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Cultural challenges to Solution Focus – Reflections from Mexico

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The use of Solution Focus (SF) is introduced in new cultural settings all over the world. This is a challenge to SF that raises questions about how we can use cultural aspects in our practice. And is SF actually a cultural unbiased tool? This paper reflects upon these aspects based on experiences with using SF in Mexico. Moreover it has the purpose of representing a first small step towards a "cultural SF guide" consisting of questions that may help us pay attention to how we can maximise the benefits of integrating more explicitly the cultural settings we are interacting within.

Introduction

Literature on SF and culture is mainly about how the use of SF tools can change culture, be it organisational culture, group culture, business culture or others. The literature however rarely reflects upon if or how culture changes SF, what happens with our way of using SF in different cultural settings and how this can be used constructively.

During the last decade critical analyses of different methods of consultancy, training, facilitation and aid-projects have shown that many of these are heavily culturally biased. This frequently leads to strong negative consequences characterised especially by a non-favourable perception of the cultural "other", valued on the basis of Western parameters in general and Eurocentric indicators in particular. This has

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been seen for example in change and development projects in the non-Western world and in many attempts to introduce change, planning and strategy models in the same regions, as well as in models for social assistance, psychology tests, etc. (on cultural bias and consequences see for example: Burnes, 2004; Escobar, 1991; Hylland Eriksen, 2001; Miike, 2003; Sachs, 1992; Tyler, 2003).

People, processes and products are measured based on what is defined as "normal", "good results" and "success" in the Western world, which can be difficult to fulfill not being Western. It may easily lead to a confirmation of stereotypes or the construction of an image of the cultural "other" as deviant, less competent, insufficient, slow or complicated to interact with (see also Baker, 1998; Cohen, 1994; Hylland Eriksen, 1994; Shohat & Stam, 1994).

In this way, methods and work models for change and social help that are culturally biased can become their own worst obstacle to achieving good results. They may even become a factor in maintaining or reinforcing a cultural hierarchy and thereby also other related inequalities such as social, economical or religious hierarchies.

Is SF just another one of these Western change-tools contributing to cultural hierarchy?

It seems that SF is different from the majority of techniques by aiming to be fundamentally culturally unbiased. What tells us that? To mention a few aspects:

- Doing SF is about finding and giving attention to what works and ignoring what doesn't. It is not about judging whether or not the cultural differences are good or bad.
- It is a process that constantly and respectfully needs to be adjusted to local habits, rules and characteristics as it is not a predefined model that may or may not work and where others can be blamed.
- It is about interaction as well as identifying and building solutions together, not about consultants doing analysis based on pre-elaborated models for what they think should be achieved!

- There is no need for deep and diagnostic comprehension of the cultural characteristics to make progress as SF is pragmatic and focuses on *how* to use these characteristics rather than *why* they are there. This makes it possible to avoid many cultural misinterpretations.
- Recognition and affirmation are fundamental in an SF work process; it is not about analysing who deserves the recognition.
- In all cultures there are experiences of what works and in the SF approach every case is perceived to be different, which means that the idea of cultural hierarchies is not relevant.

All of the above points suggest that SF is a tool that probably can be used universally and adopted easily to very different cultural settings. Although one of the great masters of SF, Kim Insoo Berg, has said that cultural aspects need not to be given too much attention and in any case focus should be on their similarities (Victor Yalom, 2003), this paper takes the stand that culturally unbiased does not mean culturally neutral. We should not ignore, abandon or avoid using culture. Quite the opposite. Moreover, even if SF is culturally unbiased in theory, there is still a danger that we use it in a biased way.

This paper argues that culture is an aspect that is definitely important to pay attention to, mainly due to the fact that SF being basically culturally unbiased gives us the unique opportunity to choose *how* to use culture, be it what we identify as our own culture or that of others.

One way of doing this is to make more explicit the cultural aspects and question how we can integrate and use these intentionally in our own practice. What would be the benefits of this?

- Improve the use of what works in the specific cultural settings.
- Increase awareness of how our own cultural aspects can contribute to progress.

- Increase our capacity to remain culturally unbiased.
- Enrich SF tools and SF community.

This paper offers a first small step to a guide on how we can deal with aspects from our own or other cultural settings in an SF manner. It consists of seven main suggestions and each is complemented by a set of questions for reflection on how to use them in practice and examples from my experiences during my process of introducing SF in Mexico as a consultant (although originally Greenlandic-Danish, Mexico has been my home for a third of my life).

