

How the coming distributed society changes form and space

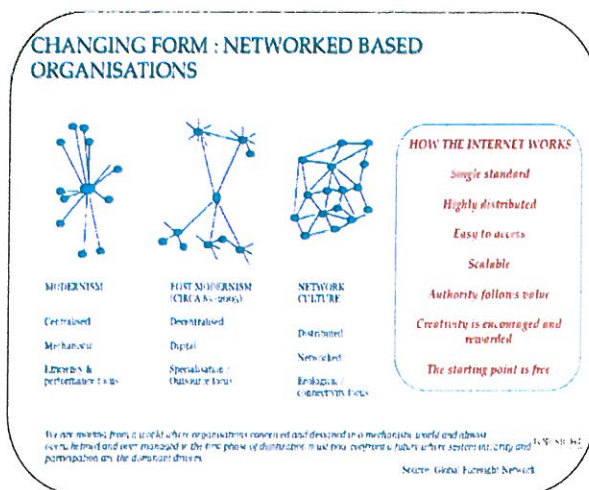
The advent of oil and electricity changed the social, economic and environmental landscape for Australian society. Perhaps this is most easily seen in the evolution of our rural fabric particularly since WW2 and it is likely to accelerate. As with previous shifts the effects on infrastructure and social fabric will be profound.

1950's	Soldier settlements	Geographic Expansion
1960's to 1980's	Green revolution	Technological Expansion
1990's	Industrialised Agriculture	Economies of Scale Based on Efficiency
2010 to 2020	Multiple food Value chains (macro & micro) & Urban food	Fit for purpose No cost to the Planet systems (Agro – ecology)

Five important features underpin this shift

1. The shift from mechanistic and centralized thinking to distributed and networked based thinking

The new technologies change the focus of the smartest way to work. Now those that can design with a distributed focus can deliver far more value using far fewer resources than those obsessed with a traditional efficiency focus.



2. Organisation form changes

Just as organisations in the 20th century came to resemble the dominant technology of the day, (the Henry Ford model) so too future organisations will reflect our dominant technology; the Internet.

The key driver of this is the cost of information transfer. In the past, organisations were the size they were because the cost of transferring information beyond the boundaries of the organization

was high. Our world was populated by 'middle men.' They aggregated demand and could communicate with both suppliers and customers. Their day has gone as the cost of information transfer has approached zero.

3. Shift from supply side power to demand driven thinking and consumption

According to the World Bank there are now over 6 billion paid mobile phone subscriptions on the planet with some 5 billion being in the developed world. These mobile devices enable their users to compare prices and products easily. What this means is that the power to source, shape, compare and purchase moves from the producers of things to the consumers of things. Governments everywhere are late in understanding this shift.

4. The future of competition

In the distributed society it is the ability to build and use networks that creates the greatest value. Those whose focus is on head to head competition (the dominant way of thinking in the 20th century) fail to understand that this **new world relies on strong relationships** not 'deals.' The World Economic Forum at all its main events, including Davos, has declared the **future of competition is collaboration.**

5. How we create value is being used in many fields to undermine traditional offerings

Every day new examples are emerging of **business models (how we create value) that use far fewer resources to deliver value.** At a global scale all the case studies and all the technologies we need to build these new business models already exist. Further invention will only widen the gap. Those who wish to lead their communities and the local economy are therefore faced with a stark choice. They either use their power and influence to keep the community focused on the old way of doing things (thereby using far more resources than is necessary to deliver what is needed) or they step uncomfortably into a future where what they know and understand has little value.