A mindset to foster a culture of economic well-being

Economy for the Common Good International Conference 2024 3/June/2024. Leeuwarden, Netherlands.

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Keywords: Well-being economy, Agency, Culture, Mindset

Introduction

The transition towards an economy of well-being¹ is complex, systemic, dynamic, and uncertain. Individuals and organizations struggle to connect with and embrace their changing contexts². In the face of uncertainty, humans cling to the known and fear the unknown³. To support individuals and organizations with these challenges, this paper presents a model and framework for a culture of economic well-being based on individual and collective intrinsic values. The model is called the "Mandala of Agency" (MoA) and places the individual at the core of systemic change with values as the leverage points. The MoA is based on theoretical exploration with parts validated by empirical research. In this paper, I will elaborate on the MoA in organizational settings. There are 2 main components, namely:

The mindset – Agents - uncover the dynamic and multi-identity self and connect with the challenges of the situation to create the individual context. Individuals exercise, regain, and re-exercise individual agency, freedom, and responsibility to agentively identify the values, mental models, and context to construct the personal vision of individual valuable lives.

The culture – Collective agency - merges individual valuable lives with the valuable lives of other stakeholders in the organization. It is based on appreciating and respecting the multi-identity, and dynamic self of others, and building ties with stakeholders based on trust, collaboration, and shared values. Integrating both individual and shared values, in a bottom-up and inclusive manner into the strategic framework and contextual realities of the organization. This can translate into new business models to embed multidimensional value. Collective action - The joint actions translate individual and shared values into the manageable and measurable actions needed to create valuable lives. Thus allowing us to face uncertainty, dismantle paradigms, and create new realities that are conducive for an economy of well-being to emerge.

¹ Well-being in this paper refers to the capabilities that people have to live valuable/fulfilled lives, being ends and not mere means of economic production. (Sen, 1999)

² (Furr, 2022; Katsos, J.E, and Miklian, J., 2021; UNDP, 2022)

³ (Walker, Salt, & Reid, 2006)

Background

At the core of economic well-being lies the ability of individuals to live the lives that we have a reason to value⁴. Empirical evidence⁵ demonstrates that who we are and what we value is not top of mind, limiting our own ability to lead valuable lives. Many of the choices we make arise from narratives and values constructed for us by external influences⁶. The knowledge of the individual self enables us to act in autonomous and self-directed ways⁷.

In our era of uncertainty, individuals and organizations struggle to connect with and embrace their changing contexts. Organizations are instrumental in generating multiple types of value and redefining growth. Organizational change does not come easy and it is hard to gain the endorsement of all stakeholders.

The Cartesian division⁸ between mind and matter generated a separation of the self, where values were separated from scientific facts⁹. The subjectivity of the self was for a very long time regarded as non-scientific and thus excluded from scientific exploration. This view of the world also separated the individuals from one another, people and planet.



From passive observer to active agent to collective

The current narratives of the social and economic challenges and the big transitions of our era are not

conducive to change. Concepts like sustainability and regeneration can mean different things, for different people in different situations, creating different contexts and making it difficult for the individual to connect with the external narratives. This feeling isolates individuals and generates apathy towards potential action, placing individuals as a passive observer of a reality they feel they cannot influence.

The Mandala of Agency

The MoA has been purposely designed to be applicable in different contexts and to resonate with a wide variety of audiences. It does not strive for simplicity, rather it aims at presenting in a holistic, structured, and actionable manner, a route to identify and live valuable lives¹⁰. The MoA strives to activate and cultivate the intrinsic motivations of individuals with the exercise of their agency, freedom, and responsibility. The Mandala is an interdisciplinary model and framework where several methods, theories, and concepts interact and blend¹¹. It is to be implemented in a context where basic needs have been fulfilled and in liberal democracies with a well-established institutional framework.

^{4 (}Sen, 1999)

⁵ (Lomeli Aguirre - Elena, ongoing)

⁶ (Adam Curtis, 2002)

⁷ (Leary, 2014)

⁸ Form Rene Descartes's mechanistic world of the world

⁹ (Capra, F., Luisi, P.L., 2014)

¹⁰ Valuable lives as defined by Amartya Sen in Development as freedom. Where individuals are not seen only as means of economic production but as ends on their own, with the capabilities to live fulfilled lives.

