

FOOD SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Unlocking our Food Systems Change Capacity

A HANDBOOK FOR SYSTEMS LEADERS

Food Systems Leadership Network
The Wallace Center at Winrock International



Wallace Center
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL

About the Food Systems Leadership Network

The Food Systems Leadership Network is a national Community of Practice focused on strengthening the leadership, management, and organizational effectiveness of community-based non-profit organizations using food systems as a lever for positive social change in their communities.

Facilitated by the Wallace Center at Winrock International, the initiative aims to support, celebrate, connect, and invest in the individuals and organizations working tirelessly to transform their communities through food. In addition to providing an innovative online platform for accessing member services, e-learning, and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, the network offers opportunities for individuals and organizations to develop their leadership, management, and operations skills through mentorship, coaching, retreats, and other professional development and organizational capacity building activities.

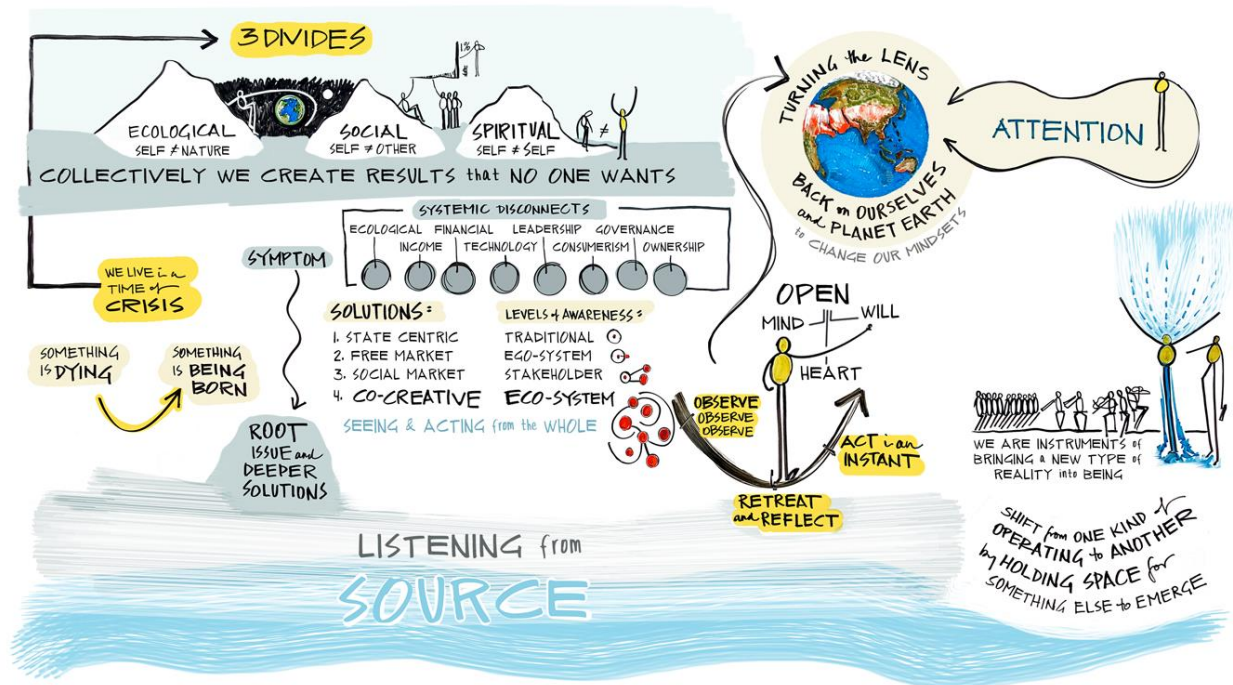
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Unlocking our Food Systems Change Capacity

A Handbook for Systems Leaders



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“A genuine leader is not a searcher for
consensus but a molder of consensus.”
— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Openings

Agenda Overview



Our Desired Outcomes



Getting the Most Out of Our Time

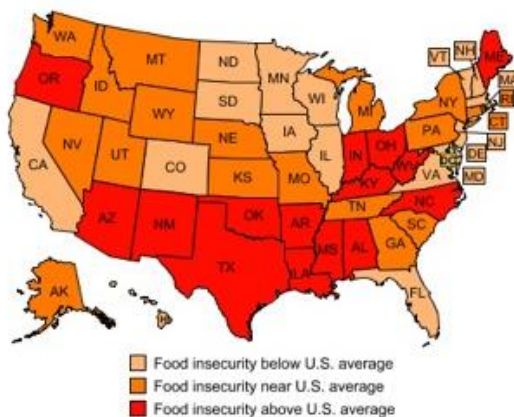


This set of ground rules is designed for our workshop, but many of these same rules can be used in other settings. Four of these rules: listen, respect, curiosity, and engage form the basis for deep dialogue and in one form or another are almost always used.

Towards Systems Leadership

Why Systems Leadership?

Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2014-16



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, using data from the December 2014, 2015, and 2016 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

- ✓ Because too often, despite our best efforts, we are not making enough progress
- ✓ The challenges we face are beyond the capacity of existing organizations/ authority structures
- ✓ Collaboration is necessary, but not enough collaborations succeed
- ✓ Our times demand more...

The easiest answer to this question is simply because we are not doing a good job creating prosperity. By prosperity, we mean something much greater than jobs or wealth, we mean genuine wellbeing. The wellbeing that comes from personal, family, community, social, and environmental health and is based on respectful and caring relationships between each of these aspects of our world. Systems leaders try to bring forward a new and better world based on what is possible and emerging. They build from aspiration.



What Systems Leaders Do



- ✓ Their personal commitment to service creates the same commitment in others
- ✓ Their ability to see all perspectives enables others to do the same
- ✓ Their listening creates trust
- ✓ Their willingness to experiment creates openness to new possibilities

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We call the sum total of these effects the ability to create collective leadership. Collective leadership is a state where a large group of people have harmonized their vision and their actions such that the sum of what they do together far exceeds what any individual organization can do. Nelson Mandela is one of history's great example of a leader who catalyzed leadership.

3 Core Skills of Systems Leaders

SEEING THE WHOLE

The ability to see, work, and engage the whole system

01

ENCOURAGING REFLECTION & DIALOGUE

The ability to get others to really talk and listen about what matters

02

LEADING FROM THE FUTURE

The ability to shift from problem-solving to creating a worthwhile future.

03

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We will be exploring each of these skills over the course of the next two and one-half days.

Systems Leadership Skill 1: Seeing the Whole System

In this section we introduce systems thinking and causal loop analysis, two powerful ways to help us better diagnose why the food system is failing us and help us build stronger solutions.



What is a System?



Source: Roots of Change

- ✓ "A system is an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that accomplishes something." – Donella Meadows
 - An engine, a compass, or a computer
 - A business, a household, or a neighborhood
 - A watershed, economy, or biosphere
- ✓ Systems always have purpose! But often we either can not see them or need to change them.

Systems are all around us. Some we see and operate daily and we can depend on them to reliably do what we expect. Other systems may be harder to see or understand. More problematically they may work as intended, but create side effects that are more damaging than the positive outcomes they create.

Consider the system for providing seeds to farmers growing at scale. It is clearly complex and involves the selection of varieties that will be sold, seed growers to produce the seeds, packaging, distribution, and ultimately sales. The system works as it was designed and farmers have ready access to seeds. But the system has multiple side effects that are damaging: it discourages seed saving, by either making it illegal or too expensive to do so. It discourages genetic diversity in seeds as it is more efficient to focus on just a few varieties with the most desirable traits. Finally, since the system is dominated by just a few large companies, the system tends to shift profitability from farmers to seed companies.

We use systems thinking to help tell our story better and to find the places in the system where change is most possible. For example, the seed system is critically dependent on the ability to patent pieces of genetic code. Changing that patent protection would change the system significantly.

- Mechanical systems have clear and unchanging purposes that are easy to understand (a tractor, an assembly line)
- Living and human systems are dynamic and often have purposes that are hard to see

What is Systems Thinking?



WHAT IS SYSTEMS THINKING?

