



**IDM — Creating Collaborative
Intelligence**

A New Era Begins at the Interdevelopmental Institute (IDM), Gloucester, MA, USA

*The new digital economy is changing how work gets done, how
leaders lead, and how organizations are structured.*

Conference Board of Canada, 2017.

As seen on its new website, www.interdevelopmentals.org, the Interdevelopmental Institute is entering a new phase of its development. The new focus of its work is centered on the *digital transformation of business* in all of its facets.

There are two ways of addressing this transformation relative to human capital:

1. A shallow behavioral one (now pervasive)
2. A deep adult-developmental one (still largely unknown)

Choosing the second path entails becoming developmentally self-aware and starting out from one's own *internal workplace* in which one's action logic is grounded.

While the inside-out way is always more difficult, it is in the end the only one that gets one to realizing one's goals.

What IDM provides

Based on nearly 20 years of reflection on how adult development determines organizational behaviors, both in individuals and teams, our work has yielded a large number of new cutting-edge insights without which thinking about the digital transformation of business remains half-baked (www.interdevelopmentals.org; also Publications).

This becomes evident from reading contemporary theories of non-hierarchical organizations and shared leadership, topics which, when remaining uninformed by IDM concepts, show lack of complex thinking and, consequently, *critical realism*.

New blogs on this website aim for making it easier to understand and use CDF, the Constructive-Developmental Framework (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructive_developmental_framework).

CDF is a many-sided tool synthesizing validated empirical research:

- (1) a decision-theory for managing human resources in hierarchical and non-hierarchical organizations;*
- (2) an interview-based tool for learning developmental thinking and listening;*
- (3) a set of mind-opening tools leading from logical to dialectical thinking (through DTF, the Dialectical Thought Form Framework);*
- (4) a theoretical foundation of dialog methods schooled in Bhaskar's Critical Realism;*
- (5) a pragmatic foundation of introducing developmental processes in DDOs;*
- (6) and others.*

Exciting new uses of adult-developmental theories

Uses of developmental theory change with the times. Over 30 years, social-emotional inflections of developmental theory – spearheaded by Kegan & Lahey, and popularized by Wilber -- have been widely used unsupported by actual

empirical assessment, and therefore have assumed the character of a metaphysical ideology.

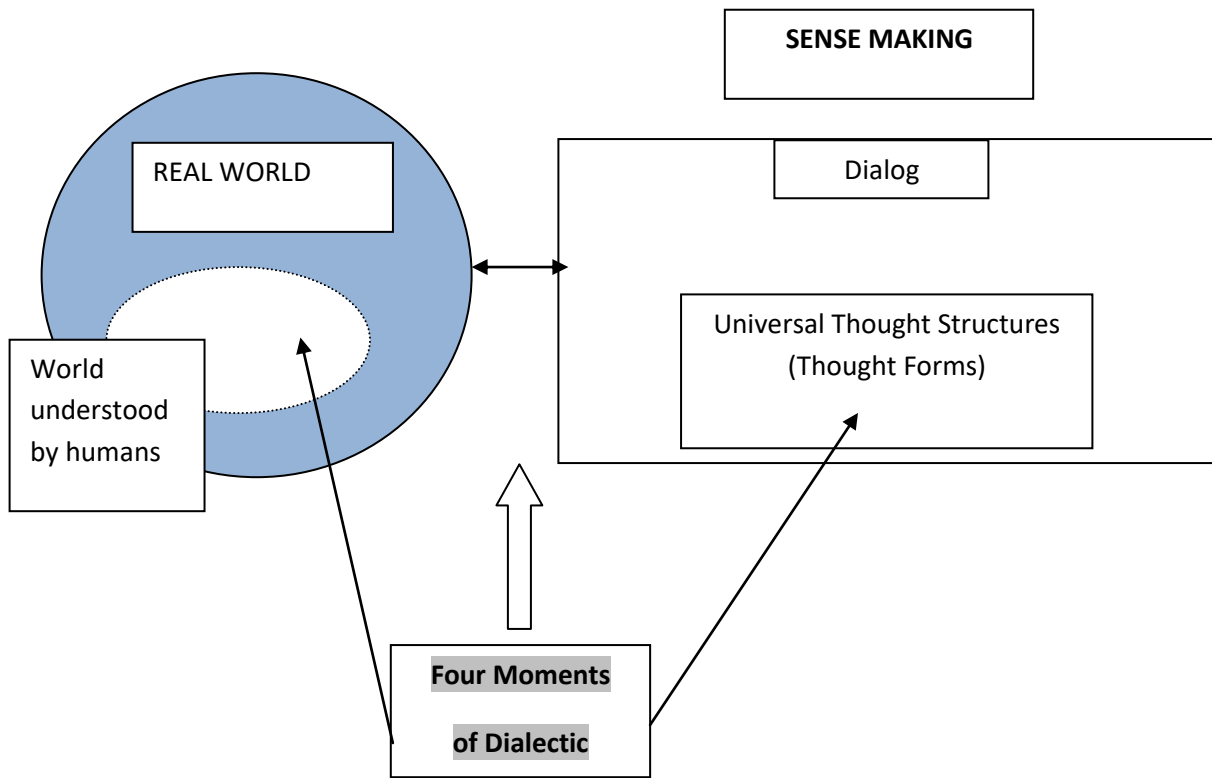
Since the beginning of 21st century, however, these “developmental” approaches have shown their theoretical as well as practical limitations which are due to severing, or never establishing, the link of social-emotional meaning-making with cognitive sense-making and its development over the human lifespan (Basseches 1984; Laske 2008; Linell 2009).