Search in social life and cultural diversity

We perceive and act in everyday life in relation to the knowledge and skills we acquire in interaction with others. The internalisation of cultural ideas of how we should behave makes it possible to interact without thinking thoroughly about every step we take and constitutes the basis for a sense of belonging. Perceiving things as "normal" is in part a result of a process where the sensitivity and curiosity that usually characterises the un-knower is reduced. An important aspect of SF is precisely the conscious use of an un-knowing attitude in our interaction with others in working situations (Jackson & McKergow, 2002, p. 118–119), but in our own surroundings it may be less present or even unused. Applying a not-knowing attitude beyond our work can help us integrate and maximise our use of cultural aspects including diversity to enrich work as well as SF.

In Mexico – starting up as a fulltime consultant using SF techniques – I studied my networks thoroughly to identify who could be helpful in getting me closer to a situation where I could make a living from it and make SF known in Mexico. Consultants and decision makers are definitely the key people, I thought, and – having plenty of contacts – I had no difficulties in obtaining meetings. To my surprise, whatever I tried I did not get anywhere. Following one of the basic principles of SF I stopped doing what didn't work and did something else. In this situation, this meant being so frustrated that I needed a break

with meetings. I decided to enjoy friends, the neighbourhood and huge networks of very different people.

When narrating the news from our lives I told my friends about my intentions with SF in Mexico, my many marvellous experiences and the quite poor results. Everybody had something to say about my experiences, even though it was sometimes just a vague comment like: "Oh Sofia, it's sad … but as you know, that is how it is when you are not recommended". (I am called Sofia in Mexico.) This made me realise that I had not yet used my contacts the way that we usually use our contacts in Mexico (see below for more about the meaning of being recommended). One responded on my reflections by talking about how she learned about real estate, making me recognise the importance of knowing how to sell. Others wondered if they could introduce me to someone, while artist friends showed me sculptures symbolising new perspectives or gave me basic guidelines on how to perform in meetings, and others again told me more about the political game that pervades the Mexican business environment.

I realised that I was surrounded by an incredible diversity that I did not use. Taking a position as a "not-knower", I asked more consciously about what my friends and contacts do to get one step up on the SF-scale while selling, analysing history, making sculptures and doing politics. To explore further the socio-cultural diversity, I invited people to interpret my successes and my failures on a more frequent basis. With new perspectives, more clarity about the many roles I have in my consultancy, and concrete ideas for my next small steps, I found new paths and made progress.

Different contacts are helpful at different things, and using the social and cultural expertise of others represents extraordinary resources that, if integrated intentionally, may represent a constant enrichment and (re)evaluation of SF consultancy.

- What kind of cultural diversity characterises your social life, your network, family or neighbourhood?
- How have you utilised this diversity until now (intentionally or not)? And in what way has this enriched your way of practising SF?

> • How would those around you notice that you are trying to identify how their cultural perspective can contribute to your work? What else?

Find cultural characteristics that contribute to progress

Cultural differences are easily perceived as obstacles and cause frustration or at least lead to thorough reflections on how to avoid them. In many situations the cultural differences automatically serve as explanations and justifications of our own ways of acting and living. In this way it is a fundamental part of our way of constructing our identity (anthropological studies argue that we construct our collective identities partly on what we believe we are *not* instead of only what we perceive we are (see for an example Hylland Eriksen, 1994). Nevertheless, the purpose of this section is to place emphasis on the possibility of using cultural differences as a constructive and enriching aspect of practising SF.

"Sofia, you really have a quite unique hairdo. Have you ever tried straightening it? It would look good … and go very well in meetings, you know". Not that my long and slightly curly hair is so unusual, but it became clear that appearance was especially important when introducing myself to new decision makers in the public and private sector. Asking directly about how I should look usually only caused vague responses or surprised comments reassuring me that I should always come as I am. I resisted my inclination to let the explanations guide me, remembering and confirming that explanations very rarely show us what to do (Jackson & McKergow, 2002, p. 48–49), just as a thorough analysis of the problem does not automatically lead us to its solution. I followed the hints on what works and invested what I felt was an enormous amount of time dressing up before the meetings and putting my hair up. I experienced again and again that the people inviting me to meetings thanked me afterwards. "For what?", I asked. "Thank you for coming with such a nice appearance. I appreciate your respect and the importance you show the meeting" … and finally they could introduce me to more influential people.