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“...a way of understanding reality that emphasizes the relationships among a system's parts, rather than the parts themselves.”
– Daniel Kim



“Systems thinking is the ability to understand these interconnections in such a way as to achieve a desired purpose.”
–David Stroh

Often the key to systems thinking is shifting our focus up—how are the things we see interconnected? From there we can begin to understand the purpose of the system. These steps are critical and come before we try to design solutions. This includes:

- Seeing the pattern in seemingly isolated incidents
- Seeing the structures that underlie complex situations
- Seeing the mental models that create the structures



Conventional vs. Systems Thinking

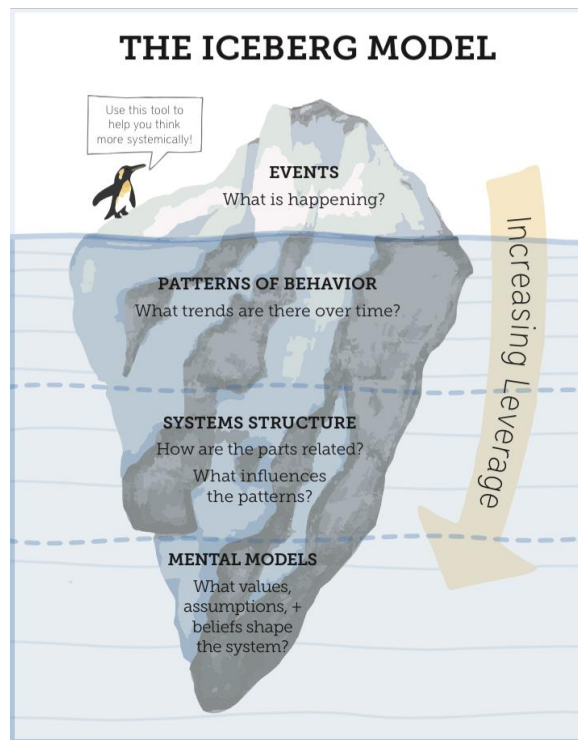
Conventional Thinking	Systems Thinking
✗ The connection between problems and their causes is obvious and easy to trace.	✓ The relationship between problems and their causes is indirect and not obvious.
✗ Others are to blame for problems and must change.	✓ We play a role in creating problems and changing ourselves is part of the solution.
✗ A policy designed to achieve short term success will also assure long term success.	✓ Most quick fixes have unintended consequences: they make no difference or make matters worse in the long run.
✗ In order to optimize the whole, we must optimize the parts.	✓ In order to optimize the whole, we must improve relationships among the parts.
✗ Aggressively tackle many independent initiatives simultaneously.	✓ Only a few key coordinated changes sustained over time will produce large systems change.

Source: Innovation Associates Organizational Learning as cited by Stroh, Systems Thinking for Social Change

Most of us were trained in and are experts at conventional thinking. This is typical 'problem solving'. The challenge is this approach works best for simple problems and is particularly ill-suited to dynamic 'wicked' problems such as building a just food system.



The Iceberg Model



This is one of the most important models we will use today. It reminds us that most of what we care about is hidden and requires work to uncover. The payoff is big—the ability to find new solutions that go at the deeper structures of the challenges we face.

Working Down the Iceberg	Example: Hunger in America
Event level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on what is happening now • Is symptom oriented • Tends to spur reactions 	Event level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long lines at food banks
Pattern level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been happening over time? • Forecast oriented, the past as precursor to the present 	Pattern level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lines longer when economy weakens, but never disappear • Changes in long-term indicators of malnutrition like diabetes
Systems level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are events and patterns connected? • What are the cycles in play? 	Systems level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well organized anti-hunger network focused on emergency food • Symptomatic relief that does not address underlying driver of hunger--poverty. May even weaken anti-poverty work.
Mental models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are our ideas and values creating the system? 	Mental models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hungry are always with us • Poverty is a product of personal choice

The Ladder of Inference

The Ladder of Inference



So how do mental models get formed? Most are learned... The Ladder of Inference explains both how these models get built and why they are so hard to change.

The ladder tells us that we often make assumptions about other people and situations based on our filters and biases that lead us farther and farther away from the actual data we see. The reflexive loop described here can be personal, but it also can get encoded in culture and policy.

Over time these reflexive loops become encoded as mental models—shortcuts we use to interpret the world. And while they may be based on our experiences, they are also shaped by our interests, proclivities, and biases. These models tend to lock us in to one way of reacting and thinking about the world.

Mental models are at the deepest level of the iceberg and the difficulty changing them is one of the most common mistakes change leaders make.



Diagnosing Why Change Gets Stuck



Force Field Analysis was developed by Kurt Lewin in the early 1950s to describe the situation where change is prevented by the equal balancing of two opposing forces. Think of a swinging door being pushed on from each side by people of equal size and strength. All things being equal, it is likely that neither can budge the door. As systems thinkers, force field analysis is a critical first step to understanding the forces at work in creating the status quo we might be working to change or the desired outcome we might want to create. The next step in systems analysis is to see not only how these forces balance, but how they interrelate and actually mutually support each other.

This is a specific example around local food production. While this is static thinking, it is a good diagnostic to identify systems forces that are at play. It is excellent for use with community members who are experts at these forces, but may not have thought about how they interrelated and reinforce.

To use force field analysis:

1. Determine the status quo you are trying to change or the desired state you want to achieve.
2. List the forces driving change to the status quo (or towards your desired state) and those holding back change (or the achievement of your desired state).
3. Verify your list. Are all these forces really operating?
4. Order the list by the strength of the force.

At this point, step back and think about which forces can be strengthened or weakened to shift the equilibrium. It is often more effective to think about strategies that weaken restraining forces than ramp up driving ones.



From Linear to Causal Loop Thinking

01



A common problem solving framework. Assumes everything is connecting in simple, straightforward way.

02



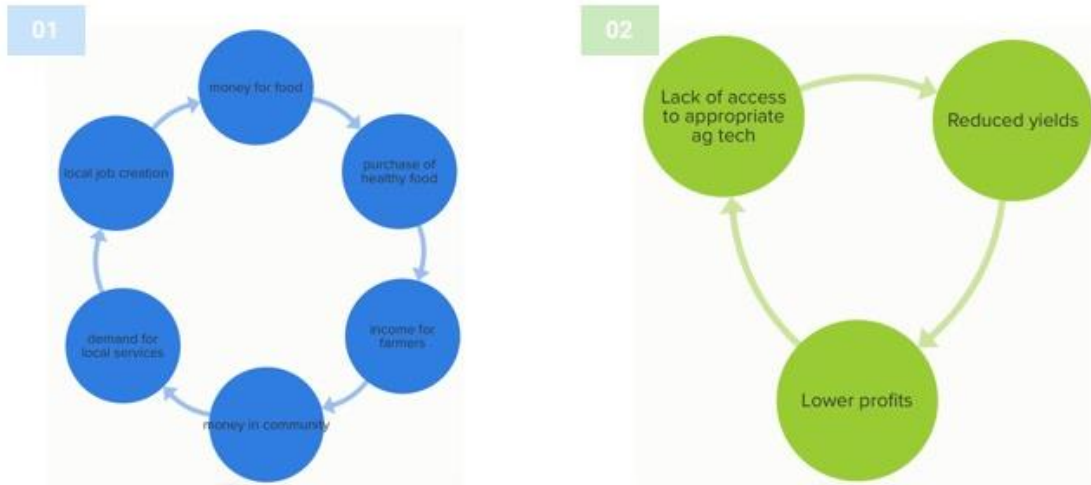
Causal loop thinking asks the question how are things related and repeat in cycles.

This is the fundamental shift we are trying to make. You can fix a car with linear problem solving that finds and describes the problem, where the target is clear, and the fix involves following relatively simple steps—there is almost nothing in the food system that can be fixed this way. We have to shift our thinking to how the parts of the system interrelate and feed upon each other.



Positive Feedback Loops

Snowball effects good and bad



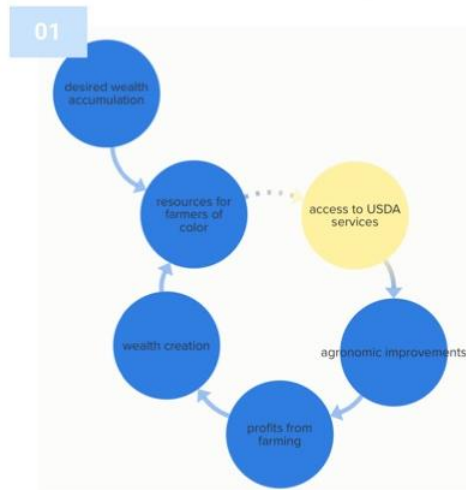
Virtuous loops drive systems towards outcomes we want or like

Vicious loops trap us in outcomes that can be hard to escape

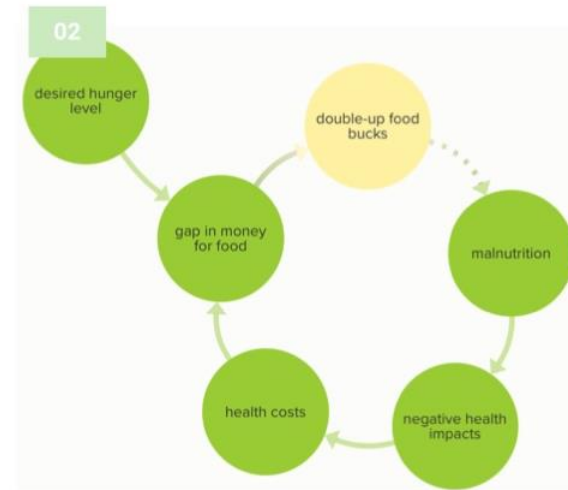
These loops are often the easiest to spot. They build upon themselves whether they are positive or negative. Of course nothing can go on forever, every positive loop has a limit. In the case of the vicious loop above, eventually the farmer goes broke and the system collapses. Many positive loops can take generations to come to full fruition, which is why they take perseverance to keep working.

