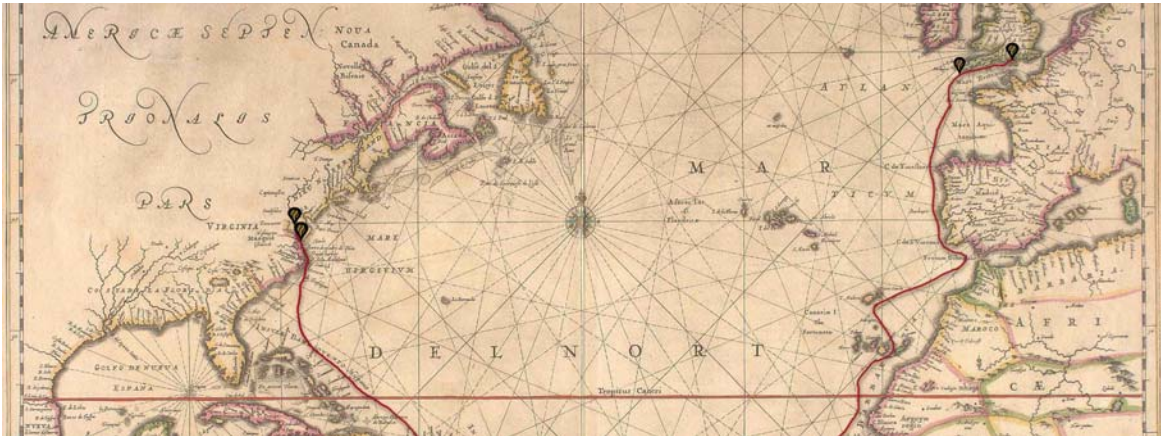


# MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE

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Change is a kind of journey that involves traversing the distance from where we are today to where we desire to be. When approaching change, especially change on a big scale that involves many people, a critical early step is seeing as much of the context of the change as possible. It's not good enough to see only the place we want to go; we also need the terrain between here and there. In short, we want a map of the landscape to help keep us on course and guide our way.

Too often, change is viewed as the solving of a problem. In this light, getting to the solution as fast as possible seems like a good thing. But more often than not, I am brought in because people have tried any number of quick fixes that haven't worked.

It turns out, it's not so much a problem needing fixing as it is a changing situation that needs understanding.

And the bigger the change, the more context - or landscape - is needed to gain sufficient understanding. If we're heading to the next town, a few streets and turns suffice, but across the border requires a much larger map to get our bearings for the journey.

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And yet, with really big problems, such as climate change or global economic downturns or even getting a divorce, gaining the context can seem so complex that we simply throw up our hands, and turn back to things more easily in our ken. But this means, obviously, that we never attend to what really needs changing, simply because we don't know how to gain enough purchase on the endeavor to be able to see it well.

What if, instead, we had a clear process for gaining context on anything - no matter its size or scale? What if that process was repeatable and applicable to all situations? That would make approaching anything so much easier - even those big fat hairy things that really are calling for our attention. Such a process exists, and I call it mapping the landscape.

We all understand the idea of getting a map before heading out into the unknown. But in the case of change, especially large-scale change, no map exists. We may not even know our final destination, and for some, a clear understanding of where they currently are is a bit of a mystery. Like the early cartographers, in change we must make our own map: seeing into the fullness of what is changing, all around it, noting its contours and connections to other things, its scale and varied terrain, and also discovering the gaps in our ability to see. The mapping process is itself a journey - one of exploration and adventure, best undertaken by the curious.

So, how to go about gaining this context - how to create this map? By answering a standard set of questions that act very much like surveyors' markers. These core questions are applicable to all endeavors, no matter the scale. Some of them are:

- 1) **What is the nature of the current situation that seems problematic, that is in need of change? (Where you are now.)**
- 2) **What is the future we envision in which the "problem" is solved? (Where you're headed.)**
- 3) **What events and trends in your world are affecting the situation, and what are the impacts? (What's going on around you.)**
- 4) **What resources do you have/need to put toward this effort? (Provisions and capability for the journey.)**

The bigger the change effort, the more people will need to be involved in the mapping so as to get a complete enough view of the landscape. The more people participating, the more time is required. That time is an important investment since it is the shared answers to the questions that make for a robust map. Some years ago, I was guiding a leadership team of 40 through these questions, when at a break one member asked: "Wouldn't this go a lot faster if only a few of us did it?" "Oh yes," I replied, "but would the others agree with and sanction the answers?" "Ah," he said, "we've done just that before and gotten nowhere." Exactly.

When we recognize that first we must create the map, it slows down our tendency to rush to solutions. This is a very good thing in situations where no one has really thought much about what they're solving - and this usually is the case in large-scale change. Slowing down to create broad understanding is even beneficial when there are experts involved, since we've all experienced how much and how vehemently experts can disagree!

And this slowing down underscores an underlying principle to the process: patience. Developing a really good map takes time. And rushing it doesn't help anything. That's another reason most people don't tackle large-scale change: they lack the stamina. Big problems and big change, like all big endeavors, require great preparation to undertake. Mapping the landscape is a key part of that preparation. And a good map is well-worth the investment.

For more on this subject: Go to Strategy on the RRC website.

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# ABOUT

## ADVANCING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO BRING ABOUT LARGE-SCALE CHANGE

Author, Rebecca Reynolds is CEO and Principal of RRC, a firm specializing in supporting large-scale change endeavors.



Reynolds is a pioneer in building individual and group capability to achieve visionary leadership and strategy, collaboratively developed alignment on innovative solutions, and institutional rigor in their implementation.

Reynolds acts as strategic adviser to executive leaders on complex business and leadership challenges across industries as diverse as natural resources, the arts, public policy, and IT, on issues involving diverse stakeholders and long-term effects.

RRC advances visionary strategy development and then builds the requisite capacity to achieve it. Core capacity areas include executive leadership advancement, governance redesign, IT solutions, human capital development, and collaborative process—all to enable success in dynamic and complex environments with long-term impact.

Founded in 1991, RRC has served hundreds of clients in the government and non-governmental sectors on a broad range of issues. Government clients include the USDA Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the US Environmental Protection Agency, as well as collaborations involving the spectrum of stakeholder interests on land management and business enterprise issues.



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