This example is a reflection on the fact that all the time we get "new" knowledge about cultural characteristics that surround us. Our incorporation of new information is not necessarily reflected in our actions though. We can have a profound knowledge or access to new information that could help us do better without being aware of it or ever making use of it. In other words, the question is not always *what* information we have, but *how* we make use of it. When confronted with differences, with rules and demands that can seem far from what we consider "our way", the identification of cultural characteristics that can help us make progress makes it possible to constructively transform the immediate feeling of being corrected, of not being recognised, being offended or maybe of being superior and feeling the one who's right - all natural reactions when we become aware that we are doing something not considered "normal" for others. Judging cultural characteristics of others as good or bad becomes less relevant when focusing on *how* to use the information about the cultural differences to bring us closer to what we want.

Once I experienced the benefits of doing so I also began looking for the aspects in Mexican culture(s) in general that have the most similarity to SF, to use them as possible ways to identify with the SF steps and make faster progress. To mention only a few: the emphasis on polite complimenting in conversations has similarity with SF affirms; listening without interrupting; and an incredible creativity in finding solutions within all parts of society that is considered especially Mexican. This creativity is part of everyday life at work places where lack of resources makes people invent the most original solutions, like how to create a networks with other offices kilometers away in order to interchange favours and get access to a copy machine? Or how can 10 people in an office share one computer? The motorcycle police officer suddenly finds himself in the role of distributor of office tools as he is driving around anyway. The roof of the office building is spontaneously converted into a perfect meeting room, weather protected by plastic tied to the lamp posts;

and with no space for an extra lane needed for the heavy traffic, what could work better than just reducing all the other lanes and painting one more on the side. The solutions might not always be the most efficient, but the creativity has a special presence and seems to have become part of the national identity as Mexican. This is definitely worth using when applying SF in Mexico.

- When and how was the last time you used cultural differences in a constructive way to make progress in your work or in relevant areas of your life?
- What would it take to identify cultural characteristics that may contribute to making progress?
- Suppose you integrated more cultural characteristics in your work, what would be the benefits?
- Which cultural characteristics and rules have most similarity to SF? And when?

Word and adjust the project in new ways

"Our language has remained the same and keeps seducing us into asking the same questions" (Wittgenstein cited in de Shazer, 2009, p. 57). Inspired by Wittgenstein, this section is a suggestion for re-wording projects to reduce the seduction of asking the same questions and maybe find unexpected benefits and new ways to progress. Staying with Wittgenstein, the position here is that language can not only seduce as well as bewitch, it can also heal (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 52).

On my trips to Northern Europe it was clear to me that in this part of the world change seems to be a positive word - and SF is described precisely by the word change. I had not much doubt when trying to introduce SF in Mexico: change was definitely the central word.

In Mexico change is also an everyday topic with a special visibility, but (I never noticed before that it is) in a quite different way to how it is seen in Europe. Change is most frequently mentioned in relation to the huge impact caused

when elections for president every six years change the civil servants from top to bottom; the vulnerability related to changes when sickness causes tragic economic breakdowns for whole families or related to work conditions determining that you can lose your job and social security in minutes; the so called "war" against the mafias that in the name of "positive" change has caused 28,000 assassinations and made fear ever present; and flood, hurricanes and earthquakes cause big changes in all levels of society.

The word "change" makes people sigh and makes them look exhausted. And here I was talking about change and tools to achieve small steps. It didn't work. What to do then?

- What words have you used to describe your projects recently? – And how do you think others noticed that?
- What do other people say you are doing?
- When do people seem the most interested in what you do? What differences and similarities have you noticed between cultural environments in relation to this?
- When have you been promoted in a satisfying way? – And how did this happen?
- What might tell you that you have maximised the positive effects of how you and others have worded your project?

I have made it a habit after every meeting to analyse when people seemed most interested – what words helped? I integrate these in new ways of presenting SF and what I do for a living – just to try it out afterwards in other cultural settings. Differences in what seems to attract decision makers can not only be noticed between the public and private sector, but also seem to vary depending on the hierarchical position. At some point I felt unable to find ways that could make decision makers more interested in what I could offer. Often they looked bored when I described how every organisation is already full of usually unexplored resources, and

how unexpected solutions and positive results can be generated sometimes incredibly fast when engaging people constructively.