These limitations are equally limitations of the contemporary concept of DDO.

IDM has been at the forefront of critiquing this narrow developmentalism of various degrees of absolutism. The central topic at IDM today is **that the digital transformation of business is a welcome disruption of business because it enhances the awareness that business requires deeper than logical thinking and systems thinking.**

Accordingly, the CDF component called DTF (Dialectical Thought Form Framework) is in the ascendance at IDM, both in teaching and consulting. Its tools -- Bhaskar’s moments of dialectic and their associated thought forms (Laske 2008; 2017a/b) – naturally “explode” any thinking in flat monological quadrants, by acting as *mind openers* in real-time dialog (see John Stewart at <http://integralleadershipreview.com/14809-14809/>).

The power of universal thought structures in fostering critical realism



The dialectical structure of dialog between the mind and the real world

In terms of theory as well as practice, what social-emotional development thinkers leave out of account is that there exist *universal thought structures* (paradigms) called *thought forms* that guide people's attention to what they think "about" (including developmental theory ...). These thought forms, put in perspective, are major players in taking a critical and realistic perspective on human organizations as being subject to the vicissitudes of the real world:

As intimated in the figure above, there actually is a "real world" which sense-making ("thinking") is always aiming for reaching but mainly missing due to monological logical thinking.

However, realistic thinking is always possible in dialog that follows a dialectical discipline that focuses on the thought-form structure that underlies sense making ("thinking").

Naturally, if one gets stuck in purely logical thinking or even systems thinking, such as in "quadrants", one has left critical realism behind. The reason is lack of

Otherness, meaning the taking into account that there is actually another side to what one is thinking about oneself and the real world.

As a result of neglecting both the study of, and the use of, universal thought structures called *thought forms*, today sense making in both business and science has remains predicated on a static world “out there” to the same extent that “transformation” (which forever eludes logical thinking) is on everybody’s tongue.

This paradoxical situation was first seen by G. Bateson (1972). Thirty years ago, he formulated the insight that the main problems of the world were, in his view, anchored in the **gap** between “how people think” (i.e., logically) and “how reality works” (i.e., dialectically), -- a gap that is clearly conveyed by contemporary organizational and political thinking (<http://integralleadershipreview.com/14809-14809/>).

Ways out of the gap

The overriding goal of IDM consulting and teaching has become to lead CEOs, Board Members and executives toward an understanding of the gap mentioned above. In the time of the internet, this gap subjectively appears as the thoughtless downloading of information as if it were knowledge, based on formal logical thinking taken for granted. Making aware of, and opposing, this kind of thoughtlessness is the core of our “leadership development” program which transcends and includes all of the niceties (“learning to learn” ...) of exclusively behavioral leadership programs.

In this work, our stance is one of *critical realism* in the sense of Roy Bhaskar (<https://roybhaskar.wordpress.com/what-is-critical-realism/>), with the important difference that Bhaskar’s dialectic is monological and explanatory, while our use of dialectical thought forms is *dialogical, emphatically focused on movements-in-thought in real time*.

By interpreting Bhaskar’s four moments of dialectic as sets of thought forms, we acquire new tools for realistic and critical thinking. We believe that errors of thinking in the sense of Bhaskar’s epistemic fallacies do not simply stay “in the mind”, but lead to kinds of action logic that are ultimately ineffective or even pernicious, or at least risky.

