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Seven Keys to Unlock Mediation's Golden Age - The Introduction

Imagine

Nadja Alexander¹ and Lela P. Love²

*“In order to change an existing imagined order,
we must first believe in an alternative imagined order”*

Yuval Noah Harari
Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind (Chapter 6)

This work is not about best practice. It is about next practice.

Imagine corporate, political and community leaders empowering others with their mediative style and collaborative stance.

Imagine governments embracing mediation principles to frame their approach to domestic and international problem-solving and dealing making.

Imagine mediation being a necessary step before any form of civil litigation and arbitration —worldwide.

Imagine mediation being a cross-disciplinary, core education component at kindergartens, schools, universities and professional bodies, and mediating being perceived as a widely respected independent profession.

Imagine mediating with an earpiece that translates not what parties are saying but what they are actually feeling.

Imagine being stuck in a negotiation and with the click of a button being able to get practical and evidence-based information about how to get yourself out of deadlock.

Imagine epistemological worlds of dispute resolution, deal making, peacemaking, international relations, brain science and psychology deepening their capacities by engaging with one another on a scientific basis, rather than self-isolating or colliding.

Imagine adequate funding for and acceptance of collaboration as an approach to human problem solving.

All these imaginings and more are contained in the pages that follow – a collection of over 20 eclectic yet compellingly succinct and coherent essays, carefully curated to offer us *Seven Keys to Unlock Mediation's Golden Age*.

Currently mediation finds itself in a *fragmented age*. Diverse disciplines make a claim to mediation; they include business, psychology, counselling, management, human resources, social sciences, political science and law, among others. As with all disciplines, they have their

own theories, systems, literature, models, jargon, processes and practices and many mediation scholars remain within their own academic silos, resulting in a fragmentation of the field. More than that, the way mediation is practised draws boundaries around specific areas of practice, for example, family, commercial, investor-state, environmental, and peace mediation. Co-option of mediation into the legal or court space also ultimately leads to fragmentation, and to debates about what mediation is and isn't and who can call themselves a mediator and who can't. Fragmentation diminishes the value and power of mediation. It confuses users and inhibits cross-disciplinary collaboration and innovation.

In an age of fragmentation, this work offers a path for integration and growth. *Seven Keys to Unlock Mediation's Golden Age* introduces new innovation into mediation by seeking to develop understandings of the field that connect people, professions and perspectives. It pulls together disparate fragments from diverse mediation worlds and shapes them in new and holistic ways. In *Seven Keys*, the value of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts as it maps out a future not just for mediation but also for humanity.

Enjoy this work which comes to us thanks to the collaboration of some 40 leading voices from around the world. It can be read from cover to cover or by dipping in and out of its vast yet compact contents. *Seven Keys* is optimistic, grounded and most timely.

In the words of Irish poet and philosopher, John O'Donohue, "*Our trust in the future has lost its innocence. We know now that anything can happen from one minute to the next. Politics, religion, economics, and the institutions of family and community all have become abruptly unsure.*"³ The 2020 Coronavirus pandemic reveals what huge challenges lie around each corner calling for our imagination and world-wide collaboration.

The worlds of mediation, peace-making, coaching and empathetic listening have an opportunity to offer leadership to navigate these uncharted waters. If ever there was a moment in time when the multi-disciplinary talents of mediation professionals and the needs of the world meet, it is now. What we do - or don't do - now, matters. Imagine how you will use these keys to unlock the potential of mediation.

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³ John O'Donohue *Divine Beauty: The Invisible Embrace* (2003)