Balancing Feedback Loops

Keeping systems in check for good and bad



Stagnating loops tend keep the system from changing



Stabilizing loops tend to bring the system back into balance

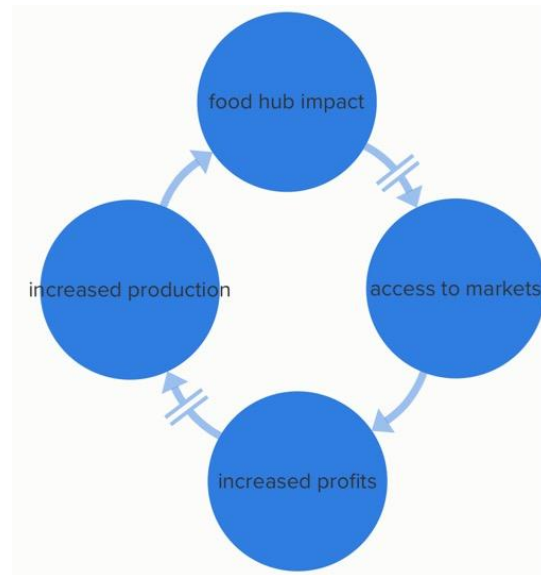
Daniel H. Kim in his excellent “Introduction to Systems Thinking” describes balancing loops as

“...continually trying to keep a system at some desired level of performance, much as a thermostat regulates the temperature in your house. Whereas the snowballing effect of reinforcing loops destabilizes systems (that is, puts them out of equilibrium), balancing loops are generally stabilizing or goal seeking. They resist change in one direction by producing change in the opposite direction, which negates the previous effects. (This is why they are also called negative feedback loops.)”

We make a distinction between balancing loops that stagnate or slow positive change as opposed stabilizing loops that try to bring a system back into balance. In the stagnating example above, the power of institutionalized racism that desired a low level of wealth accumulation in communities of color worked through manipulating access to USDA services to see that poor farmers of color stayed poor. This stagnated change in the system. In the stabilizing loop, when the number of hungry people rises too high, additional resources flow into the system, here in the form of double-up food bucks, which tend to reduce hunger. Note in these diagrams the dotted arrows mean the connection between the elements moves in opposite directions--when more double up bucks come into the system, malnutrition goes down.



Time Delays



Time delays

One final factor to consider about causal loops are time delays. It is often the case that while change in one element is directly related to change in another (in this example the connection between effective food hubs and access to markets), that impact may not be immediate. It may take time to create market relationships, build up supply and get this virtuous cycle going. Giving up too soon on virtuous cycles often happens in our immediate results world.

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Systems Leadership Skill 2: Facilitating Reflection and Dialogue



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From Discussion to Dialogue

Dialogue, finding meaning through talking and learning together is at the heart of systems leadership. We both need to be able to effectively participate in and lead dialogues. There are four keys:

- ✓ **Listening**
The ability to hear with your ears, head, and heart to both the said and unsaid.
- ✓ **Respect**
The ability to accept the different experiences of others and them to your view of the world.
- ✓ **Suspending Certainty**
The ability to accept that you are not perfectly informed, that there is more to learn.
- ✓ **Voice**
The ability and willingness to clearly articulate your thoughts and feelings

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In both our learning journey and our peer coaching work today we will use dialogue, which means to find meaning through exchange. Dialogue is a unique state where we combine being completely awake and aware with deep thoughtfulness. It is both a feeling and a process. It is distinct from conversation, which is less focused and deep, and from debate, which has as its goal to kill one or more alternatives. Dialogue has as its goal to create deep shared understanding of what we all experience. It is a combining of our knowledge and our hearts in a way that creates wisdom.

Creating and being in a dialogue is a skill and takes practice. The four keys above each unlock an aspect of dialogue: when we listen deeply, we step outside our own narrow views, when we respect others' experience we accept the world as being complex and diverse, when we suspend our certainty about what is true, new truths appear, and when we share what is real for us, we weave our truth into the tapestry of the whole.



What is Facilitation?



- The act of assisting or making easier the progress or improvement of something.
- From the Latin “facilis” meaning easy.
- Practically, the art of enabling groups to find their desired outcomes through skillful clarification of desired outcomes, design of group processes, intervention in the room, and summarization and follow-up.
- Accomplished by individuals who take on the facilitator role with the intention of being in service to the group.
- Facilitation is not mediation or conflict resolution, although both may

be needed. It is not therapy, although good meetings are beneficial.

Core Theory of Success



Here is a positive feedback loop in action! Good facilitators create the conditions that build stronger relationships, challenge the group to think more deeply, and encourage thoughtful action that lead to positive results. The loop makes it look easy, but it rarely is. Think about this loop as you design your meetings and processes. Make sure you tend to each of the elements, always starting by strengthening relationships. A good rule of thumb is ‘contact before content,’ meaning we focus on people before we rush to get the agenda accomplished.

The Six Actions of the Facilitator



Facilitators have a lot on their plate. At any given moment they are helping:

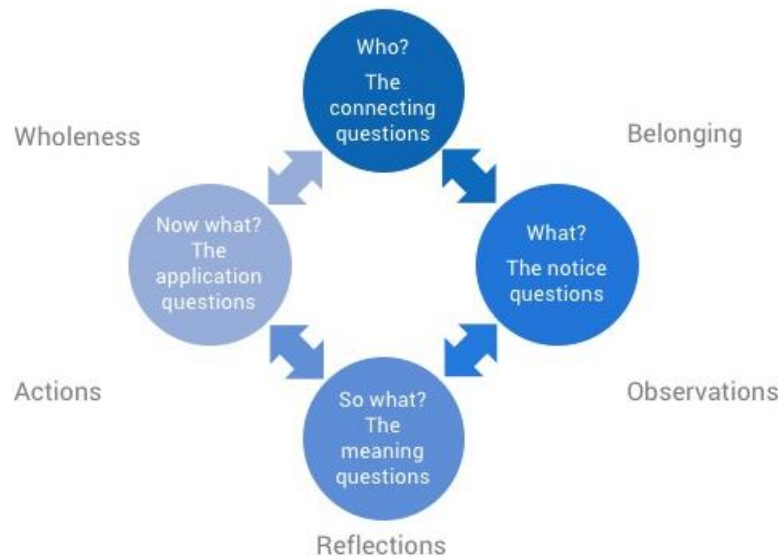
1. To create the container for the group to operate in including clarifying objectives, agendas and ground rules. The strength of this container both helps the group stay focused, but also is part of the toolkit to avoid/manage conflict. *Hint: good ground rules are one of the best container building tools you have.*
2. To keep the group focused on its purpose and agenda. This is the 'cat herding' element of the job, but not always the most important. At times it is critical to let a group go off agenda to pursue an idea or issue that is important. The skill is to know when to do this. *Hint: ask the group--"is this something we should dive more deeply into right now?"*
3. To intervene in the dialogue to clarify issues and work through conflict. This is where the facilitator can make a real difference! *Hint, your most important tool--good questions!*
4. To balance power and participation in the group by making sure everyone has a chance to be heard and all views are respected and considered. The ability to draw out quieter members or less popular views is a core facilitation skill.
5. To reflect and synthesize the group's work during the meeting. This can be by using flip charts, whiteboards, Post-it notes, or other kinds of capture. The goal is to accurately reflect what the group has shared. This recording of the meeting helps avoid conversations going in circles, demonstrates that a viewpoint is heard and captured, and enables the group to have better memory of how it came to decisions. *Hint--it is fastest and best to capture comments from the group verbatim. Shortening or changing people's words introduces the possibility of errors and is time consuming.*
6. To capture the group's work effectively after the meeting in notes or report backs. Your ability to synthesize and organize a wide-ranging conversation can help a group move more quickly. *Hint: do the notes within a few days of the meeting, while it is still fresh in your mind.*

What would add to these actions? Which are most comfortable to you?



Process Framework for Questions

Knowing when to use the right kinds of questions is key



Source: Making Questions Work: A Guide to What and How to Ask for Facilitators, Consultants, Managers, Coaches, and Others. Dorothy Strachan, 2007. Modified by Joseph McIntyre.