In this sense, we see in complex thinking a moral imperative that one needs to follow to avoid making simplistic assumptions about the state of the world as well as one's own mental state.

Adopting the stance of critical realism, we become teachers of a kind of “hyperthinking” that is very different indeed from the present meaning given to this term, which only postures as transcending purely logical thinking and systems thinking (<http://www.hyperthinking.net/>).

The crucial difference in dialectical thinking derives from the effort made to practice a kind of triple loop learning in the sense of Argyris. However, dialectical thinking transcends Argyris' behavioral approach by introducing the link between “thinking” and “real-world transformation” as a necessary nexus in self-aware practice (https://www.amazon.com/Organizational-Learning-Chris-Argyris/dp/0631213090#reader_0631213090/).

In our perspective, level of complexity of thinking becomes an ethical issue, not primarily in the individualistic sense of gaining insight, but in the social sense of taking responsibility for one's thinking and the action logic it nurtures.

In this light, social science in its present purely monological form appears as a way of abdicating social responsibility and distorting social reality, due to being grounded in a primitive *transfer model of communication* according to which cognitions are transferred through language rather than being seen as arising from dialogical interchanges between people that construct their own “real world”.

Why CEOs experience have sleepless nights ...

Today, the practice of critical realism paired with dialectical discipline is of particular value for people who are in charge of entire organizations.

In such a position, you cannot but experience the digital transformation of your business encroaching upon you (day and night), so that you naturally try to get a handle on what, due to your present way of thinking, you are most undefended against. What you'll find yourself challenged by looks as follows:

- *Digital transformation requires of you a mindset shift*
- *Leading through risk, disruption and transformation finds you unprepared*

- *The implications of digitally transforming human capital flabbergast you*
- *Fundamental business paradigms you have followed are being overturned by the digital economy*
- *You do not immediately grasp the importance of culture transformations for contributor engagement and performance*
- *You wonder how working with a CDO, Chief Digital Officer could help you and what his/her capabilities need to be*
- *You wonder how you can strengthen the “behavioral” component in change management*
- *You wonder what “deliberately developmental organizations” are once you go beyond buzzwords*
- *You wonder how you can cope with the regulatory environment for dealing with the multifaceted effects of disruption*

Taking on any of these topics runs the risk of de-totalization on account of which the forest gets lost by focusing on the trees. Despite of constant talk of “change” there is also the risk of missing transformation even though it is in everybody’s mouth, again due to missing dialectical discipline.

Then also, the issues listed have their own specific developmental trajectory and are intrinsically related. Without learning to master not only thought forms but constellations of thought forms little can be achieved.

How IDM can help you

We are experts in sharing knowledge about universal thought structures called *dialectical thought forms* which have been shown to help grasping real-world transformations, not just “change”.

We call these thought forms “dialectical” because their use requires us to make the following paradoxical assumptions:

1. One cannot fruitfully discuss issues of concern (such as “digital transformation”) by assuming that the real world we are dealing with is external to us, thus “out there”, as is naturally done in a monological world view.

2. Rather, we must start with the notion that the “real world” is created conceptually through our thinking in real-time dialog, and that success in dealing with it depends on how good is our grasp of the transformational nature of the reality we create when communicating with each other (see the figure regarding Sense Making above).
3. To measure how good is our grasp of the real world we need to pay primary attention to the “movements-in-thought” we are engaging with to create it, and this requires a new form of “cognitive listening”, not just “new thinking” or shallow “hyperthinking”.

We can approach this challenge by starting with Wilber’s quadrants and deepen what we find in them by using Bhaskar’s *moments of dialectic* (CPRT), following the diagram below:

I		It	
C	P	C	P
R	T	R	T
We		Its	
C	P	C	P
R	T	R	T

“CPRT” stands for four moments of dialectic as classes of human thought forms:
 context (C), process (P), relationship (R), and transformation (T)

4. Let’s first look at the four quadrants which define a map of our territory. The map comprises four only seemingly separate “worlds”:
 - *The “I” world*: my personal perspective on the world
 - *The “We” world*: my perspective as an integral component of a social community
 - *The “It” world*: the real world described objectively, in terms of empirical research
 - *The “Its” world*: the real world seen as composed of different parts (sub-totalities), each with its own generative mechanisms.

We need to see these sub-worlds as intrinsically connected as well as in constant transformation due to the links between them.

What is more, we cannot simply “describe” them from the outside but have to reflect on the movements-in-thought we ourselves bring to bear on them following the four moments of dialectic.

