

The Upside of Brexit - A Teal Experiment in Politics

By Morya Short for Enlivening Edge Magazine

The EU referendum results have been shocking to many and an invitation to bad behaviour for others. However, amidst the chaos there might be some bright spots for the UK, particularly if we marshal the lessons into collective learning, and move what could be “one-off” political engagement by some folks, into something more lasting.

Can we leverage Teal ideas to create a new type of Politics? It seems clear, from the actions and reactions over the last ten years, that the electorate's desire for a new type of politics is growing stronger. The attempts to score political points within and across parties after the shock EU Brexit results might have once been viewed as an inevitable aspect of politics; today it is viewed with disgust by many. We were left “rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic” as we focused on who will lead the main parties, instead of creating a cross-party group to work out how we handle the EU exit, fix the banking system, the economy, and inequality plus make our plans to cope with a significantly warmer world—to name just a few of the challenges.

A Call for Change

Back in 2009, the UK electorate discovered that some of their “trusted,” democratically-elected members of Parliament were being less than fully honest about their expenses. What followed was a cascade of accusations and rebuttals which the media dubbed the “Expenses Scandal.”

Cheating on the expenses was a source of shame and in some cases resignation and legal action. But what the crisis also made clear was that the expenses rules themselves were much more generous than most companies, so the rules in fact “invited” the “spirit of reasonable expenses” to be flouted. For example, in 2009 up to £250 could be claimed without a receipt.^{[1](#)}

At the time, the feeling in the country was that “Politics” needed shaking up, that a new type of leadership was required. Along with phrases like “we are in this together,” Cameron and his ministers encouraged the electorate to swallow their austerity budget. It all seemed as if some progress might be made. Perhaps, politicians had seen the light and realised infighting, polarisation of issues around ideologies, lying and cheating were aspects of political life which needed to urgently change? Sadly, all this was just political business as usual; the attractive seemingly-collaborative, “let’s all pull together” language was just rhetoric, just a soundbite.

Meanwhile the EU “Brexit” referendum campaign has made it very clear that nothing substantial has changed in the “way” we “do politics” in the UK. The referendum campaign was conducted just like any other: information was “massaged” into statements designed, not to provide understanding or clarity, but to influence the voter. Debates were attacks, not a reasoned discussion about the pro’s and con’s of staying in or leaving the EU. All the time, the protagonists encouraged us to make decisions with our emotions or via biased campaign literature, written in varying shades of terminological inexactitudes.

Can Teal help?

Reinventing Organisations by Frederic Laloux ignited many people’s imagination and prompted action. Inspirational and practical case studies from the book have convinced a more-than-ready audience that this is the time to reinvent how we work together. The case studies demonstrate the business imperatives behind self-organisation, bringing the whole self to work, and emphasis on the organization’s evolutionary purpose. At the same time as showing the business case for each of these three “Teal-stage organizational” breakthroughs, Laloux shows us a world where these breakthroughs are already working—and working well.

Throughout the book he introduces many practical approaches to solving business and employment issues in new ways, such things as Theory U, systemic thinking, and Appreciative Inquiry. All the examples in the book are from businesses of varying sizes. Now it’s time to ask: could the same approaches be used effectively in government?

A political party based on Teal ideals would focus more on values, purpose, and “how” to solve problems than on making policy promises. Such a party would be value-driven, not ego-driven. It would be agile and responsive to the needs of people, communities, country, council, and state.

Sound like an impossible dream?

Perhaps.

To discover what is possible, What could be the next step?

How can we create a new way for Politics and governance? What could help us stem the tide of politicians who are driven by rabid self-interest and intent on enhancing their Political career as their first priority?

The appetite for “new ways” is clear; perhaps what we need is a collaborative, co-creative piece of work which defines what these “new ways” might be.

Asking politicians themselves for something different has not worked. Perhaps the reason why Politics stays the same is that not enough energy is being put into creating an alternative? (There are some notable exceptions; see notes for details.)²

How can we begin a revolution in governance in an evolutionary way? How can Teal personal and organisational models help?

Successful Teal organisations combine personal development as well as business and organisational change. The decision to “go Teal” creates a push-pull dynamic where new business approaches challenge employees to rise to the challenge of self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose. In turn, as the people grow and develop the organisation continues to grow and change. What emerges is a transformation, which if done sensitively allows a new organisation to evolve from the old.

It is this evolutionary process which might be Teal's greatest gifts to the world of Politics. Allowing old ways to “die” and be replaced by a new form, is a way to avoid getting stuck debating “what's wrong” with the old system. Fighting the old system is one way to make change, but coupling that with creating a clear new path will accelerate lasting transformation—transformation which includes developing new worldviews as well as new processes and practices which support ongoing evolution.

So how do we start this transformation in Politics? Asking the right questions will certainly be a good start. Beyond that, collaboration, experiments, and prototypes will be needed to chart the way.

If you feel that Teal has potential to assist a new form of Politics emerge and you would like to take part in an experiment, please sign up to participate.

The next step will include an on-line call with participants, to kick off the collaboration and plan further steps.

[Join the Experiment Now](#)

Notes:

1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8039590.stm
2. [Crowdacracy](#). [RSA Flat-pack democracy](#)