¹¹ Psychology, Organizational Psychology, Philosophy/Political Philosophy, Systems theory, Philosophy, Neurobiology, Cognitive Sciences, Culture, Organizational Development, Economics, Well-being economics, and Spirituality

The visualization of the complete model took the form of a Mandala. In some cultures¹², mandalas represent a map, a journey of consciousness toward transformation and self-discovery. In other cultures, mandala-shaped images represent a journey of progression¹³. The inside-out nature of the mandala represents a process of growth and expansion of the self, the self in its context, and the self with others (people and planet). The MoA is a non-static, dynamic, and progressive journey for the continuous becoming of the self, the others, and the context.

The totality of the journey consists of 6 expanding steps.

Mindset, individual agency (Innercircle)

- 1. Who I am Defining the self
- What I value Identifying valuable life and vision for self
- 3. What I do where I am Linking individual valuable lives to organizational context

Culture – Collective Agency (outer-circle)

- 4. Who are we and what we value Weaving visions together
- 5. Where we want to be Embedding collective vision in organization
- How we get there –
 Collective Actions



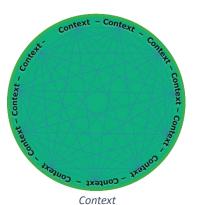
The Mandala of Agency

Context

Context is the set of interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs¹⁴. Originally from the Latin "contexere" which means to weave or join together¹⁵.

For the mandala, <u>context is</u> "the framework that captures and embeds the interconnected circumstances and patterns that give a certain situation(s), in a specific moment, a specific meaning".

In the journey of the mandala, context expands with the individuals. It evolves from situation(s) to personal context, to collective context, to collective context for action. Therefore, the point of departure is setting the scene of the situation and guiding



¹² Buddhist, Hindu. For Taoism and the Navajo, they serve the same purpose but are not called Mandalas.

¹³ Mayans and Aztecs

¹⁴ Webster online dictionary. Accessed 10/03/2024

¹⁵ idem

individuals to contextualize it based on their understanding. Examples of situations can be; nature-inclusive sustainability, regeneration, energy transition, and so forth.

The Mindset - Agent

A mindset is the set of underlying values and beliefs about the self, which shapes the approach to challenges, resilience, and willingness to learn and grow¹⁶. For the mandala, **mindset is "the dynamic** outlook that we have, to use our cognition and consciousness to see, react and create the world around us".

The key elements of the mindset are; values, identities, mental models, and context which are identified with freedom, agency, and responsibility to articulate and pursue their valuable lives¹⁷.

The mandala does not pursue individualism, rather, seeks to support the individual to connect with the true-self to better connect with the other and together face the systemic issues of our era in transitions. The MoA sees the individual as a relational agent who cannot exist In isolation but who knows to think independently.

1 - Who I am - Me

Who we are is a difficult question to answer, which makes it easy for many of us to rely on what the media or institutions tell us that we need to be and to have to live fulfilled lives. Empirical research¹⁸ shows that who we are and what we intrinsically value are not top of mind. Just like our contexts, we are in a continuous state of becoming¹⁹.

By asking these questions and identifying our intrinsic answer, we ignite our becoming as agentive and responsible citizens aiming at being truly free. We open-out control of our choices and learn to respect the choices of others, willingly acting together²⁰.

Values

At the core of an economy of well-being are the capabilities that individuals have to live valuable lives²¹. To understand what that means, we need to know what we intrinsically value; this knowledge will only emerge with the identification of our values.

Values guide our actions, challenge our assumptions, and enable new ways of thinking to emerge that promote well-being. In the MoA, <u>values are:</u> "A set of personal choices identified with freedom, agency, responsibility, and



Values and the multi-identity and dynamic self

consciousness to be applied in a given time/context to enhance individual well-being and make lives valuable"²². They are the leverage points for systemic change²³.

^{16 (}Dweck, 2017)

¹⁷ Sen's capabilities approach did not specifically mention mindsets.

