



Avoiding the Energy-Sucking Paradigm: Creating Sustainable Change in Organizations

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Unpacking the Metaphor of the Energy Sucking Paradigm

- What experiences does this metaphor bring to mind?
- How would you define an ESP?
- What observations about how organizations engage in change relate to the ESP?



Seeking Alternatives

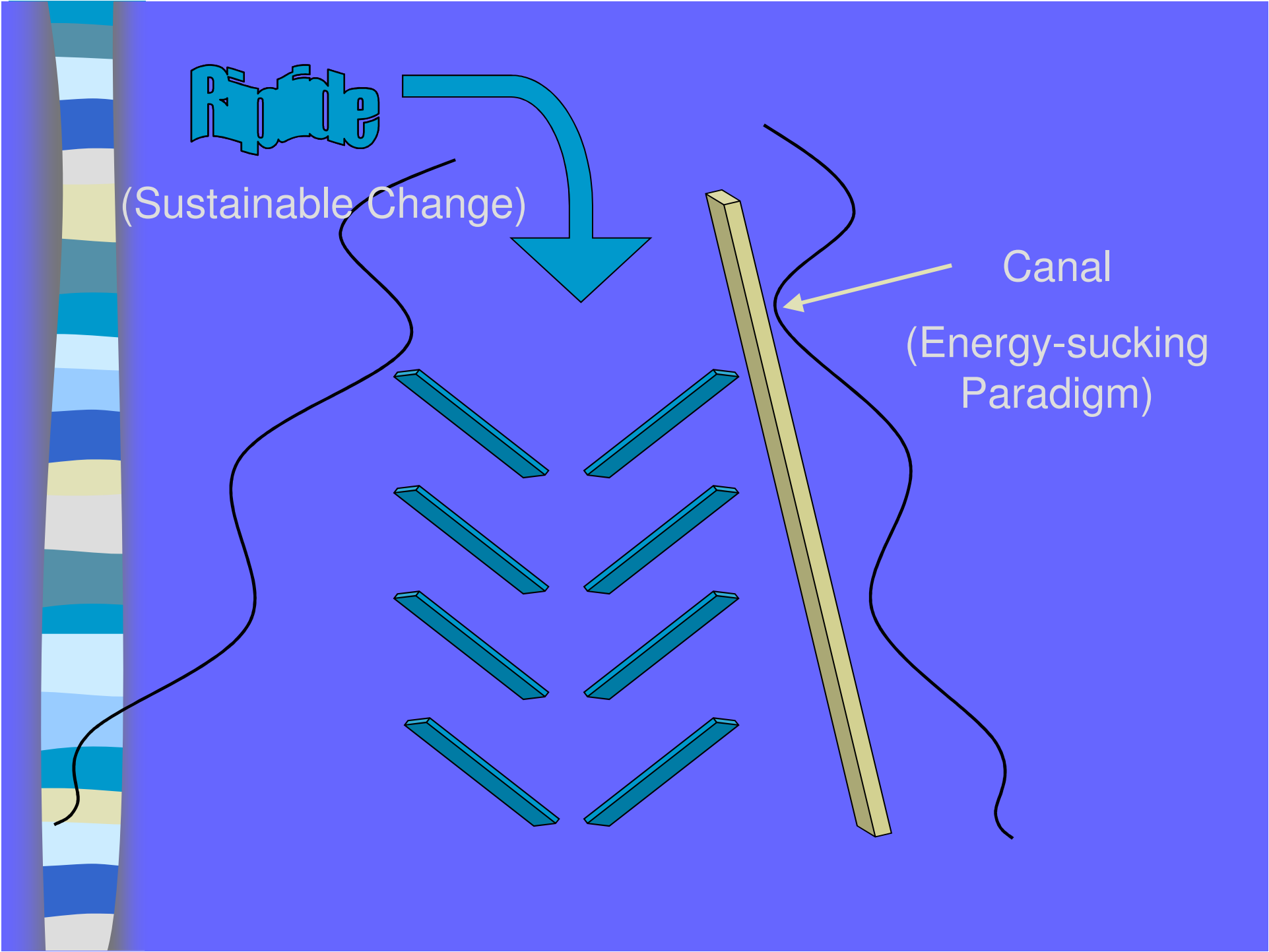
- What experiences do you have with change that are different from the energy sucking paradigm?
- If not an ESP – then what?

Paradigm

(Sustainable Change)

Canal

(Energy-sucking
Paradigm)





CANAL

vs.

RIPTIDE

- Consumptive

- Sustainable/generative

- controlled

- unleashed

- at rest

- in motion

- disconnected from power sources

- energy and resources within the system



CANAL

vs.

RIPTIDE

- rigid boundaries
natural state: at rest
- resistance
overcome
- solution separates
- against the current

- semi-permeable
natural state: in motion
- resistance
incorporated
- solution integrates
- with the current



Principles of Sustainable Change

-Kathleen Allen and William Meese

- Leverages resources/energy already in the system.
- Sees resources within the system as assets.
- Seeing assets is at the core of transforming energy in a system.



Principles (cont.)

- Choice of design/structure helps unleash the energy.
- Resistance is integral to change and needs to be intentionally coordinated to optimize effect.
- System dynamics need to be understood to be utilized/optimized.
- Design to create momentum, to reach a tipping point.

Strategies for Sustainable Change



- Relationships are primary
- Agents of change not stability
- Assume they are invited to the table
- Follow the energy resources are time, energy and attention not \$
- Attract not push
- Focus on the commons



Strategies for Sustainable Change

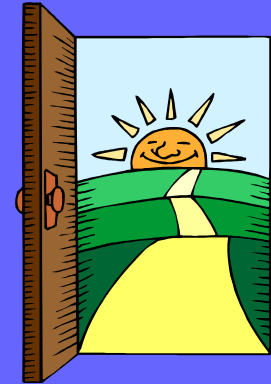
- See change on two different levels – one that is traditional and one driven by organic ideas like energy, attraction, time, relationships
- Look around corners instead of walls – a pattern of innovation
- Focus on process and meaning not just content
- Recognize the power of human conversation

The Inner Work of Sustainable Change

- Always seeking
- Personal growth changes the way they work – “simplify, simplify, simplify”
- Perturbations normal
- Reflective
- Letting go
- Spirit involved



The Inner Work of Sustainable Change



- See connections everywhere
- Work in the commons not for self-interest
- Act as if they are critical to a better future – no passion for marginality



Three Basic Strategies for Change in Organizations

- Understand the basic nature of organizational energy
- Understand the processes that enhance the flow of energy
- Identify the behaviors (ESPs) that inhibit the flow of positive energy.



Allen's Essential Principles

- Energy is released when, through conversation, we are in connection with one another.
- Human energy is positive energy.
- Humans flow toward connections.
- Any strategy that brings people into relationship unleashes energy.



The Power of Human Conversation

-Margaret Wheatley

- We discover each other's presence, concerns and dilemmas.
- Conversations move rapidly through human networks to others who find them meaningful.



The Power of Conversation

(cont.)

- As conversations travel among networks of concerned people, they develop power exponentially.
- This exponential power can quickly develop into a capacity for huge impact.



The Power of Conversation

(cont.)

- The values and issues we talk about are crucial. We can choose values of self interest or for the common good.
- Seeding the conversation with the values we want is a critical place to intervene for influence.



Questions Worth Asking

- Where do these ideas lead you today? What seems familiar?
- Do any of these views help you better understand something that happened this year or strategize for something on the horizon?
- What possibilities do you see? What constraints?

One Last Thought:

“You can fly, but the cocoon has to go.”

-Norma Gibbs

