

## The Paradox of Thought Leadership in Aliveness

*... who knows the mysteries of the life behind the clouds ... in the forests ... beyond that which is visible ...*

Thought leadership ...  
... how wonderful this term sounds.

When someone is labelled a 'thought leader' ... does this mean that they have made it, that they are important, that they have something genuinely meaningful to say?

Perhaps.  
Perhaps not.  
Or perhaps those that attribute the label are not actually thinking ...

Not-Thinking, especially while thinking that one is thinking, is a widespread phenomenon.

Individuals can even label themselves a 'thought-leader'.  
Doubtless, it's an ego-booster.

\* \* \*

Now ... What precisely is 'thought leadership'?  
Who gets to decide who deserves such a label?  
Why?  
And then? ...

...  
Is 'thought leadership' an oxymoron?

Whenever I encounter labels, I'm inclined to ask Questions about them.

...  
...  
Permit me to relate three personal encounters with 'thought leadership' ...

A number of years ago, I was spontaneously invited to facilitate a workshop at an international project management conference. I presented *cultureQs*®, which at the time was in its pre-launch phase. After the workshop, I was approached by an experienced consultant who said, *"This is great. I'd love to be able to invite you to Australia to present this approach, but as you're not a thought leader, we're unlikely to gain much traction."*

I responded: *"What then is a 'thought leader' exactly?"*

...  
Not long ago, I received a personal message from a person on LinkedIn that included this little gem: *"just tag me on posts where you would like to engage my thought leadership on a topic."*  
I'm not entirely sure what she considers 'thought leadership' to be, and decided not to ask.

...  
Some weeks ago, I saw announcements for an event that claimed to be offering, *"Thought Leadership for Systemic Transformation"*.  
With the inherent contradiction between the notion of leadership within systemic transformation, I remain somewhat confused by the organiser's idea of 'thought'.

\* \* \*

So ... How about people whose work really does challenge our thoughts, take us in new directions?  
What do we call them if not thought leaders?  
Would they call themselves “thought leaders”? If so, could they be considered to be working systemically?

What does this label really mean?

It’s a little like the label of Professor. Does the label convey the right to the holder to profess over a subject? Does the label convey automatic superiority of view?

And here lies the problem of paradox in aliveness ... By naming a notion, we are rendering it meaningless. We are dividing the world into them and us; some and others; we are fragmenting the unfragmentable.

We are trying to control the uncontrollable.

How about people who follow “thought leaders” ...  
To what extent are they actually ... “thinking” ... actively genuinely “thinking” ...?

To what extent are these “thought leaders” thinking about the true value of their messages to others?

Once a term comes alive, it spreads and mutates ... just like a virus ...

How can we supersede the influence of both traditional and social media, enabling ourselves to suppress such viruses and actually engage in ...?

... “thinking” ...  
... thinking ... and sensing ... with all our senses ...  
... Questioning ...  
... enlivening curiosity ...  
...

The name is not the thing named.

\* \* \*

So ... What precisely is ‘thought leadership’?  
I honestly don’t know.

Personally, I prefer to Question ... to explore ... together with others ...

It’s by far the most effective means I have experienced to initiate genuine new ideas ... generative ideas that benefit all ... the generative change initiatives ... that bring to the surface the (perhaps) invisible desires and potential inherent in us all, individually and together.

...  
...

Dear Senior Leader ... Why wouldn’t you want to do this?