^{18 (}Lomeli Aguirre - Elena, ongoing)

^{19 (}Fromm, 2022)

²⁰ (Ryan, R.M., Deci, E.L., 2000)

^{21 (}Sen, 1999)

²² (Lomeli Aguirre, 2024)

²³ (Meadows, 2008)

Values are not categorized or predetermined by a fixed moral or ethical construct. They are dynamic, multifaceted, and always evolving, like the individual.

It is the knowledge of our values and their dynamism that enables us to define ourselves, see our evolution, articulate our multiple identities, make decisions, adapt, and grow. The MoA gives attention to 3 distinctive identities; individual, professional, and world-citizen.

Identity

For the MoA, identity is: "the choice we have to define ourselves in a given role, moment in time and context. It is through the understanding of the interplay of our identities that we can integrate and prioritize what constitutes the self."

The construction of our identities determines how we think about ourselves and about the other²⁴. This understanding determines what actions we are motivated to take. The better we internalize our identities, the more autonomous we become in guiding our lives, and, the more connected we become to others²⁵.

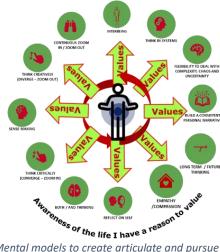
When we exercise our agency we can create genuine identities. When we allow our identities to be built based on the values developed by others for us, we outsource our ability to be ourselves, we commoditize our identities and ourselves²⁶ and our relationships with others.

2 - What I value - My vision

Mental Models

Mental models provide the cognitive tools and frameworks needed to navigate uncertain and complex systems. They enhance our ability to understand, analyze, and act²⁷ to promote positive outcomes and address systemic challenges²⁸. Mental models enable us to choose to think differently so that we can feel differently²⁹ and, act differently.

The engagement of the mind does not mean rationalizing in the form of mathematizing or analysis. The mind is a process³⁰. For the mandala, mental models are: "the engagement of consciousness and cognition to become cognizant of how we construct our thoughts and become



Mental models to create articulate and pursue valuable lives

intentional in the way in which we construct our narratives and thus our realities.

The 12 Mental Models in the MoA present the necessary ways of thinking to face the systemic complexity to achieve a culture of economic well-being³¹. They are meant to be in continuous interaction with each other.

²⁴ (Oyserman, D., Elmore, K., Smith, G., 2012)

²⁵ (Ryan, R.M., Deci, E.L., 2012)

²⁶ (Ryan, R.M., Deci, E.L., 2012)

²⁷ Also emerges in Volition as the power/ability of an individual to make conscious choices/decisions and to act upon them. It encompasses the capacity for intentional/purposeful action, driven by one's will/desire.

²⁸ (Senge, 2006)

²⁹ (Damasio, 2021)

³⁰ (Capra, F., Luisi, P.L., 2014)

 $^{^{31}}$ Interesting overlap with IDGs and the future of jobs by the WEF 2023.

- Building a personal narrative understand and align values, thoughts, and behaviour.
 Independent-thinking
- **Zoom in** Convergence to filter existing information to pay attention to the details. Critical and analytical-thinking
- **Zoom out** Divergence to gather new information to explore the unknown, and build the big picture. Creative, inquisitive, and lateral-thinking
- **Systems thinking** Interconnectedness, patterns and dynamism of components while seeing the whole.
- **Self-reflection** -Transformation of acquired knowledge into personal growth acknowledging the feelings we feel.³²
- **Sense-making** Data-collection process to assess the plausibility of something³³.
- **Both/and thinking** Reconciliation and integration of apparent dichotomous/paradoxical notions, moving us away from either/or thinking³⁴.
- **Empathy and compassion** Understanding experiences of others, fostering collaboration³⁵ , and sharing our humanity"³⁶
- Long-term thinking Thinking about the future for ourselves and for those around us.
- Resilience thinking—Flexibility to deal with uncertainty and complexity and to embrace chaos.
- Interbeing Embracing the interconnectedness with everything around us.
- **Frugal thinking** maximizing resources and minimizing waste, focusing on the key features that matter, letting go of the rest.

Mental models, together with values, enable the articulation of the individual's vision of a valuable life. Empirical research³⁷ shows that upon identification of values, mental models, and acknowledgment of our multiple identities, individuals intrinsically widen their definition of sustainability to include their interactions with others, accountability of their behaviour, and awareness of their actions.