Good questions are the facilitators best friend. Many facilitative approaches (including both World Café and Open Space) are based on the power of questions. This process framework (which we have modified from Dorothy Strachan's original version by adding the who questions) gives us a way to think about both the kinds of questions to ask and when to ask them:

- As groups are forming, *who* questions are critical. These build connections and trust between group members. They encourage members to consider issues of belonging/membership.
- As you begin to work on an issue, the *what* questions are the first to turn to. The questions encourage members to share what they are observing and feeling. These questions are distinct from *so what* questions by focusing just on the data and experience.
- Once the group is clear on what it is they have seen or are working on, the *so what* questions come into play. These attempt to make meaning of what we are experiencing. They ask groups to work themselves down the iceberg to explore the patterns that drive situations. Getting groups to reflect is one of the hallmarks of systems leadership.
- Finally, groups turn to the *now what* questions. These are focused on action and next steps. The group is asking themselves what do we do with our new understanding.
- The cycle often repeats as groups move into action and ask who else do we need to be part of this to be successful. This encourages the group to think about wholeness and inclusion, two other hallmarks of systems approaches.

What are some of the best questions you have been asked in groups? It is a great practice to write down good questions to add to your own question bank.



The Question Box

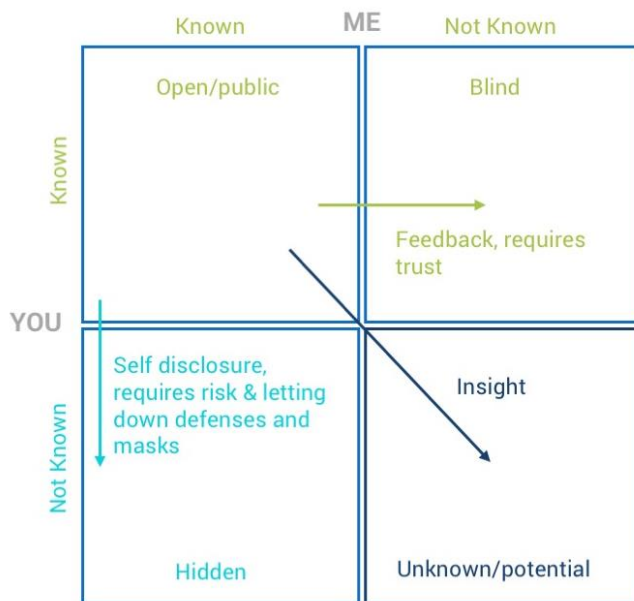
<p>Who Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can you share about your background that would help us understand your views? • What do you hope to get from today's meeting? • What skills and interests do you bring to the project? • What concerns do you have as we get started today? • What is one thing you can share today that no one knows about you? 	<p>What Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you notice? • What struck you in listening to the presentation? • How did the [presentation/discussion/site visit] make you feel? • How would you describe the problem? • What is your first reaction? • What just happened? • Who is involved?
<p>So What Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the pattern here? • What seems to be driving the situation? • What are we missing? • Is there another way of looking at this? • How does this all fit together? • What does this mean to you? • What have other people learned from similar situations? • What is deeply needed here? 	<p>Now What Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this mean for our project? • How can we incorporate this in our work? • How can we build support for this in our community? • How do we operationalize this? • What is 1 thing you can do to support this? • What is our next step? • Who needs to be engaged for us to take the next step?

This is a handy reference for the four types of questions. It is loosely based on Dorothy Strachan's work, but we have offered questions that lead groups to think systematically about issues.

Building Trust: It Is Job One for Facilitators

We have already seen how easy it is for people to make assumptions about others with the Ladder of Inference. Facilitators have a particular job: to help people climb down the ladder and stick to what we actually can see and know. The hard part: it is tough to get people to do!

The Johari Window and Why Building Trust is Hard



The Johari window is a tool to understand the process of trust building. Trust can only be gained with risk—risk around self-disclosure and risk around giving feedback. The payoff can be huge, insight into each other that neither of us have.

The Johari window was developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955 to describe the challenges in communication and trust building in a group. It may look a little complex but reflects something we all know and understand.

The window is broken into two views: my view of myself and your view of me. Each of the four quadrants describes an element of what we can see from our respective views.

1. **Quadrant 1:** Upper left, open and public. This is the part of me that we both know. At the beginning of a relationship that is not a lot! Little that what is at the surface--age, gender, clothing, skin color, jewelry--our public image. What usually happens here is you jump up the ladder of inference right here and begin to make some assumptions about me. This can be the start of unwinding trust.
2. **Quadrant 2:** Lower left, known to me, hidden from you. This is my story as I understand it. Until I tell you something of it, you have no way to know me. But for me to tell you more than surface things like job or family, I have to risk disclosure. This is the first trust move! If I tell you something real about me--hopes, fears, my history, my pains, my joys--I have to trust you will use this information well. I may have to remove a mask I wear to appear to be something I am not (professional, together, competent, strong, fearless--any of the things I think others might expect of me).
3. **Quadrant 3:** Upper right, known by you but blind to me. This is primarily the area of how my actions and demeanor impact you. The only way I can know this is for you to tell me. This could be simple feedback, like "I love the color of your coat," but more substantial feedback like "I am cautious around strangers and worry you will not understand me," opens up much more for us to talk about. This kind of feedback also requires risk, this time on your part! You have to trust I will understand and accept that feedback.
4. **Quadrant 4:** Lower right, unknown/potential to us both. This is the fun square where we explore what we might be together, how our interests and passions might connect. We enter this square through listening and know we have reached it when we have some insight into each other.

The window is important to facilitators because it gives them two things to encourage: self-disclosure and feedback. What we do at the beginning of meetings with introductions can be a way to encourage modest self-disclosure, our ground rules can encourage feedback, and we can make both of these moves ourselves to demonstrate our trust in the group.



Trust Building Moves



1. Introductions that humanize: rather than jobs and titles, ask something that encourages modest self-disclosure.
2. Transparency about objectives/goals: being clear about what a meeting is about and how the agenda was set.
3. Ground rules for working together, including agreements about confidentiality can help.
4. Hearing from each participant. Consciously making sure that that quiet voices are engaged. The ground rule 'step up' (for quieter people) and 'step back' (for more vocal people) can help.
5. Recognizing gender/race/age/power. These are all real in the world. It helps groups when you recognize them. This is particularly important when we are working across divides.
6. Having groups where no minority is alone. As you put together your stakeholders and attendees, make sure no one is an 'only,' the only woman, the only conservative, the only rural person...
7. Encouraging the group to dig deeper. People are hungry for truth and are skeptical when big issues are avoided. Have courage to ask groups to dig deeper into issues.
8. Being personally vulnerable is a critical part of groups being more open. What you demonstrate, others may follow.
9. Curiosity is powerful. A sense of wonder is too. Encourage groups to react less and be curious more-- "I am curious, tell me more" is a wonderful phrase in groups.
10. Patience. Groups grow over time and over the course of a meeting. Pushing too hard at the wrong time can undermine trust.
11. Being aware of group life. There is a lot going on! People have their own inner experiences, there are relationships forming and changing in the group between people, and the group itself has a life. All these need attention.

As a counterpoint to this list, here are some things that erode trust:

1. Introductions based on status
2. Confusing or hidden agendas
3. Lack of accountability to ground rules
4. Having dialogue be dominated by the few



5. Minimizing the importance of gender, race, age, or power
6. Allowing majority voices to dominate
7. Leaving the conversation on the surface
8. Being a 'know-it-all'
9. Certainty
10. Rushing to conclusions
11. Focusing only on outcomes

The Big Four Process Steps



Facilitators help groups to:

Define the issue

From clarifying desired outcomes to agreeing on definitions, getting people on the same page

See the big picture

From working all the way down the iceberg to seeing the reinforcing and balancing loops, getting groups to see the big context

Find common/higher ground

Creating the conditions for groups to come together around their shared needs and aspirations

Take action

Turning clarity into action including planning next steps for next week and often over years

Facilitation is often considered to be what you do in the front of the room, but experienced facilitators will tell you success in a meeting begins long before people arrive. Meeting and process design are the real heart of good facilitation and the secret to driving change faster. These four process steps, whether they take one meeting or one year, are a guide to the basic arc facilitators consider when putting meetings together. These steps are closely matched to the skills of the system leader who works hard to be sure groups are taking on the right issue in a systematic way with the goal of creating a better future.



The Change Process Arc



This is a more detailed view of the process arc most groups have to take to achieve results. In general, if you miss one step, later on you will not be able to complete your goals. Everything begins with clarifying your purpose/defining your issues. Without this, it is impossible to know who needs to be part of the effort. Some groups will come together without a clear purpose, here, their first job is to figure out what their work is together. This process arc is closely related to the steps in Theory U that we cover later in the workshop.

