

De Bono's' Mechanisms of Macro Change

1. *Change by salvation and desperation*
2. *Change by crisis management and drift*
3. *Change by evolution*
4. *Change by protest*
5. *Change by resistance and ultimate retreat*
6. *Change by alternatives*
7. *Change by compromise*
8. *Change by Hegelian clash*
9. *Change by revolution*
10. *Change by leadership*
11. *Change by inspiration*
12. *Change by provocation*
13. *Change by design*
14. *Change through creating alternative tracks*
15. *Change through persuasion or exhortation*
16. *Change through awareness*
17. *Change through review*

None of the mechanisms of change outlined below are exclusive. There is a good deal of overlap and sometimes one mode of change may alter into another. Change itself is only a virtue if it leads to something better or if it is demanded by an alteration in circumstances. Societies change because there are internal forces that lead to change or in order to cope with an altered world or in order to improve the lot of their citizens. Change may be in the direction of a doctrinal utopia or simply to restore a status quo that has been eroded by circumstance.

1. Change by salvation and desperation

The basic principle is to do nothing and to hope that before things really get bad a new technological development will offer salvation. For example, we hope that a development in nuclear fusion technology will rescue us from a final depletion of oil resources - or a new way of using coal more conveniently. Similarly, we hope that a change in birth control technology will make it possible to limit population growth in the Third World. Desperation works in the same way. When the crisis really hits then something will have to be done about it: effort will be focused and the public will be behind the effort. The strategy has several advantages especially in terms of reducing the need to do anything at the moment. But some problems are irreversible. For example a crisis level of pollution may be irreversible for though future pollution may be stopped, the existing level may be unalterable.

2. Change by crisis management and drift

This is the method favoured in most political systems. Whenever a crisis occurs it is blamed on the external world and the government of the day is seen to be making valiant efforts to

solve it. That the crisis may actually have arisen from previous policies is not mentioned. Problem solving skills are focused and a solution of sorts is found. Political expediency triumphs for the moment. In between the episodes of crisis management there is a general drift determined by the shifting power-groups in society and changes in attitudes and values. Politicians see themselves not as navigating the boat of society but as surviving the storms that arise from time to time. It is enough that a politician should be seen to have his heart in the right place and a bailing-pump in good order. Each crisis that is coped with does not completely restore the status quo. There is a residue. Legislation introduced to solve the problem tends to stay on the statute books. So to the underlying drift there is added the change produced by crisis residue. This is not to suggest that such crises are deliberately used as opportunities to introduce deliberate changes - though this can happen as well. -

3. Change by evolution

This can be nothing more than a polite description of the change method described before: one man's drift is another man's evolution. True evolution is essentially a shift of trophies. There are shifts of power, shifts of activity and shifts of values. These are thwarted or encouraged by the structure of the society and the nature of its institutions. In economic terms a market economy is supposed to allow true change by evolution - and all else to hinder this.

4. Change by protest

Change by protest supposes that those running the system are endowed with intelligence, vigour and resources. The purpose of the protest is to modify the behaviour of those in control: to restrict it in certain areas and to direct it into other areas. In such matters as ecology protest has been remarkably successful. The power of the media, and especially of television, serves to amplify a small protest into a major one. A protest that may initially be very small has to be bizarre enough to guarantee media attention. Once there is exposure then others jump on the bandwagon and the movement grows. Politicians who are looking for areas of exposure join the bandwagon if it is positive and react to it if it is negative. So the system works in a most effective way. In the United Kingdom a man was released from prison because a small group of friends protested his innocence loudly-enough. The only disadvantage of the system is that the importance of the matter- or even the validity of the issue - has little to do with the effectiveness of the protest. Unpopular but important issues cannot use the system. Any emotional issue can. By and large, protest tends to be negative although its ultimate results are positive. For example, protest against pollution is in favour of ecology and Ralph Nader's famous protest against unsafe cars are in favour of safer cars. If the protest is a good political bandwagon, then the reaction may be excessive; for example in California the environment protection requirements are so strict as to hold up business development and employment prospects. In some circumstances a noisy minority can impose their wishes on a quiet majority.

5. Change by resistance and ultimate retreat

The threatened change is resisted as long as possible. There is no attempt to anticipate change and then to move with it. This delay and resistance allows the direction of change to become very clear. It also allows others to make the change and provide an experiment that can be observed. In the industrial world there is often a deliberate 'me-too' policy: let someone else bear the costs of development and make the initial mistakes- then make the change yourself. Finally, when the pent-up change is inevitable you withdraw resistance and move swiftly with it. The retreat of Great Britain from its Empire was a classic example of this sort of change.