3 - What I do where I am - My vision in my context, the organization

Organizations, like individuals, are amid interconnected transitions, and in this process, are becoming more conscious of their environmental and social impacts and are starting to explore new business models to adapt to their new realities.

Based on the understanding of the self, its values, and mental models, the organizational situation is contextualized by the individual. On this basis, the individual understands the impact that the pursuit of their vision of a valuable life can create. Thus, increasing their level of competency³⁸ in relationship



Individual valuable life in organizational context

33 (Mantis, 2022)

³⁷ (Lomeli Aguirre, 2023)

³² (Goleman, 2020)

³⁴ (Smith, W.K., Lewis, M.W., 2022)

^{35 (}Radzvilavicius, A. Stewart, A. Plotkin, J., 2019)

³⁶ (Brown, 2021)

³⁸ the need to feel effective and capable. (Ryan, R.M., Deci, E.L., 2000)

with their environment and drive intrinsic motivations to act for change³⁹.

Empirical research⁴⁰ demonstrates that upon the understanding of the organization context, and the linkage to the valuable lives of the individuals, shared values emerge naturally; Connection, Cooperation, Meaningful work/Making a difference. Further, individuals move from individual actions to collective and proactive interactions⁴¹.

To wrap up the mindset journey: agency, freedom, and responsibility are the means and the ends that help us understand values, mental models and, valuable lives, create new narratives to live dignified lives, become more resilient and, agentively create our own well-being.



The Agent - Mindset of well-being

The Culture – Collective Agent

Culture is a dynamic and evolving concept. Many different definitions of culture exist. Yuval Noah Harari defines it as "...collection of artificial instances that enables millions of strangers to collaborate and cooperate"⁴². Culture indeed brings us close to others, driving our collaboration. Living by the narratives created by others for us, we collaborate based on artificial instances. Exercising our agency, freedom, and responsibility, we connect and collaborate based on genuine and intrinsic instances.

For the mandala, <u>culture is:</u> "the dynamic interplay between individual and collective intrinsic values and their many different forms and manifestations in a particular context that creates shared perspectives and collective agency".

³⁹ (Ryan, R.M., Deci, E.L., 2000)

^{40 (}Lomeli Aguirre, 2023)

⁴¹ idem

^{42 (}Harari, 2015)

4 - Who are we and what we value - Our vision

The ensemble of agentive individuals creates dynamic and synergistic relationships that foster collaboration and shared responsibility. Individual visions are woven into a collective vision in a bottom-up/inclusive manner. Stakeholders engage with empathy and respect and generate mutual understanding of their respective valuable lives.

It is from a place of expanded connection with the self that the individual can create genuine connections with others⁴³⁴⁴ and together create the cultures that will foster their collective valuable



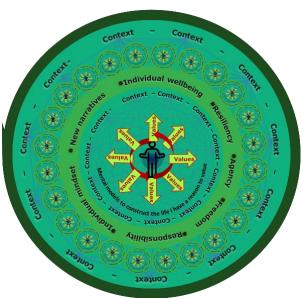
Connecting with the valuable lives of others

lives. Relatedness creates belonging to one another, which promotes intrinsic motivations to act and overall well-being⁴⁵. It is through our ability to relate that cultures are created and transmitted⁴⁶.

The vision is a driver of strategy. In the process of creating a vision, stakeholders embed their mindsets in the organization. It is not only what the vision is, it is also what the vision does⁴⁷; build individual and organizational resilience to embrace shared futures⁴⁸ and construct collective valuable lives. In this process, the organization becomes a collective agent.

5 - Where we want to be - Our vision in the organization

As mindsets, stakeholders shape their organizations need to shape their cultures and Often, strategies are created at the strategies. top and presented top-down for implementation, which is not conducive to activating people's intrinsic motivations to support the organization and create the change needed to face the transitions of our era. The MoA presents a bottom-up approach to organizational cultural change. Where the strategic objectives of the organization are developed based on the shared values and vision of its stakeholders in the



Collective valuable lives in the organizational context-Collective agency

^{43 (}Fromm, 2022)

⁴⁴ (Bieri, 2012)

⁴⁵ (Ryan, R.M., Deci, E.L., 2000)

^{46 (}Ryan, R.M., Deci, E.L., 2012)

⁴⁷ idem

^{48 (}Senge, 2006)

organizational context.

