning is embraced and constantly generated in worldly organisations.

Finally, what unites aspiring worldly organisations is the desire to tread lightly on our planet, conserving our fast depleting resources for future generations. To be worldly means to care: to act ethically and sustainably; to support the struggles of disadvantaged people across the globe; to act and advocate for social justice; to advocate for and act on anti-racist practises; to campaign for an end to poverty and hunger; and to lobby for politicians and businesses to come together to combat climate change. These issues are not distant and detached, but real now, and requiring action.

Worldly leaders are global citizens, and worldly organisations become sustainable by embracing the diversity of their people, acting with care to preserve the planet and ensuring a healthy bottom line in order to continue to deliver their mission and vision for a better world.

# The Kitchen

## Practical steps to becoming a worldly organisation

- **Ensure true diversity and inclusion within your organisation** – Do you have a diverse mix of staff? Board members? Partners? Is your organisation balanced? Does your Board and staff team reflect the diversity of the people you serve? Are your equality and diversity policies and training up to date? How often do you reflect on and review these aspects of your organisation? Do you have gaps in your people mix? What kind of people would enhance the balance of the organisation? Who would bring in fresh ideas and perspectives? Ask how you could attract those people to join you?
- **Mix up your people to create new thinking** – creativity and innovation in organisations tend to happen where different ideas, experiences and knowledge are brought together in a synergistic relationship to create something new. If your people are currently working in homogeneous groups, mix them up to produce new thinking.
- **Maximise the contributions of the next generation** – never underestimate the potential of young people. They have grown up with digital technology and have only known a globalised world. Many organisations are now using “reverse mentoring” where young people are coaching older generation colleagues in new technologies and social networks. Try to tap into this invaluable source of ideas. For example, give them early responsibility and above all ask for their opinions. Value the power of learning from the emerging future and not just the value of past experience.
- **Use tools and models to maximise the benefit of cross-cultural partnerships and collaborations** – strengthen your partnerships using the “Six Senses of Partnerships” and map the compatibility of your organisation with another organisation using our “Culture Tree”.
- **Develop an awareness of cross-cultural communication** – as a worldly organisation, it is likely you will be working across multiple cultures. Thus, developing an awareness of cross-cultural communication is vital. To find out more, read our Thought Leadership Paper titled “Cross-Cultural Communication”.

## Key messages

- A worldly organisation differs from a global organisation in its cultural depth and understanding. Worldly organisations are sensitive, embracing and respectful of difference. They are curious to understand the many cultures in which they operate, and the many different worlds within worlds that make up our globe. They pay constant attention to check their unconscious biases.
- Worldliness enables cross-cultural partnerships and collaborations. It values and exploits for good the different lenses and cultural interpretations in our world. It goes beyond respect to produce rich cross-cultural innovation and knowledge. This requires a sensitive understanding and awareness of cross-cultural communication.
- Sustainable partnerships are at the heart of becoming a worldly organisation. However, it is important to invest time and effort to find the right partner for you. Check for the cultural compatibility of any potential partner. Use the Caplor Horizons “Culture Tree” model to check whether your values and purpose are aligned.

## Reflection questions

- Who are the people in my organisation who are most different from me in their backgrounds, experience and ways of thinking?
- Have I listened actively to these people recently? What have I learned from them? How can I do this more frequently and more actively?
- How can I encourage a culture of inclusion in my organisation?

## Action and impact questions

- What actions can I take to break down silos and encourage cross-silo working?
- What actions can I take to create more heterogeneous teams?
- How can we ensure we are creating a level playing field for all?

## Further reading

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