Outcome-Based Design

Project Name

Detailed Agenda

Overview

Dates/Times	
Location	
Desired Outcomes	
Roles	
Pre-Work	
Follow-Up	

Logistics

Participant Count	
Attendees	
Room Setup	
A/V	
Food & Bev	
Participant Materials	
Meeting Supplies	

Agenda

[illegible]

The key to both good meetings and effective change processes is to be clear about your desired outcomes for each meeting and each element of the meeting. These can be captured in a simple agenda template like this one (a full page version of this is in the handout portion of the workbook). Everything you do with a group should have a clear purpose, even if that purpose is to have an open-ended brainstorm to decide what to do next. Use the process arc to help determine what the goal is for your meeting and then get serious about your outcomes. The last step is to figure out what facilitation tools will help you most. *Remember good meetings have clear outcomes that everyone agrees to and agenda items to help achieve those outcomes.*

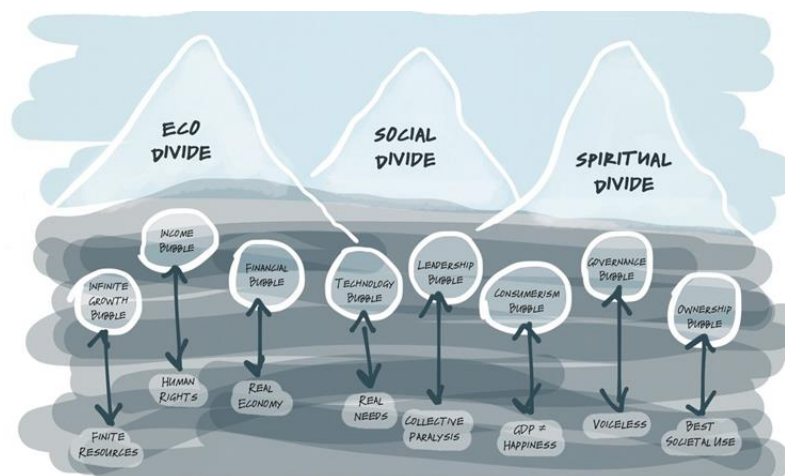
The Facilitator's Checklist

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>✓ Have you set a clear personal intention?
How are you planning to be most helpful?</p> | <p>✓ Do you have ground rules that help the group?
These rules can vary from group to group..</p> |
| <p>✓ Do you know where you are in the arc of change?
Design according to the needs of each stage</p> | <p>✓ Have you mixed up the ways people interact?
Good meetings are alive with different ways to draw out people</p> |
| <p>✓ Have you created clear outcomes?
Do this for the meeting and each activity</p> | <p>✓ Do you have a good way to capture the meeting?
You may need help with recording...</p> |
| <p>✓ Are the right people coming?
This may be your allies and it may be someone very different</p> | <p>✓ Are you reaching high enough?
Bringing people together can be inspiring, but that needs to be built in</p> |

There is a lot to pay attention to as a facilitator, but the most important thing is to be yourself. If you are able to authentic, humble, and curious, groups will naturally want to support you. At the same time, as the opening quote in the workbook from Dr. King states, you are also there to help shape consensus to act. This is not to get the group to do what you might think is best (although your good ideas might be helpful) but to push itself to answer the deeper questions and commit to the tougher solutions. The next section discusses more about this wider context.

Systems Leadership Skill 3: From Solving Problems to Creating Futures

3 Divides: A Bigger Context



It is clear that our work building a just food system is only a part of a larger effort to create a society and economy that is life affirming and sustainable. As we work on our specific issues in communities and beyond, keeping this larger context in our awareness helps us see how local issues are part of a bigger pattern. The changes we make at home reverberate around the world.

The Presencing Institute, founded by Otto Scharmer to promote work and change using Theory U describe the three divides in this way:

“The Ego to Eco framework begins with what we call the “iceberg model” of the current socio-economic system. Why an iceberg? Because it assumes that, beneath the visible level of events and crises, there are underlying structures, mental models, and sources that are responsible for creating them. If ignored, they will keep us locked into reenacting the same old patterns time and again.

Progressing through the levels of the iceberg from surface to depth will illuminate several blind spots that can help us rebuild our economy and society to be more intentional, inclusive, and inspired.

Like the tip of an iceberg—the 10% that is visible above the waterline—the symptoms of our current situation are the visible and explicit parts of our current reality. This “symptoms” level is a whole landscape of issues and pathologies that constitute three “divides”: what we call the ecological divide, the social divide, and the spiritual divide.

The Ecological Divide. We are depleting and degrading our natural resources on a massive scale, using up more nonrenewable precious resources every year. Although we have only one planet earth, we leave an ecological footprint of 1.5 planets; that is, we are currently using 50% more resources than our planet can regenerate to meet our current consumption needs. As a consequence, one third of our agricultural land has disappeared over the past 40 years. Rapidly falling water tables are taking us on a path toward food riots. Food prices are expected to double by 2030.

The Social Divide. Two and a half billion people on our planet subsist on less than \$2 per day. Although there have been many successful attempts to lift people out of poverty, this number, 2.5 billion, has not changed much over the past several decades. In addition, we see an increasing polarization in society in which the top 1 percent has a greater collective worth than the entire bottom 90 percent.

The Spiritual-cultural Divide. While the ecological divide is based on a disconnect between self and nature, and the social divide on a disconnect between self and other, the spiritual divide reflects a disconnect between self and Self—that is, between my current “self” and the emerging future “Self” that represents my greatest potential. This divide is manifest in rapidly growing figures on burnout and depression, which represent the growing gap between our actions and who we really are. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2000 more than twice as many people died from suicide as died in wars.

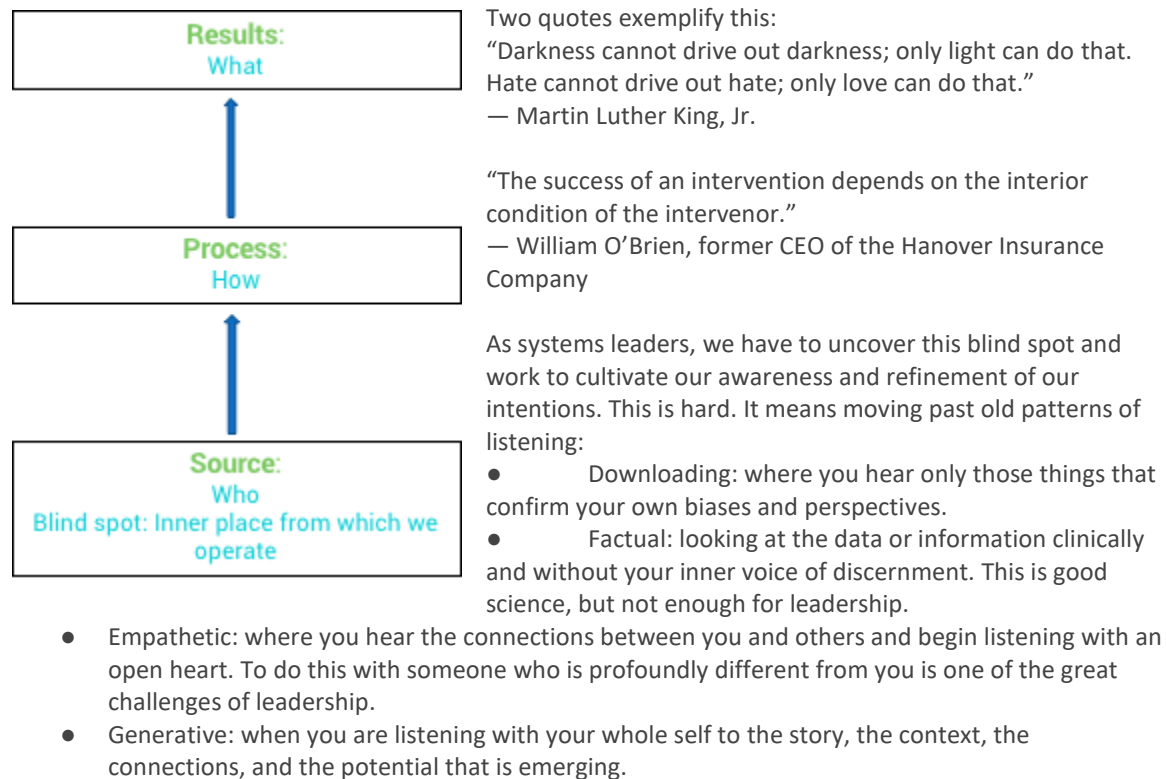
The ecological, social, and the spiritual-cultural divides represent three different tips of the iceberg of massive institutional failure. We are collectively creating results that nobody wants.”

Source: <https://www.presencing.com/ego-to-eco/3-divides>



The Blind Spot of Leadership

There is lots of information out there on what leaders do, but surprisingly little on the inner core from which leaders act. This is the blind spot. Usually we act without having clearly grounded ourselves in our intentions around change or our honest desires for others. Yet we know that leadership that comes from compassion, openness, and a wide view is more able to motivate others and find the new solutions our times need.