Based on weaving individual contexts, a common context emerges. Here a gap analysis can be conducted to see existing realities and identify missing steps to get where the team defined they want to be. This can be done across projects or teams within the organization.

The alignment of shared values and shared vision not only strengthens organizational cohesion and resilience, but also nurtures cultures of collaboration, solidarity, and inclusive growth. This, in turn, fosters well-being for all stakeholders and for the organization.

Empirical research⁴⁹ shows that when aiming at creating value based on the intrinsic values that we hold and being true to the self-identified valuable lives, individuals strive to create value beyond financial value and expand into social, environmental, cultural, and experiential value. On this basis, new business models can emerge for the organization, where multidimensional indicators can reflect the multi-dimensional value the organization strives to create.

6 – How we get there – Collective Action

Understanding is not changing⁵⁰, therefore, the last part of the mandala identifies the collective actions that need to be taken to realize the jointly created organizational vision.

Individuals become agents of their own well-being in a process that brings them close to oneanother. In the same way, organizations can become collective agents, who can produce multidimensional value for their prosperity and that of those collective agents around them.

The interplay between individual mindset and collective culture gives rise to actions that are driven by intrinsic motivations, rooted in personal and shared values and visions. These actions reflect a commitment to personal development, collaboration, and contribution to collective well-being. Within the organizations, individuals engage meaningfully in the realization of shared visions and strategies.

Organizations can go beyond financial value-driven models, with the active collaboration of its

Manageable - From big & complicated to complex, small & manageable From big problem to big change Big change

engaged stakeholders and create multidimensional value to achieve an economy of well-being. Actions are also to be measured with multidimensional indicators to reflect the multidimensionality of the value they will strive to create.

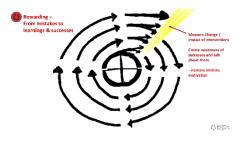
As actions are identified, it is important to keep them manageable and structure them on a measurable manner.

understanding the multidimensional value the By organization strives to create, problems can be broken down into smaller problems and dimensions and contextualized. Then it can be observed that big change emerges from acting together in the pursuit of the big picture. This approach is conducive to behavioural change⁵¹ and promotes systemic collaboration.

⁵⁰ (Bieri, 2012) ⁵¹ (Grant, 2021)

⁴⁹ (Lomeli Aguirre, 2024)

Measuring actions through multidimensional indicators enables the organization to see and highlight successes across the multidimensional value created. Success-narratives increase the intrinsic motivation to continue to act⁵² and further build the collective agency of the organization. Change starts small, over iterations becomes big.



Conclusion

The journey towards an economy of well-being is complex and multifaceted, demanding a shift from traditional paradigms to embrace dynamic and context-sensitive approaches. The (MoA) provides a holistic, flexible and transformative framework that places individuals at the core of systemic change, emphasizing the importance of individual mindsets and collective cultures to foster economic well-being.

Mindsets to build individual agency, creating awareness of the self, and enabling individuals to identify and align with their intrinsic values, mental models, and contexts. Cultures to build a collective agency that merges individual aspirations into a collective vision, fostering trust, collaboration, and shared values within organizations. Collective actions to evolve beyond traditional models, exploring new business paradigms that prioritize multidimensional value creation.

Currently, the MoA and its implementation tools are being further tested in organizational settings. The mandala is to further grow and develop. So far, based on the theoretical exploration and empirical research obtained, the MoA can already offer new insights and outcomes to facilitate the emergence of a well-being-centric culture where; we embrace dynamism through the knowledge of our dynamic self, we create new realities that reflect what we intrinsically value, we democratized the economy through the exercise of our agency and responsibility, societies are just as they cater for what individuals value most, organizations become resilient as they are composed of resilient individuals who can deal with complexity and connect with one another, multidimensional value can structurally be created and we exercise our individual and collective agency systemically.

^{52 (}Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D., 2005; Pink, 2018)



The Mandala of Agency

The collective agent - The culture of economic wellbeing

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