

# The Externalisation of Change

In a previous essay, I outlined some possible changes to personal and individual behaviours and attitudes which were intended to underpin (provide a foundation for) the subsequent externalisation (or projection) of change in an area which translated into the personal development of ‘empowered citizenship’.

In a society which claims (or has ambitions) to be democratic, it is, in my view, imperative that every single member of that society takes it upon themselves to fully participate as a democratic citizen in all possible areas, to ensure that democracy itself is in full ownership of all its citizens, and not an object of ownership by the State.

What does ‘full ownership’ actually mean for an individual citizen?

Firstly, I want to distinguish between the definitions of ‘citizen’ and ‘subject’. There is, to a degree, a sliding scale between the two. A ‘subject’ is clearly linked to the concept/notion/status of ‘subjugation’ which suggests very strongly a lack of power, status and contributive value. In a modern, apparently democratic, society, it is still possible that ‘subjugation’ can represent the default condition of the vast majority of members of that society. In an economic sense, and this is true in societies today where economic factors are the overriding concerns of those who define the nature of the ‘system’, ‘subjugation’ can be represented by the status of ‘economic entity’, where the role of the individual in the society is defined purely by their economic activity, and they are not only encouraged, but in some ways, programmed by their upbringing within the culture, to be (and do) nothing else, certainly not to be an equal stakeholder in as many areas of participation as possible. It serves the interests of those in positions of power and influence in the society in question, to perpetuate this culture, as they are by far and away, the most significant beneficiaries of this.

It is of course true that for a society to claim any degree of democracy, it needs to be seen to present its members, even if it is only at the times of elections, with some notional power to affect the way the society is run, by casting their votes every so often to modify to whatever degree the culture enables and the voting system allows, the political direction of the society. Many modern societies, claiming democracy, are in fact governed much more significantly by the pervading global economic structures and systems, and democratic power, vested in governments by the members of the society, takes a back seat, leading to the conclusion that, even though each member can exercise some limited degree of power by voting, this power is transient in that it is ‘owned’ by the voter, only on election day, and therefore does not represent any even slightly sophisticated idea of citizenship. In effect, the individual member of the society is still largely a ‘subject’. Within such a system, politicians are almost in the position of ‘lending’ power to each member of the society only on election day (or the period leading up to election day) and then taking it back again immediately afterwards.

On the other hand, the notion of citizenship, when explored to its endpoint on the scale, represents a permanent state of being which is reflected by the full ownership and active use of an equal share of democratic power held in the hands of each citizen. It is crucial that this state of being involves ongoing active participation in all areas of political, societal and economic function, and also to ensure that at all times, a broad view of the role of such a citizen, as both a participative member of community and society, and (and this, whilst being very challenging, is very important) as a single being of a certain species, amongst a multitude of beings of all species sharing the same planet.

This concept of active, participative, democratic citizenship requires two fundamental commitments. The first is a commitment made to themselves by each citizen to take onboard and embed ‘empowerment’, which is not something that the overriding society or culture is responsible for packaging up and handing out to individuals, but is a change requiring the recognition of personal responsibility, along with everybody else, for understanding and living out, on a daily basis, the concept of empowerment. This can be summarised in a simplistic way, and as a change from that described above, as the citizen, at all times, retaining full control and ownership of their equal share of democratic power and allowing, through their vote, at appropriate times, a political representative operating within the official democratic institutions, to have a direct connection to this power for their term of office. This is akin to placing their hand on the citizen’s share of power in a way which enables them to exercise it, but not own it, and in exercising it, being held to account at all times, transparently for using it in the interests of the citizens, and that alone. As an empowered citizen, keeping close watch on how this connective power is utilised, allows the continuous reassertion of ownership in a way which significantly enhances the capability to provide input, feedback and conversation about its use. It also reinforces the concept that democracy in action belongs to the citizens and not to the State or political careerists.

Having stated that ‘empowerment’ is a state which requires a specific decision and ongoing commitment by the citizen to embed it and change their behaviour and attitudes in a way which make this additional responsibility a significant part of their daily activities, along with democratic empowerment (which as stated involves ongoing active participation) comes also societal and economic empowerment, again requiring a commitment to personal change, in areas defined broadly by investment in and association with the notion of ‘community’ and also, very importantly, a commitment in areas of employment and work, to refrain from a ‘blinkered’ approach – “I go to work at 09:00, focus exclusively on my contractual or defined obligations, take my wage packet or salary, and go home” – or from the other angle, “I hire people as labour to do a specific role which I have defined, and they do it and I pay them, and they go home” – but instead to recognise that the benefit of taking an active role in a position of employment, where exploration of broader co-operative activities beyond the defined roles, enhance both the prospects of success as an organisation, build a strong ‘community’ at work where joint enterprise contributes to great personal (and communal) value for all involved, and is in itself a motor for personal development. This commitment must be made both by the employee and the employer, at all levels within the organisation.

‘Empowerment’ is a broad concept in execution for all areas of society. It is a self-challenge to climb out of a comfortable, soft, warm armchair and experience a vastly more diverse environment of personal engagement with community, society, natural environment and the citizen’s relationship with all.

The second commitment, and equally important, is to establish and maintain the necessary changes at a ‘system’ level (again as outlined in the essay entitled ‘Internalisation of Change’, requiring cultural change – understandably difficult – which embed within the system, full support for, encouragement of and development of active citizenship from a very young age. This is not in any way, a brainwashing of young minds, but is a recognition that a citizen’s development, as they grow within a culture, is very strongly influenced by the nature of the culture, and so if the desire is to promote active participation in all areas, and an embedded understanding that taking personal responsibility for empowerment is a fundamental part of contributing as a full stakeholder in the community or society, it is vital that the default culture is fully aligned with this goal.

Just what specific activities a citizen involves themselves with will depend of course, on their own judgement, but in order to maximise the exercising of their judgement in a wide number of areas,

they must be enabled, encouraged and supported to develop from a young age, all the attributes of an active, participative, democratic citizen.

The embedding within citizens of these concepts, help strengthen themselves as individuals, hugely underpin the foundations of a truly democratic society, removing to a large extent, its historical fragility, build strong communities (however they may be defined) and enhance significantly the potential of organisational success, economically and otherwise. The single word which summarises the concept outlined above is 'stakeholder-ism'. This represents, as stated, a commitment by the individual to live out the full role of stakeholder, and also an embedded, societal commitment demonstrated fully in the implementation and ongoing processes of the infrastructure of the culture, to develop, encourage and support 'stakeholder citizens', regardless of diversity, background and character.