6. Change by alternatives

This is supposed to be the method that works in any democracy. The opposition party puts forward an alternative policy to the governing party and if the electorate prefer the alternative they vote in the opposition at the next electoral opportunity. But, for a variety of reasons, it does not quite work that way. Any party in opposition knows that to get back into power it must not only hold its own supporters but also capture some of the floating voters or other party voters. So the alternatives get less and less different and in the end no true alternative is offered. Furthermore, in a complex world the same experts make the economic analyses and so the proposed policies end up by being quite similar. In most democratic countries today it is quite hard to see the real differences in the policies offered by the opposing parties. The similarity will probably get greater as it becomes less possible to undo policies set in motion by previous governments. It is only in countries like the UK where the parties have an historical class base that differences of policy can exist.

7. Change by compromise

A camel is said to be a horse designed by a committee. So change by compromise is change by bargaining in which each interested party seeks to have its own proposal presented in the final outcome. It is pork-barrel politics in the traditional style of the US Congress. It is also the style of change in countries that elect their representatives by proportional representation with the result that government is by coalition. By far the majority of labour disputes in industry are solved on the basis of compromise. So what precedes the compromise may be a dispute or the input of a minor party seeking to exert its identity.

8. Change by Hegelian clash

First there is a thesis. Then an anti-thesis forms in opposition to the thesis. From the dynamic tensions created by the dash emerges the synthesis which is a changed order of things. In theory this works, but in practice it does not. It would work if both sides were seeking the best features from the other point of view in order to build up a synthesis that would be better than either alone. In practice the antithesis team derive most of their energy and direction by simply being against everything on the 'thesis' side- with the result that destruction of every aspect of the existing order becomes the objective.

9. Change by revolution

The old order is destroyed and a new one sweeps in to take its place. Revolution in France, revolution in Russia, revolution in Cuba. My system is better than yours and in any case yours-is worse than mine. Your system is full of corruption and exploitation and privilege. My system is for the good of the people. The revolution is to be achieved by direct struggle of one sort or another. Creeping revolution is not good enough because the sharpness of the change will be lost even though each of the aims may be perfectly achieved. Sometimes it is enough to sabotage the old system so that it will collapse into chaos, and phoenix-like from this chaos will arise the new order. For many revolutions is a direction and not a destination? Many a revolutionary would -rather follow his revolutionary fervour in a country he wished to change than go to live in a country where the change had already been achieved. The difference may be that between an entrepreneur and a manager. Protest as a means towards revolution needs to be carefully distinguished from protest as a means towards improving the behaviour of the existing system. The latter is really a vote of confidence in the system.

10. *Change by leadership*

A de Gaulle arises to change France and to change Europe. Change by leadership is change by decision and change by inspiration. The leader is in the same position as a chief executive in a corporation. With an eye to the future and to the capabilities of his corporation he makes decisions by decree. How much he listens to his advisers, how much his decisions are fed by personal vanity, how much he is corrupted by power are all quite separate from the functional exercise of the power of change. Because the system is so effective it suffers all the dangers that go with unrestrained effectiveness. After all the chief executive is somewhat restrained by the views of the other executives, his stockholders and the financial press. He can also be dismissed. It may be that the power to inspire is enough in a leader even when it is not accompanied by executive control. Mahatma Gandhi in India might have been an example of such leadership. But leadership in protest is not quite the same as leadership in operation and administration. Protest is its own achievement.

11. *Change by inspiration*

Inspiration by a charismatic leader, by a new religion, by an old religion revived, by a new idea and by desperate circumstances are obvious mechanisms of change. Over the last one hundred years the attitude in both the USA and Europe towards Africans has undergone a total revolution. In many quarters the attitude towards business has also undergone a revolution. The process is extremely powerful but difficult to control and to predict. *Change by degrees* It is difficult to tell whether changes in attitude are brought about by inspired leaders or by an accumulation of tiny steps: change by degrees. Just as the stock-market rises because each little step becomes the base line for a further small rise until coincidence establishes a rush, so a change of attitude is established step by step until it becomes a trend and a flood. Today it is hard to imagine that there was a time when slavery was looked upon as a matter of routine by Christian governments and Christian gentlemen and even quasi-religious bodies like the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