One day a former politician who had shown great interest in my use of SF decided to introduce me to some friends of his. When explaining what I do, he changed everything I had told him and talked instead about how I am specialised in assurance of results (in Spanish: aseguramiento de resultados), that I contribute to making people work in the same direction so people actually do what they have to do. "This innovative method makes mistakes and errors more useful", he added, "and makes them look better. It's not that bad at all. Sofia makes sure that plans indeed become reality". His presentation caused interest immediately. They turned to me talking about how difficult it is to make people follow orders, and that methods like those I use are always needed so to make results faster. "One of the problems is that people are lazy and don't want to work. It is admirable that you have found a way to make them see what they have to do." I noticed their sudden attention with mixed feelings. I felt a strong need to make my point clear, starting with the fact that I don't make people follow orders and assure results, but at the same time I had a vague sense that our conversation was a small sign of what I had wanted from them.

Annoyed that he had changed my "speech" and added characteristics to my work and SF that are not in coherence with what I consider SF philosophy, at first I did not realise the value of the incident. He on the other hand, had no doubts about how to describe what I do. He connected a political value to the approach and most importantly I understood afterwards, he knew how to make them identify with the topic. Their animated talk was a sign of a sudden connection between their reality and the innovative method they had never heard about. It was his "speech" that . . . worked.

I became aware of the exception – the situation where the problem was expected but somehow did not happen (de Shazer cited in de Jong & Berg, 2008, p. 103) – and I explored it further as SF suggests. Once I recognised that my insistence in making people get it *right* about SF was a

hindrance and that I could build upon others' descriptions of my work, a conscious use of their cultural expertise to describe my project has become a fundamental part of promoting, learning and innovating.

Opt for local support and collaboration

"You can't just go there and think that because you are a competent consultant with very good intentions you will succeed. How can you forget that in our environment of public administration – completely independent of your qualifications – they perceive you, Sofia, as unprotected. People need to see you are connected to a group", many friends kept saying after I had seen another one of my projects started up but not ended, and without getting paid for many hours of preparation. Others – a majority – insisted that I need to use my contacts and "be placed in a position" (in Mexican Spanish: acomodado) by more influential people.

During more than 6 months I explored different ways of getting more stable working conditions and one of my many initiatives was asking contacts, colleagues and friends about what they thought would be a good first step towards a situation where I could work with the stability and benefits as those who are "acomodados", without ever accepting such a situation myself. It became clear that the first step could be finding the best way to be "recommended". In Mexico this can be compared to having a "mediator" or maybe even a "protector". There are different degrees of responsibility connected to the recommendation. The most efficient recommendation implies that the recommender plays an active role during the contract. The recommended party tries to avoid making his recommender look bad by failing (in Spanish: quedar mal), reports to him with certain frequency how things are going, and if there are any problems the recommender is likely to step in as mediator and defend the recommended party or solve the situation the way that affects his name and reputation the least.

I have since remembered how many times I had been

recommended, but avoided the situation because of an exaggerated pride that made me avoid "owing" too much to others, and thereby also failing to use what works and what is a fundamental part of how reciprocity is expressed here. I have now changed my perception of being recommended and I have not lost anything. On the contrary, I seemed to be considered much more a serious collaborator ... playing a part in the same game as everybody else. It appears to be one of the crucial steps to get me and SF more recognised.

- When do you feel most supported? And by whom?
- What kind of collaboration are you most fond of? How does this currently contribute to your SF practice?
- Suppose you had even more support and constructive collaboration, what would be different?
- What did you do to get the most surprising recommendation you have received until now (be it SF related or not)? What else did you do?

Raise awareness of belonging

In the beginning of the paper it was argued that a not-knowing attitude can strengthen our use of our social environment and cultural diversity (see above). In this section it is argued that we need to do so while always being aware as well as actively using the perception of our belonging, seen from our own perspective as well as from others'.

It is necessary to clarify here that being a not-knower is not the same as being an outsider, a foreigner or a stranger, which may easily have negative connotations. The use of both the terms "foreigner" and "stranger" puts more emphasis on the aspect of not belonging instead of just belonging to somewhere else. There is an undertone of "intruders" in it, while "outsider" is more frequently related directly to being involuntarily excluded from a group. Being a "not-knower" doesn't imply these connotations or this association of not belonging. Not-knowing is not about standing apart,

but about seeing from another perspective. However, it can easily be forgotten that behaving as an SF "not-knower" is an attitude and not a state of being. We are never complete not-knowers. We talk and act from somewhere, from an experience, an environment, a discipline, a family or somewhere else. We are more precisely "knowing not-knowers".