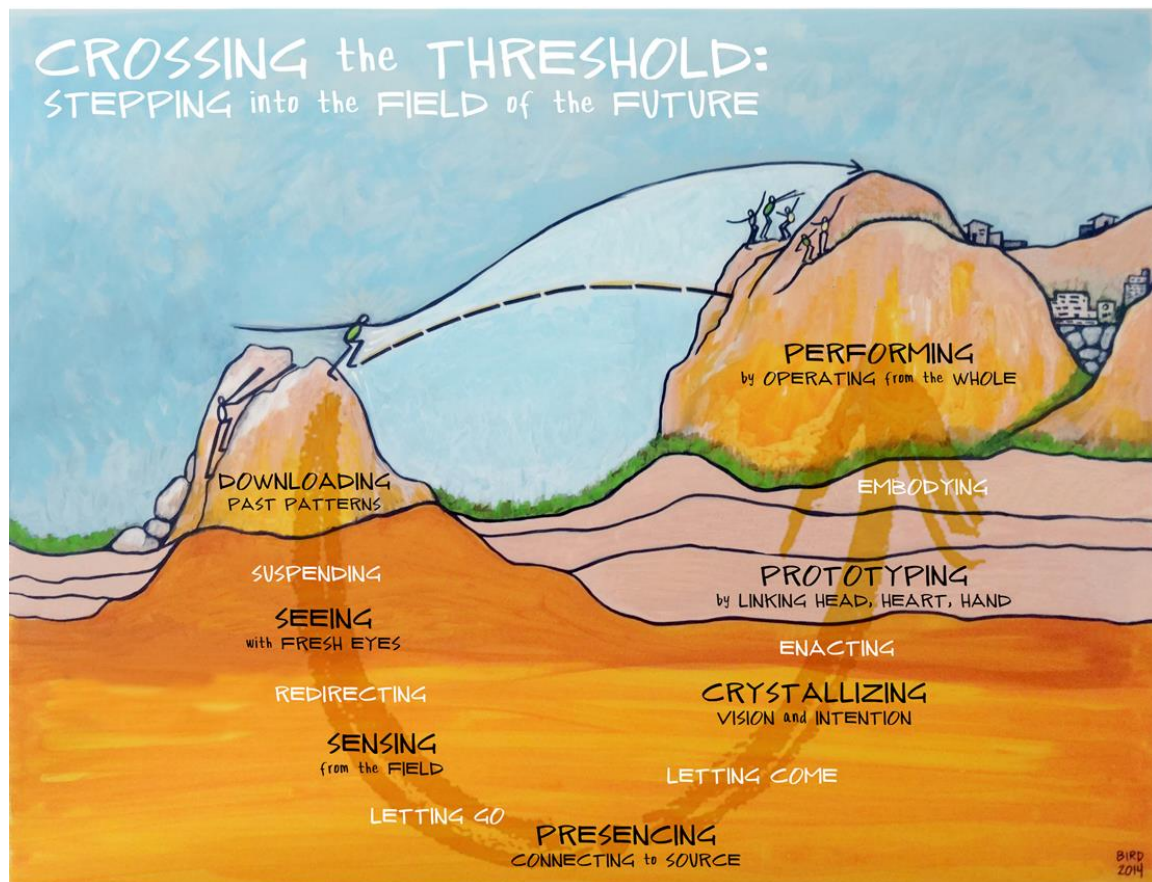
As we develop these listening capacities, our ability to listen to our own inner wisdom increases. We begin the shift from ‘my solutions’ to solutions that emerge from the wisdom of many. Slowly our blind spot gets smaller.

This section based on:

Uncovering the Blind Spot of Leadership, C. Otto Scharmer, Leader to Leader Journal, First published: 28 December 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ltl.269>.



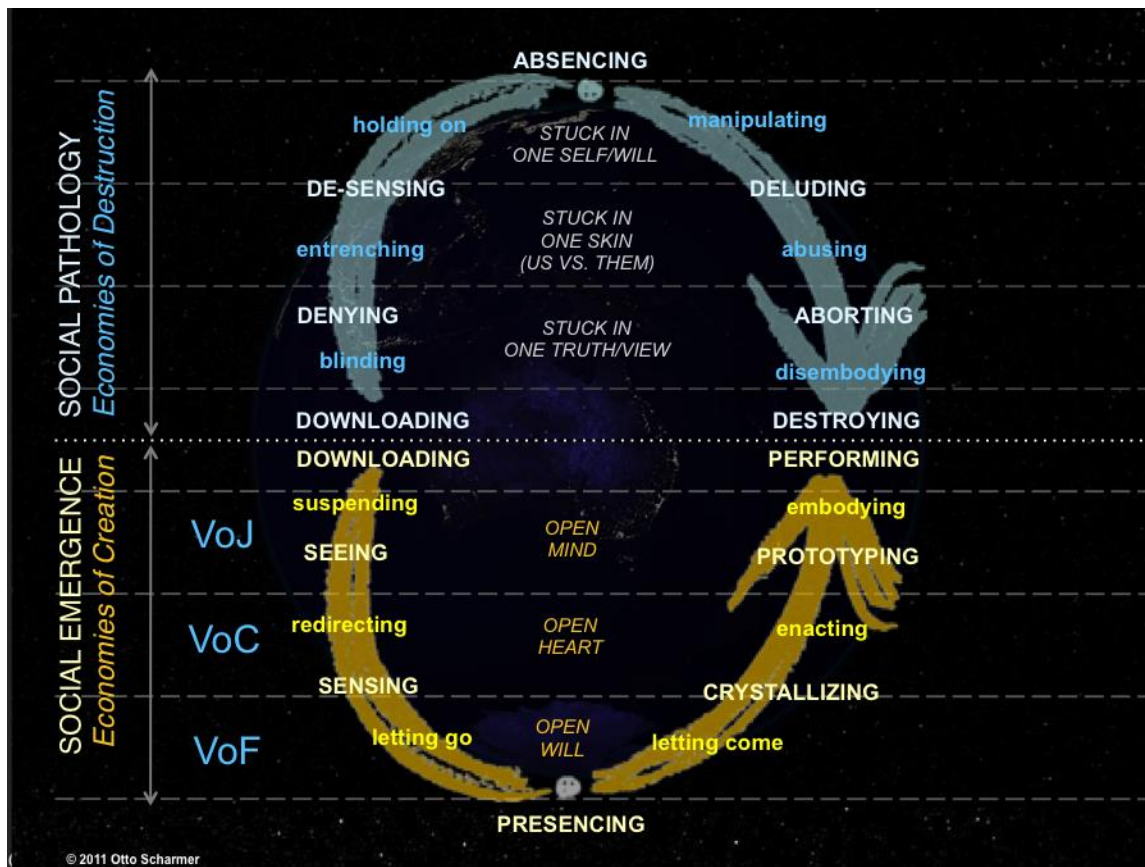
Crossing the Threshold: Theory U



Theory U is a new way to think about the arc of social change. It combines much of what we have learned facilitating transformative change with an effective process for enabling ourselves and those we serve to see their challenges and opportunities in a larger context. It is fundamentally about creativity and working together to see the whole. This approach is described in detail in the book “Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges, by C. Otto Scharmer and Peter Senge”



Absencing or Presencing, It is Our Choice



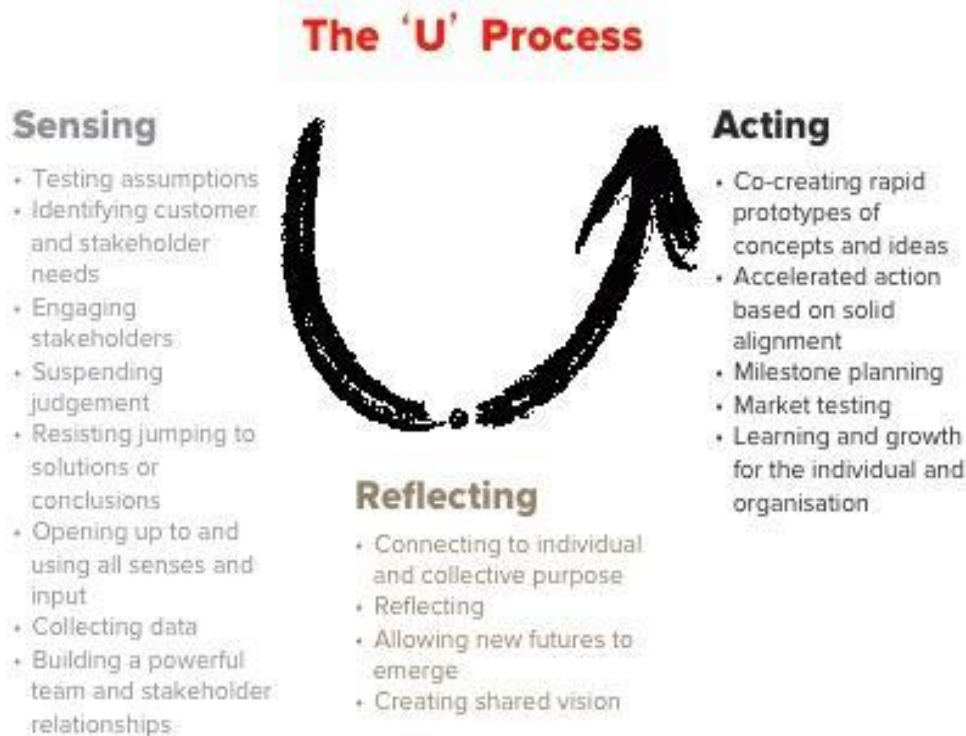
We have a choice. We can work towards creating a life affirming future or we can get trapped in denying or preventing that future. Much of the polarization we see in our world today comes from leaders who are caught in the absencing cycle.

