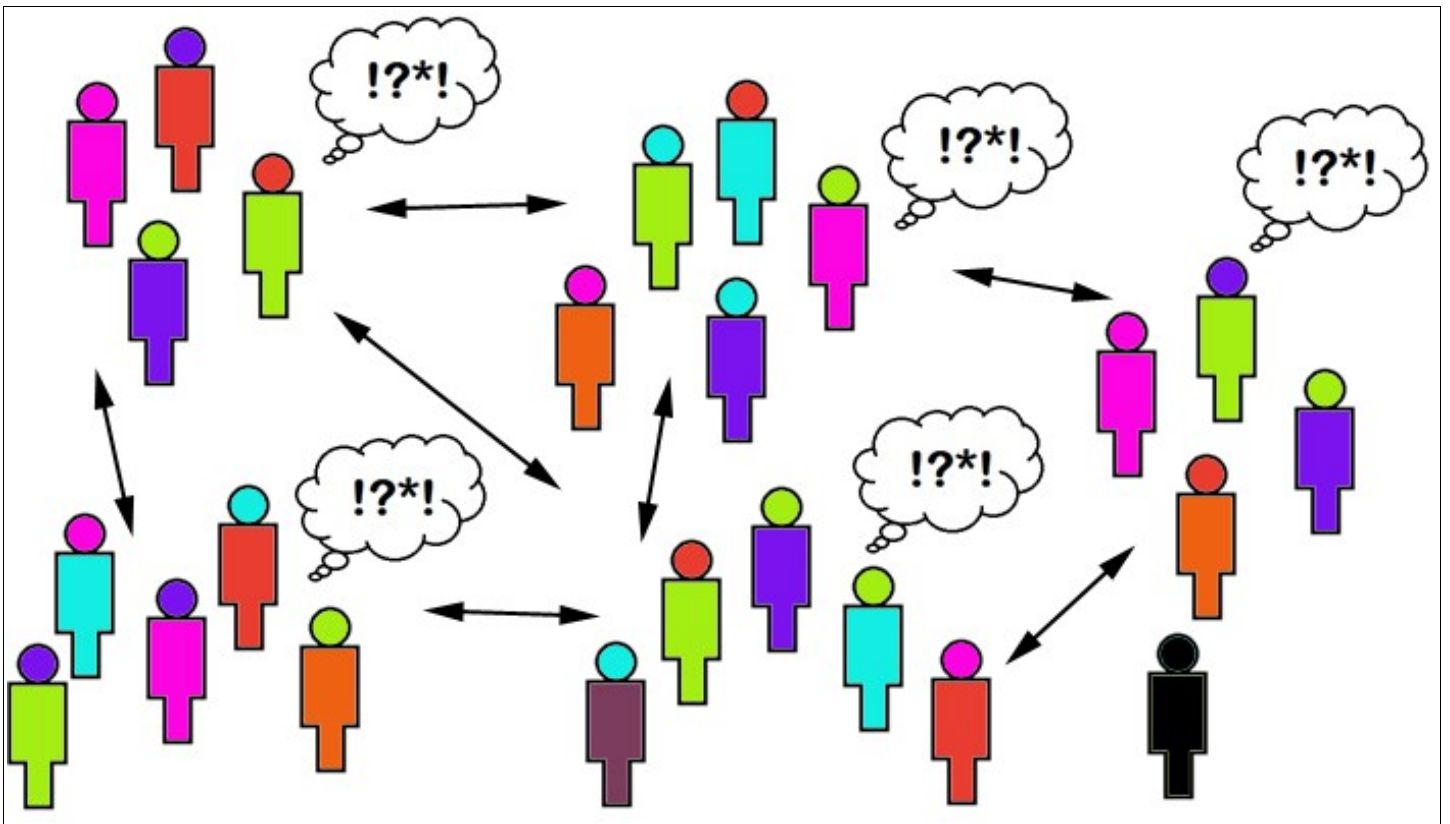


Accord: Culture, Craft, Cunning.

Dr. Timothy Barker, 2016.

Abstract.