5. Whatever quadrant we enter into –the order of entering quadrants is an equally important aspect -- **we will find that the issues found in each quadrant do not reveal themselves in their full complexity unless we begin to distinguish the four moments of dialectic (CPRT).**

6. **Individually, their meaning is as follows:**

- C: view of the world as a static constellation of “things”
- P: view of the world as undergoing unceasing change
- R: view of the world as consisting of intrinsically related elements

7. T: conjoining C, P, and R to see the world as in in constant transformation.

The last step we cannot take in purely logical thinking since such thinking does not grasp anything beyond the C-world.

8. Reflecting on the quadrants from a perspective of moments of dialectic, we can take at least $4 \times 4 = 16$ perspectives on any single subject matter, not counting the individual thought forms comprised by each moment of dialectic, which brings the number of available perspectives to $16 \times 7 = 112$ different perspectives.

9. Rather than being intimidated by this number, we can think of it as a network of *pathways our thinking can follow* when looking for outcomes and appropriate decision, where we ourselves are in charge of what pathway to follow.

Such an approach to “digital transformation”, for example, is most fruitful in dialog, not when we engage in monological analysis. To understand how we construct the worlds of digital transformation we need to reflect on the

movements-in-thought by which we create them. There simply is no real world outside of how we construct it!

When we adopt *dialectical discipline*, especially in teams and circles, we come to reflection points where an overview of what our dialog has rendered will show us new avenues to follow. We will understand the risks and opportunities we are engaging, and the complicity of the situation inviting us to act. We will also have understood where the structure (not just the content) of our “thinking” has failed to help us reach the real world (which is, after all, what we are trying to understand).

What is outlined above is, however, not a “strategy”. It is much more, namely a CULTURE defined by self-awareness, and this culture is in place in only very few organizations today.

Why organizations need better thinking

The highest-paid people in organizations are paid for the quality of what is thought to be their “thinking”. So it comes as a rude surprise that most workshops about, and consultations regarding leadership development, do not address and boost the features of dialectical and dialogical thinking. This happens because the thought-form structure people constantly use to “think” is never investigated.

Thinking is context-specific, but also is based on *universal* structures called “moments of dialectic” that are, in DTF, associated with individual thought forms. When these thinking paradigms are ignored or not focused on, thinking deteriorates into **idle chatter about contents**. Insight into what generates these contents in people’s mind is then lacking.

This is the point where a critical theory linked to critical realism in the sense of the four moments of dialectic comes into play.

Making cognitive-developmental coaching an accepted organizational practice

From this vantage point, executive coaching and leadership development are presently in sorry shape, excluding, as they do, readily available insight into the structure of thinking in terms of thought forms. Both the importance of cognitive coaching and the tools required for it are still unrecognized and unknown, which holds up creating collaborative intelligence in teams and circles.

Imagine a team whose members respond to its members' thinking only in terms of going from one subject matter to another, without investigating the conceptual structure that thinking about that subject matter is actually based on (“what thought form might be missing in what you put out there?”).

In such a team, thinking is taken to be merely *describing* the world, rather than actually *creating* it conceptually.

Especially for teams and networks of teams, collaborative intelligence based on thought-form awareness is a new structural requirement of culture transformation that so far is not deeply understood and practiced.

It is this new focus on closing the gap between how reality works and how people think through *dialogical dialectic* that is central in CDF- based work with teams and individuals.

The “wow” in this is not simply a value proposition but a proposal for culture transformation that gives rise to cutting-edge value propositions.



Below is a short description of IDM services that address the organizational “pain points” outlined above

IDM Services starting in 2017 will comprise the four types of offerings:

1. In-house workshops
2. A 1-year transformational leadership program merging webinars, developmental assessment, and coaching based on CDF
3. Just-in-time one-on-one executive and team coaching
4. Delivery of keynotes

In-house workshops

We will offer workshops geared to:

- How to boost collaborative intelligence in teams, for consultants, managers, and coaches
- How to coach your team developmentally, for team leaders
- How to introduce *deliberately developmental processes* into your organization, for executives and board members
- How to stretch design thinking into agile transformational thinking, for start-ups

These in-house workshops are specific to selective target audiences “prepped” by way of free seminars focused around a central issue. Audience members will take out memberships in IDM, and become first adopters of what the workshops teach. By becoming IDM members, they will buy into cutting-edge techniques of culture transformation that adhere to *Critical Realism* (R. Bhaskar) based on Laske’s *Dialectical Thought Form Framework* (2008, 2015).