The presencing cycle at the bottom of this image is the same as the one above, but adds in some of the things that get in the way of presencing:

- VoJ: the voice of judgement that says we must keep to a narrow perspective and discounts other voices and data.
- VoC: the voice of cynicism that says things are always the way they are and cannot be changed.
- VoF: the voice of fear that holds us back from leaping fully into our power and into the unknown.

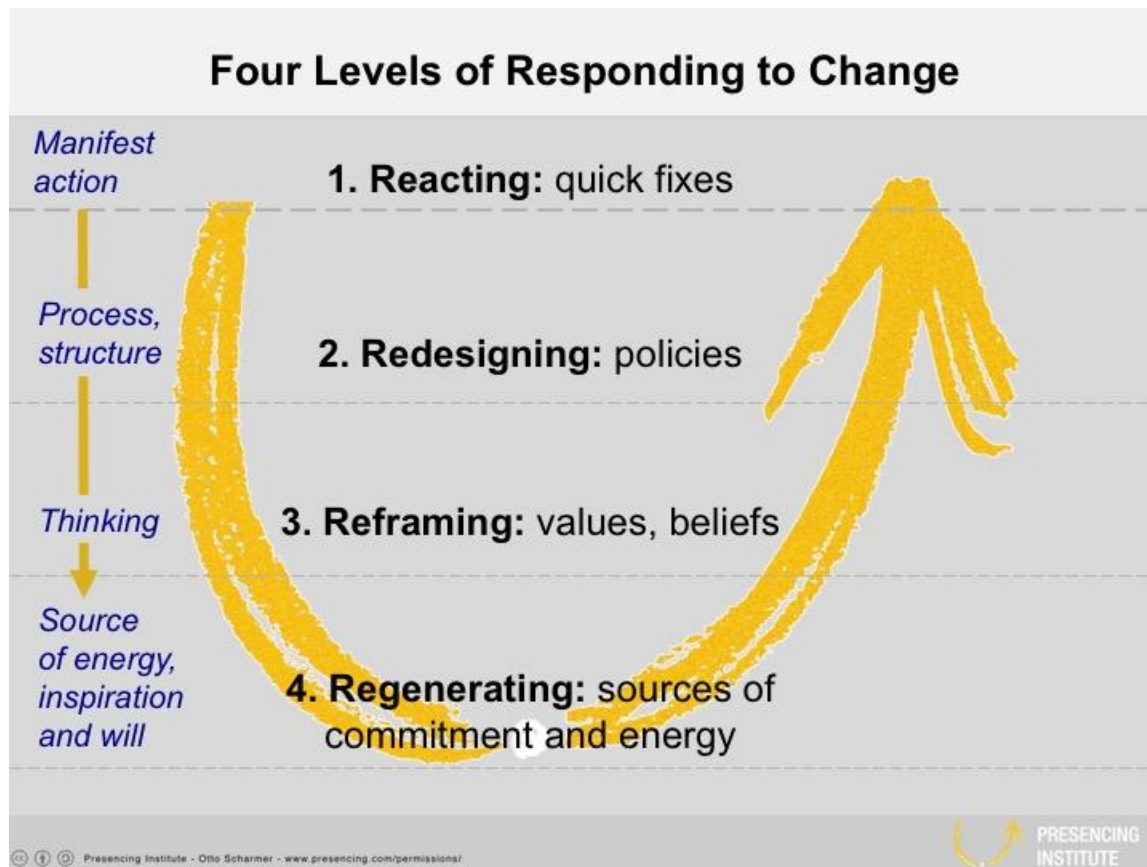


Using Theory U



Theory U is a powerful framework for creating change. It is also a practical way to structure our change processes. Working with groups to move through the phases of the U can create powerful outcomes that have deep buy-in. This image highlights some of the things that we try to cultivate at each step of the process. The steps of walking through the U are the same as the change process arc we discussed earlier. Steps 1-4 are the left side of the U, Step 5 is the bottom, and Steps 6-7 are right side.

Four Levels of Responding to Systems Change



These four levels of response roughly correspond to each layer of the iceberg. As we go down the U the change is harder to make, but more profound. The question for us is where are we trying to respond?

Towards Systems Leadership



Systems leadership is a conscious combination of clarity of intention, skill in serving the whole, and compassion for all. It is a deep practice that asks us to be more.

Every era of human development has had its challenges. Ours is an era that demands us to find a path that creates dignity and opportunity for all while protecting the increasingly limited resources of a shrinking planet.

This is the era of the system leader in you, me, and everyone we touch.

Power and Love Need Each Other



Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to this explicitly when he said:

“Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

We define power and love as philosopher Paul Tillich does:

- Power = drive of everything to realize itself, with increasing intensity & extensity.
- Love = driver toward the unity of the separated.

“Power and love stand at right angles and delineate the space of social change. Rather than a choice to be made one way or another, power and love must be reconciled continuously...this reconciliation is easy in theory but hard in practice. Our modern world is torn to shreds by this dichotomy...”

--Adam Kahane

The system leader cultivates their capacity for both love and power equally and does the same for others. In this way we learn to walk what the Navajo describe as the “beauty way,” a transformative way of being that in turns transforms the world around us.

(This section is based on Adam Kahane’s book “Power and Love : A Theory and Practice of Social Change. This is an outstanding book for cultivating your skills at balancing these two impulses.)



Hands On: Worksheets and Templates

Over the next few pages you will find various templates and worksheets that we will use in the workshop and you may find valuable in the future.

Systems Leadership Competencies Checklist

Being a systems leader is a journey. We begin with our current skills and over time build and refine on them as we become more skillful at each of the core competencies. Even when we are familiar with many of the tools and techniques systems leaders use, there is more to learn. The essence of this journey to mastery is your deep understanding of yourself, your intention in the world, and the balance you create in your life. This simple checklist is a way to discover your areas of mastery, learning edges, and solid skills.

Use this rating scale:

1 = This is new to me

2 = Just beginning to use this

3 = I use this regularly, but have more to learn

4 = I am comfortable with this and use it often

5 = I am very good at this and can help others with it

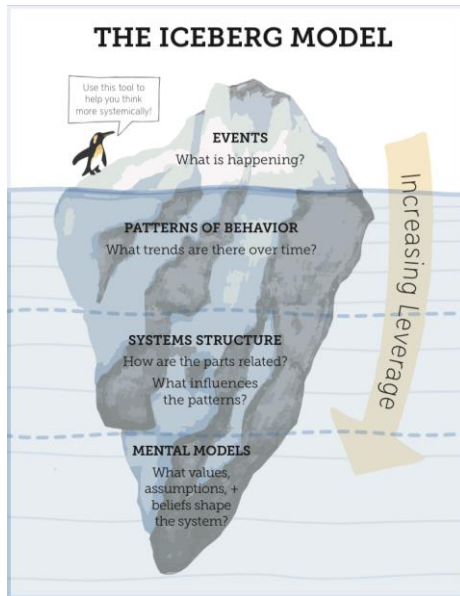
SKILL	1	2	3	4	5
THE ABILITY TO SEE THE WHOLE SYSTEM					
I use systems thinking to help understand the issue I am working on					
I use tools like the iceberg model and the ladder of inference to clarify thinking					
I use diagnostic tools like force field analysis and causal loops in designing change					
I am comfortable looking at the system from multiple and opposing perspectives					
I am able to set aside my own mental models and preferences to see things in new ways					
I am able to help others see the system and think systemically					
I can describe the feedback loops and systems levers I am trying move in my work					
FOSTERING REFLECTION AND GENERATIVE CONVERSATION					
I bring people together in effective meetings and processes					
I know and use ground rules to enable groups to work effectively					
I create spaces that build relationships, trust, and dialogue					
I am able to ask good questions at the right moment and comfortable asking hard questions when needed					

I am able use self-disclosure and feedback effectively to create deeper understanding					
I am open to new ideas and people and am able to shift my views and encourage others to do so as well					
I create environments where people can learn from each other					
I design multi-meeting processes that have clear outcomes for each step					
I practice generative dialogue regularly with team and community					
SHIFTING FOCUS TO CO-CREATING THE FUTURE					
I have a practice that allows me to connect to my inner intention and wisdom					
I am able to be compassionate towards myself and others as we work					
I can let go of my fears and engage my hopes when working on challenging issues					
I can effectively balance the impulses of power and love in myself and in groups					
I know and use transformative tools like Theory U to work more deeply					
I can visualize and describe the positive future that I am working toward					

What did you notice here? What skills would you most like to focus on developing? Sharing with others?