Belonging is about acquiring a place. The existential anthropologist Michael Jackson talks about being-at-home-in-the-world (Jackson, 1998, p. 20), which is a moving balance in the paradoxical process in which we strive for a "being-for-ourselves" through "being-for-others". In other words, we become ourselves only in interaction with others, a process characterised by a constant negotiation. As part of this, we try to figure out where others are from. In addition, our place of belonging is perceived differently depending on those seeing us, and our own sense of belonging also changes depending on the situation. Among other things, we can use "belonging" intentionally as a tool to create confidence and to build platforms as well as an indicator in measuring progress.

"I would like to start with some questions for you before you ask me anything, if that's okay?", said the director I was interviewing, "because I have heard that you have worked with the police as a consultant. You know things and we'll not be able to cheat you. But I would like to know who sent you. On that depends what I tell you today".

What the director found most important was not my belonging to a country, a neighbourhood, a race or a discipline, but the place of belonging that could have the strongest influence on my work with them: what group of influential persons do I belong to and what power do they have? I told him who "sent" me, which did not seem to give him sufficient clarity. Later I asked what the difference would have been if I had been sent from somewhere else, a question that initiated a conversation that ended up representing the first solid part of a platform. However, he still questioned my belonging directly and indirectly, and when we had a break I said: "Let me tell you the story about how I got into

all this ...." and I described my journey from one activity to another and the search that got me into SF. Although not completely satisfied, he became more relaxed, showed more interest in the project and started giving examples from his personal life. We had dealt with the question of belonging, and he had been given the possibility of interpreting "my place".

The majority of the encounters when doing SF in Mexico involve a constant negotiation of belonging as the relationship develops. At first I did not give it much attention as this is part of every interaction between people. However, I noticed that discrete comments and questions about my "belonging" or the lack of these were signs of how the process was developing. Sometimes the fact that "belonging" ceases to be an issue happens to be a result of a confidence we have constructed together, and sometimes it means the opposite, namely that people for some reason may be too afraid even to ask about belonging. While every case is different, it seems that the question of belonging is a useful aspect to assist the process of constructing.

- How and when do you use your sense of belonging? And what difference does it make when you are not working?
- How do others – clients, colleagues, family or friends notice and respond to your places of belonging?
- When are you feeling at home-in-the-world? What would you do differently if you used this with SF?
- If someone else had to make a comment on something positive in your way of answering these questions, what do you think it would be?

Continuing with another aspect of belonging, the following part discusses how belonging to the SF community can be a way to ensure a dynamic use of cultural aspects.

Link continually to the SF community

- When are you closest to using the SF community in the way you find most beneficial?
- If you had to describe to a newcomer the benefits of linking to other SF practitioners, what would you say?
- What could be one small step towards using cultural aspects of the SF community in a more explicit way?
- What would others say you can contribute to the SF community?

People doing SF are to some extent "united by a community of interest" (Seymore-Smith, 1986, p. 46), which is why we can call it an "SF community". It is formed from a great variety of cultures, languages, disciplines and scientific idioms, experiences, perspectives and ideas. This is a positive and huge challenge for SF and its use from culture to culture, and strengthening the community and its diversity has important advantages for the future of SF and deserves particular attention, even though beyond the limits of this paper.

The SF community offers a constant inspirational interchange of experiences that challenges our perception of the cultural settings we are working in. The encounters of different perspectives and aspects easily point attention to new sides of situations. We see the world from our places of belonging, and questions asked from another set of internalised habits and cultural rules of what is "normal" can be surprising and highlight things in own cultural settings less obvious for someone accustomed to it.

He asked me SF-questions formulated in the virtual space, linking me as apparently the only consultant in Mexico using SF tools with colleagues around the world. "Sofia, how could drawings and some energy exercises be helpful in overcoming the initial tension felt in the meeting?" I wondered . . . not about the exercises but about the tension. Do we talk of the same tension? Initial tension in Europe, I've heard, is usually about