A transformational leadership program

The IDM Transformational Leadership Program now in preparation is a one-year membership-based program mingling educational webinars with evidence-based bi-weekly executive coaching.

The program, which is now experimented with through on-on-one mentoring and in-house workshops, will not only “deepen consciousness”, as the saying goes, but will focus on boosting and scaffolding design thinking in business based on universal dialectical thought structures.

The program transcends present-day leadership programs by provoking self-authored thinking based on competence in using universal thought paradigms.

Just-in-time one-on-one executive coaching sessions

Despite all their apparent glamour and success, executive coaching programs are presently in a sorry state since what executives and board members are actually paid for – *complex thinking* -- is a part of such programs only with a focus on thought content, but not the underlying thought-form structures that create it.

In order for teams to engage in complex thinking, its members already need to be independent thinkers. Individual coaching and mentoring at IDM will therefore be shaped by dialectical discipline that is commensurate with a client's level of social-emotional meaning making in the sense of Kegan.

In this "just in time" program, Otto Laske together with colleagues will challenge clients to acquire a new awareness of how they conceptually construct their unique "real world" through speech in real time, for the sake of scaffolding their adult cognitive development with direct reference to the pain points they presently experience.

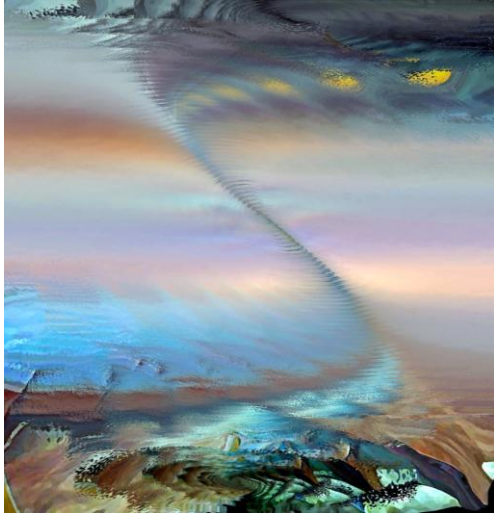
Clients will be expected to disarm their own cognitive defenses session by session, and will be supported in this undertaking according to the zone of proximal development they are presently in.

Keynotes

Keynotes should be wake-up calls. That, at least, is the meaning of the term here. Having researched adult development in depth for nearly 20 years, and having made its empirical and methodological findings applicable to organizational and educational issues, Otto Laske will share his by now extensive knowledge of the following topics:

- What are the horizontal and vertical developmental processes that sustain deliberately developmental organizations (DDOs)?
- What is developmental coaching that strengthens flexibility of thinking by using dialectical thought forms?
- What is leadership, shared or not, when you stop excluding empirical insights about cognitive adult development toward dialectic?
- What is the structure of teaching programs for complex *dialectical* thinking in schools, colleges, organizations, and institutions?

An Open IDM Future



For 45 years now, empirical research about adult development – both social-emotional and cognitive -- has become increasingly solid and relevant to organizations and society as a whole. However it has so far not been acknowledged as a required ingredient of organizational and institutional practices.

Since the year 2000, IDM has been at the forefront of attempts to change this situation, in particular in its teaching of complex, transformational thinking for managers, consultants, and coaches.

The future for this kind of teaching and consulting looks very bright indeed. You are invited to take notice of unrealized potential both in your professional self and in your organization or institution that is ready for receiving the boost of learning dialectical discipline clarified in this blog.

Brief history of IDM

IDM was founded in 2000 by Otto Laske in order to foster the practical application of adult-development research findings in organizations and institutions, especially in talent management leadership development, and executive coaching.

Both in teaching and consulting, the Institute has followed Laske's Constructive Developmental Framework, a comprehensive synthesis of adult-developmental research at Harvard University since 1975, conjoined with clinical psychological assessment specific to organizations following H. Murray.

IDM teachings are documented in two texts books for trainers: the 2005 volume 1 of Measuring Hidden Dimensions (MHD) on social-emotional, and the 2008 volume 2 of MHD on cognitive development, both regularly updated. This teaching is amplified by the 2015 Primer on dialectical thinking for integral leaders.

Between 2000 and 2015 Laske has trained a sizable group of international students through regular webinars leading to three levels of competency in developmental thinking and listening:

(1) certificate of elementary, “Gateway”, competency in CDF

(2) certified developmental coach/consultant

(3) certified master developmental coach/consultant.

The present website. www.interdevelopmentals.org, signals for IDM a new beginning. Go to the Services page to discover IDM’s current activities, and learn about details regarding CDF.

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