The idea is proposed that there are many complex issues which humanity is currently attempting to grapple with that require a new philosophy based upon more holistic thinking. However, to date the dominant cultures have failed to adopt this viewpoint mostly for historical reasons. The proposed solution is to effectively pilot a form of institutional culture at the United Nations that works towards adopting values central to this viewpoint. The context to these ideas is introduced, the idea itself presented and sample considerations summarised.



"culture ► *n*...2. the customs, ideas and social behaviour of a particular people or group..."

Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Twelfth Edition.

1. Introduction.

As we enter the third millennium many challenges seem to abound. Such is the predicament of humanity and the planet it presently inhabits that many peoples are attempting to calculate how best to tackle the issues being faced. These range from population booms, ruination of the natural habitat, the old stalwarts of conflict and lack of security to more perhaps esoteric concepts such as the most appropriate mode of operation for life on the planet given the many varied vantage points, for example, from historically differing religious views. Indeed, as globalisation takes a firm hold of the human consciousness we can witness the post-modernist utopia (or dystopia?) of interrelating subspecies of humanity interacting in an ever more instantaneous and direct manner than ever before courtesy of technological aids, air travel and common language amongst others. So, what does all of this have to do with the United Nations (UN)?

2. Culture.

The main proposition of this accord is that the culture of the UN should out of necessity adapt in accordance with the adaptations of society at large. Moves are afoot to initiate reflections concerning the structure of the UN so that it may better respond to some of these challenges. To be more precise, as the UN strives to adopt a "2030 Agenda" it is being forced to reassess its composition in more than one sphere. For example, the work of the Independent Team of Advisors (ITAs) regarding feeding into the UN's Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) has recently been examining interlinkages between the concepts central to the "2030 Agenda" positing, to do it a curt disservice, 'joined up' (holistic) ways of viewing the development 'business'. This group of wise individuals does indeed go further by stating that there would have to be concomitant structural changes to the UN in order for this viewpoint to succeed. However, in addition to all of the current observations it is important to add that cultural change will be essential to ensure the relevance of the UN.

3. Craft.

How best to bring about cultural change within the sacred grounds of one of our most entrusted institutions? There are methods such as attitudinal inventories borrowed from Psychology which may be of use in the conducting of base line tests of values ("customs, ideas and social behaviour"). Then interventions would have to be enacted which effectively reorient these along the required lines such as education programmes. Of course similar inventories would need to be carried out post hoc so that evaluations of the success or otherwise of the interventions could be formulated.

4. Cunning.

Any systemic change has to be carried out with sensitivity to the outgoing ways as new ideas are introduced in an empathetic and tolerant manner. There are plenty of intelligentsia working on issues both within the UN and around it so no doubt expertise in 'change management' will be imbued in the lifeblood of the organisation. All in all such a fundamental systemic change would most likely meet with resistance, reluctance and could even be prone to sabotage. It would have to be sanctioned from 'on high'.

5. Conclusions.

There may be scope within the current QCPR to take advantage of this reassessment of the UN beyond the more self-evident phenomena currently being explored by examining the very essence of what the organisation has come to be from a cultural perspective. Of course, this may be construed as a contentious exercise as no such systemic change on an organisational level can ever be without its detractors; the status quo being favoured over terra incognita. Perhaps one way to help alleviate any such anxiety would be to 'pilot' these and the associated ideas of the ITAs. However, again, such conjecture is really beyond the scope of this short piece. To sum up, by flagging culture as a potential area for inspection, suggesting ways this *may* be changed but not necessarily *how* we would hope for a more effective twenty first century UN ready to tackle the many, varied issues that currently demonstrate no chance of abatement.

About the Author.

Dr. Barker has long been interested in the processes of the wider UN systems. He has degrees in Computer Science and a PhD in Education. He has travelled widely to attend conferences, research and teach but is currently based in the United Kingdom. Although not directly involved in the UN (which has its advantages) he has been involved in a number of initiatives on the periphery. He was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at UNU-IAS in Japan and has been a "Champion" for UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development. He is currently a member of the UN Foundation Energy Access Practitioner Network. He also founded an NGO, DIYNGO, which is in the process of seeking "consultative status" with UN ECOSOC. When not thinking too much Dr. Barker can be found (or not) roaming the countryside which inspires and entertains.

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