12. Change by provocation

Something happens and after it has happened our thinking is never quite the same again? In the process known as lateral thinking great use is made of provocation. A deliberately provocative statement is made: for example, that taxi drivers need not know their way around London. At first sight this seems ridiculous. But as a provocation it serves to jerk us out of our usual way of looking at taxis. For example, the very low number of taxis in London (much lower than Moscow and very much lower than New York) is partly due to the tough route-knowledge exam which taxi-drivers have to pass in order to get a licence. The studying for this exam often takes six months of exploring the streets on a motor-cycle. The provocation leads us directly to the concept of a two-tier taxi system. The existing tier would remain as it is and would be used by visitors and people from out of town. The new tier would consist of drivers who did not know their way around and would be used only by Londoners who could direct the driver. The taxis would be distinguished in colour and the drivers would, in time, learn their way about anyway. In science a provocative hypothesis can be most useful in getting us to look at something in a new way. Much of art is provocative in this sense. It is not meant to be an accurate descriptive statement but to provoke us into insights, realisations and new ideas.

13. Change by design

We are always a little wary of change by design since it implies a design that fits the values and considerations of the designer but not necessarily of anyone else. The high-rise apartment blocks built around London some years ago seemed an excellent idea in terms of cost of building and density of housing. But they are now acknowledged to be a disaster because the families living in them are far too isolated from each other: children cannot go out to play and the anonymity leads to vandalism. We would be worried that a designed future would leave out human values or could not take into account the possible changes in needs, preferences and circumstances. Of course there are good designs and bad designs just as there are good architects and bad architects. There are also fixed designs, and flexible designs that allow for adjustment and improvement. *Change through creating institutions*. An area of change is perceived and a body is set up to deal with that area. In time this body acquires its own power- or loses it - and change is affected. The setting up of trades unions in the United Kingdom was such a change through institutionalisation. The European Common Market is another example. The purpose of setting up the institution in the first place may not have been to encourage change. On the contrary, it may have been to defuse the situation to make a gesture of showing that something was being done with the intention that this would avoid the need for real change. Once such an institution was in place then any further protests could be shunted off to that institution. Sometimes, however, such institutions set up as substitutes for genuine change can become foci for change in their own right.

14. Change through creating alternative tracks

This is change through by-pass. Instead of trying to change the whole system you create a by-pass which leaves the system intact. If the by-pass thrives and attracts more and more

traffic, then it becomes established and the change has been effected. Freddie Laker created such a by-pass with his low fares to New York from London. It proved such a success that within a short time most major scheduled services were offering special low fares. As an agent of change his by-pass proved most effective. In seeking to establish 'thinking' as a general skills subject in schools I have used the same method. Set up a practical way for teaching thinking as a skill and make it available to schools. If the schools find it of use, then eventually it will become established. To date several thousand schools are using the method. It would have been very difficult to attempt a direct change through complaint or exhortation at a central level.

15. *Change through persuasion or exhortation*

Salesmanship, argument, persuasion and exhortation are all ways of trying to get someone else to change his view of things. The purpose is to develop insight so that suddenly the listener will see the logic of your argument. The difficulty is to know when persuasion or advertising becomes manipulation, which is then change through coercion. Subliminal advertising is manipulation but salesmanship is not. Then there is the problem of the slanting of information. If you slant your information or select it then you are manipulating the response. Fortunately change through these methods is relatively inefficient. We would probably be unable to tolerate it if it became too effective.

16. *Change through awareness*

If you do succeed in seeing something differently than your behaviour may change as a result. The consciousness of pollution and the effect of the Club of Rome's book *Limits to Growth* were good examples of this. Freudian psychoanalysis is based on change through awareness. That is the sort of change I shall be attempting throughout this book. If we can become aware of the structures and concepts that restrict our evolution, then we may be able to adapt more easily to complex circumstances. An idea may have an organising power, an attention power, a value power or an awareness power.

17. *Change through review*

In business there is a fashion for what is called 'zero-based budgeting'. Normally at budget time each department puts in a budget both for its on-going activity and to cover new developments. The budgets get trimmed but they get passed in the end. In zero-based budgeting there is no assumption that on-going departments or activities need to go on existing. That is why there is a zero-base. Nothing is taken for granted. Each activity and each department has to justify its existence from scratch - as if it was being set up for the first time. We can do the same with some of the concepts and structures in society. Instead of taking them for granted we can look at them and see if they continue to justify their existence. It may be that some of them are restricting our development and standing in the way of a positive future.