being afraid of having a bad relationship with the boss, losing privileges, losing face or maybe even the job. In Mexico, tension is frequently related to losing not only your job, but losing everything; being blacklisted; losing your protection and contacts and maybe even being physically in danger. It is related to serious worries about your life or that of your family as well as attempts to prevent being "sacrificed". In Mexico City being "sacrificed" refers to situations where some save themselves from the consequences of incorrect or illegal activities by blaming someone else. It can also be an act of colleagues feeling envy, feeling threatened or perceiving a person as outstanding or too competent. The result can be losing your job, being publicly humiliated or similar. A popular saying states that being a government employee means "always having one foot on the street and another behind bars", describing that you're at risk of losing your job or being sentenced to prison, which is unfortunately a reality. It is an integrated part of everyday life to try to avoid falling into traps where colleagues cheat you, make you look bad, steal information to affect you or make you sign illegal documents to put you in jail and so forth. The process of trying to influence something or someone in particular negatively as well as positively is called "grilla" – meaning the sound of crickets – and is a significant part of interaction in working life in Mexico City.

What I called "tension" may easily be about huge and tragic life changes. The question is not about how to overcome the tension, it is about how to work despite the tension . . . and I am still trying to find out how.

Linking continually to the SF community ensures movement in our way of doing and developing SF, and special attention to the benefits of this will also make the connection to the community a strong contribution to maintaining SF as a culturally unbiased toolkit. Inspired by a wise comment cited by Jackson & McKergow, saying: "(…) when Solution Focus isn't "working" it's actually because I have stopped really using it" (Jackson & McKergow, 2002, p. 228), we can say the opposite about the existence of cultural aspects and the SF community:

"They are still working even though you don't use them, so you'd better use them!"

Do some cultural fishing

You can never fish in the same water twice, as it always changes. Fishing is said to help you clear your mind, getting you in contact with nature and with your self, and it can be full of surprises: you never know *if* you get something on the hook, *when* or *what*.

"Cultural fishing" refers to doing something that can have these healthy and inspiring effects. It may have great benefits, especially when looking for the best places for a good catch and putting on the right bait for it, and maybe asking questions like the following:

- When was the last time doing something not work related surprised you by having a positive impact on your way of working?
- Where do you go when you want a break from all the usual? How could that contribute to your SF practice?
- Where do you think your neighbour would go to see things from another perspective?
- Suppose that you have just come back from some remarkably helpful cultural fishing, what made it a positive experience? What did you do to make it real?

"Cultural fishing" is related to doing something that can be enriching in some way and that makes you see things from a perspective that is distinct from this precise moment, emphasising other parts of everyday life or the surrounding culture(s) and helping to explore new aspects. It may be anything from discovering an unknown neighbourhood, visiting artistic or historical places, going to another supermarket and looking at what the people next to you buy, travelling, going to the cinema, learning about your own home as if you were somebody else – an electrician, a child or a person from the late 1800s. How can you get the best catch?

I invested a whole day in going to a nearby village to sleep in the countryside and eat deliciously fried cactus worms and ant eggs in butter sauce. The people there rarely leave the village and at the beginning I found that in conversation with them I sounded as if I was a snobbish urban nerd and that I used more complicated expressions than I thought. After some hours I began finding an easier way of communicating. Going home again I appreciated my opportunity to simplify and demuddle my conversation and thought about Wittgenstein's famous phrase: "Philosophy is a constant battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 52).

An essential part of "cultural fishing" is to dare to challenge time. Not working directly on a project, in the consultancy or other job related responsibilities, is not the same as not making progress on the project. Using what is there, as one of the basic principles in SF states, need not necessarily be limited to the work situation. Putting oneself in an unusual situation shows what's there from a perspective you usually don't apply to seeing the world and what happens is . . . unpredictable . . . and depends on how you make use of it. One is reminded that "SF practitioners do not attempt to plan the whole change process from start to finish in detailed steps – it is simply not possible" (Kirsten Dierolf in McKergow & Clarke, 2007, p. 116. See also "Navigating Complexity" by Arthur Battram, 1998).

"Cultural fishing" not only creates progress in a distinct and inspirational way, it trains us in noticing and developing different kinds of progress.

Final remarks

It is just there . . . culture. It is not a thing, a defined entity and not something you can possess in varying portions. It is inevitably present in our way of perceiving the world, when we talk, at work, when we bond, when we think, write, play, love. It is created and recreated in a constant negotiation of meaning characterised by our interaction. It is there to be used.

We can choose to use cultural characteristics as a source of amazement, and build solutions with it. Therefore it is important to maintain SF as a culturally unbiased set of tools. It gives us the freedom to choose how to use culture. This paper is written with the intention of contributing to this, and with the hope that it is just one modest stepping stone for many others to come.

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D o some cultural fishing

Acknowledgements

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