The Iceberg Model

In this exercise, practice using the Iceberg Model by breaking down a food system issue. Work in pairs, pick an issue, and then work your way down. Spend a bit more time thinking about the systems layer than the other layers. What drives/enables the system? What intended and unintended outcomes does it create?



What is the issue you are describing? Be specific.

EVENT LEVEL: What is happening? (These are the kinds of things newspapers cover...)

PATTERN LEVEL: What are the trends or cycles that can be observed? (These are the kinds of things academics or institutes might report on...)



SYSTEM LEVEL: What creates the patterns? What relationships drive the system?

MENTAL MODELS: What are the values and beliefs that underlie the system. (These tend to be big ideas or values passed down over time...)

Driving and Restraining Forces

This template can help you use force field analysis.

What is the status quo you are trying to change or desired future you want to create? Put that at the top of the diagram.

List the forces working toward the change on the right and those working against it on the left. After making the list, rank the forces by how strong they are.

Driving +		- Restraining



The Learning Journey: A New Approach to Site Visits

The primary difference between an ordinary ‘field trip’ or ‘site visit’ and a learning journey are the conversations that take place between the hosts and the visitors and the ones between the visitors themselves. Three items provide the foundation for those conversations:

- Suspending your voice of judgment—allowing yourself to be open to hear and see other perspectives and ideas reflecting;
- Allowing yourself to slow down and quiet your own thinking to be open to others’ and your own deeper thoughts; and debriefing;
- Sharing your thinking with the others in the group so that a larger picture can be co-created by the varied perspectives that you each bring.

These notes are provided as a general approach.

Before the visit

Agree who will be the group spokesperson.

Spend 10 minutes in silence:

- Quiet your mind.
- Check in on yourself. What are you feeling? What are you thinking? Observe the flow of your thoughts.
- What do you think you already know about the site and people you are about to visit? Write down 5 assumptions or expectations you are carrying. Once you’ve written them down, consciously let them go.
- What do you want to know about the site and the people? Write down 5 questions or areas of interest.

During the visit

- The group spokesperson introduces the group and our purpose. Go around and each person does a quick introduction.
- Listen and observe carefully. Pay attention both to the visible and to the invisible. Use all your senses.
- Interview people you meet. Ask questions. Pay attention to their thinking. Also, notice your own thinking: your reactions, judgments, projections, etc.



- “Gather” artifacts, quotes, etc. as they strike you.

After the visit

Immediately find some space to write up your notes. Keep silent—delay sharing and chatting.

Write down, in a stream of consciousness, your observations and thoughts.

Then consider:

- What stood out for me? What struck me most strongly?
- What surprised me? If nothing, why?
- What did I notice about myself and my reactions? What might I have failed to notice?
- Putting myself in the shoes of the people I met, what advice would they have for us?
- What options does this visit open up for my work?
- What impact does and might my and our work have on the people I met?
- What new questions and puzzles are coming up for me?

After 10 minutes, gather for a team debrief.

Each person shares their observations, feelings, thoughts, and reflections. After every person has shared, take 5 more minutes in silence to round out your notes.

Source: [Sustainable Food Lab](#). Modifications by Joseph McIntyre, 2017.

Peer Coaching Group Process

Peer coaching is a way to access your inner resources as well the support and wisdom of a peer support group. This process is not mainly about advice. It is a time for individual and group reflection.

Process

Group size 4 to 6

Time 70 minutes

1. Select one person to be the case giver, another to be timekeeper. Everyone other than the case giver is a consultant/facilitator.
2. The case giver thinks about a program, management, process, or other issue that:
 - a. is current, concrete, and important;
 - b. the case giver happens to be a key player;
 - c. the case can be presented in 10 min, and;
 - d. could make a big difference moving forward.
3. **Intention statement by case giver** (10 min). This can include
 - a. Situation/Problem/Opportunity/Project=What do you want to address?
 - b. Your intention: What do you want to create?
 - c. Your edge: what do you need to let go of and learn?
 - d. Help: Where do you need input and help?
4. **Reflection by consultant facilitators** (10 m):
 - a. Take 2-3 min in stillness, then mirroring by each consultant
 - b. What images and feelings come up for me now?
 - c. What questions are evoked in my mind?
5. **Generative Dialogue** and solution brainstorming by all (30 m)
 - a. Case giver reflects on the images and emotions that the case evoked
 - b. Consultants ask questions to deepen understanding
 - c. Generative Dialogue: Co-create ideas for solutions.



6. **Concluding Remarks by each person other than case giver** (10 m)
 - a. What is the key issue to be addressed [diagnosis]?
 - b. What solution/action do I propose?
7. **Concluding remarks by case giver** (5 m)
 - a. What new insight do the solutions offer to me?
 - b. How could I use/combine these ideas going forward?

This process modified from Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges, by C. Otto Scharmer and Peter Senge (Aug 15, 2016), pg. 433



Your Deep Intention

What change are you trying to create in the world, and from what core intention or energy do you work? This poem from Mary Oliver asks the question poignantly:

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the
black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean--
the one who has flung herself
out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar
out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back
and forth instead of up and
down --
who is gazing around with
her enormous and
complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale
forearms and thoroughly
washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings
open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a
prayer is.
I do know how to pay
attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel
in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed,
how to stroll through the
fields
which is what I have been
doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I
have done?
Doesn't everything die at last,
and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to
do
With your one wild and
precious life?
--Mary Oliver, The Summer
Day

Take a few minutes here to consider what your deep intention in the work is. Use the space below to capture your thoughts. A couple of tips on this process:

- Take a minute to just relax and breath
- Explore your feelings—what are you trying to accomplish
- Go deeper—what is behind that, what is your aspiration
- Be honest with yourself—this is not all brightness and light...



Resources

Facilitation

Books

- The Skilled Facilitator: A Comprehensive Resource for Consultants, Facilitators, Managers, Trainers, and Coaches by Roger M. Schwarz. 2002.
- The Skilled Facilitator Fieldbook: Tips, Tools, and Tested Methods for Consultants, Facilitators, Managers, Trainers, and Coaches by Roger Schwarz, Anne Davidson, Peg Carlson and Sue McKinney, 2005.
- Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making. Sam Kaner, Michael Doyle, Lenny Lind and Catherine Toldi, 2007.
- Dialogue: The Art Of Thinking Together. William Isaacs, 1999.
- Power & Love, A Theory and Practice of Social Change. Adam Kahane, 2010.
- Collaborating with the Enemy: How to Work with People You Don't Agree with or Like or Trust. Adam Kahane. 2017.
- Making Questions Work: A Guide to What and How to Ask for Facilitators, Consultants, Managers, Coaches, and Others. Dorothy Strachan, 2007.

Methods

- [Open space](#)
- [World Cafe](#)
- [Art of Hosting](#)
- [International Association for Public Participation](#)
- [Intl Asso of Facilitators](#)
- [The Organization Development Network](#)

Organizations/resources of interest

- [National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation](#)
- [Society for Organizational Learning](#)
- [Lisa Heft and Open Space](#)

Systems thinking/leadership

Books

- Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds, by adrienne maree brown, (2017)
- Systems Thinking For Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results, by David Peter Stroh (2015)
- Thinking in Systems: A Primer, by Donella H. Meadows and Diana Wright (2008)
- The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization, by Peter M. Senge (2014)
- Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges, by C. Otto Scharmer and Peter Senge (2016)
- Leading from the Emerging Future: From Ego-System to Eco-System Economies, by Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer (2013)

Other resources

- Omidyar Group
 - [Why Use a Systems Practice?](#) (video)
 - [Systems Practice Mindsets video](#) (video)
 - [Systems Practice Workbook](#)
- [Tools for Systems Thinkers](#), Acaroglu
- [Introduction to Systems Thinking](#), Daniel H. Kim
- [The Systems Thinker](#),
- [Theory U/Presencing Institute](#)
- [Academy for Systems Change](#)



Credits

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Inquiries for speaking, coaching, training, and facilitation of systems change are welcomed.

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Notes





About the Wallace Center

The Wallace Center at Winrock International is a leading force for local and regional food systems development throughout the United States and has been promoting sustainable food and farming for more than 25 years. The Wallace Center's mission is to develop partnerships, pilot new ideas, and advance solutions to strengthen communities through resilient farming and food systems. We act as a convener, facilitator, resource broker, and network weaver to support the emerging chain of businesses and civic efforts making good food an everyday reality in every community.

The Food Systems Leadership Network is the Wallace Center's newest innovation for building the capacity of the individuals and organizations that are transforming the food system within their communities across the country.

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Wallace Center
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL