

Changing Systems, Power & Potential

A synthesis of insights from the
Canberra Workshop 2-3 March 2020

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April 2020



Mark Cabaj
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CONSULTING INC

Acknowledgments

The content of this paper has been derived from sessions at the Changing Systems, Power and Potential workshop in Canberra from 2-3 March 2020.

The insights and learnings included some from presenters as well as participants. In particular, we acknowledge the knowledge and expertise of:

Mark Cabaj – Here To There Consulting Inc

Liz Skelton – Collaboration for Impact

Kerry Graham – Collaboration for Impact

Mark Yettica-Paulson – Collaboration for Impact

Moira Were – Collaboration for Impact

Ariella Helfgott – Collaboration for Impact

The workshop was made possible with the support of the Paul Ramsay Foundation and the Department of Social Services.

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**“We seek and strive
for equity in place,
community and
opportunity.”**

Mark Cabaj



Introduction

The content of this paper has been derived from sessions at the Changing Systems, Power and Potential workshop in Canberra from 2-3 March 2020.

This two-day workshop with Mark Cabaj and Collaboration for Impact was for participants who are immersed in the work of shifting the conditions that hold inequity in place. Participants came from many sectors and locations across Australia, and represented systems change projects operating at a range of scales – from local to national.

It was an applied learning experience, that included interactive sessions with Mark Cabaj on:

- a multi-level framework for systems change (developed with McConnell Foundation in late 2019);
- evaluating systems change; and
- contribution analysis.

Collaboration for Impact also facilitated exploratory sessions for participants to:

- learn how to share, pool and use power in systems change work; and
- engage in peer-to-peer learning to share and strengthen promising practice.

The content within is not a reproduction of the event presentations that have been shared separately with participants. Instead, this report provides a synthesis of insights that have been organised by the following four categories:

- Defining the system (what does systems change mean?);
- Leading for systems change (including hold the space for others);
- Learning for systems change (including useful evaluation methods and frameworks); and
- Practice library (further reading recommended by presenters and participants).

It is hoped that this report will be relevant for participants as well as other interested readers who access the resource to inform their practice.

Defining systems change

What is 'The System'?

A system is a group of parts that function as a whole. These 'parts' are both intangible and tangible components with interconnections and feedback that give rise to complexity. Complex adaptive systems, such as social systems, are open systems.

They are:

- affected by external environments;
- capable of learning from feedback and adapting to changes in context;
- self-organising – with patterns of behaviour emerging without centralised direction;
- only visible when looking at whole patterns, not individual parts;
- non-linear – meaning changes in one part of the system can cause (counterintuitive and unpredictable) changes to emerge in other parts ; and
- driven by a purpose or goal, often unstated, which can evolve over time.

Non-linearity means that systems are unpredictable. Their complexity makes them unknowable, in that no single person can ever know the whole system. And the adaptive nature of systems makes them essentially unsolvable. This means that any attempt at change has an expiry date.

How we determine the boundaries of any system says more about our purpose than that of the system itself. Our mental model of 'the system' is actually in our minds as much as in the real world. We frame the system with our biases, blind spots and even use of language.

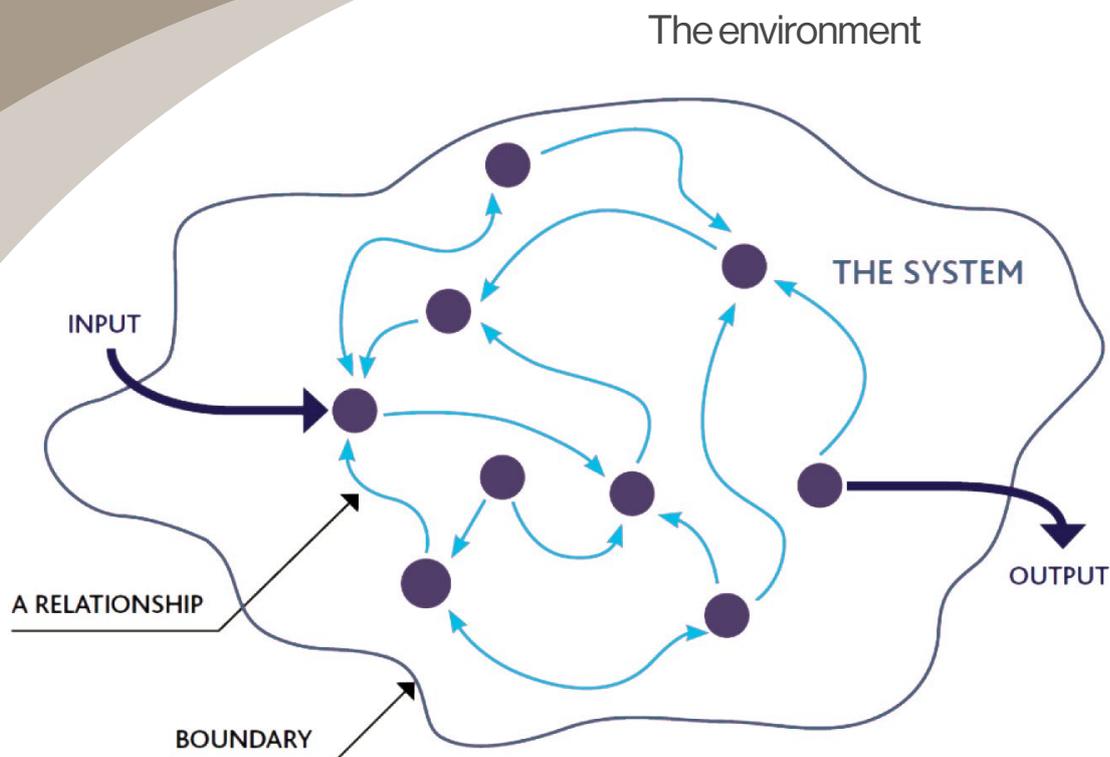
There isn't one 'true' system. We are all part of many systems. Every person will have a different idea about the system and its boundaries and needs. This is why collectively making the system visible through activities such as group model building and system mapping can be so important.



“It’s artificial to bound systems that are overlapping and open. We bound them in an effort to make them coherent and manageable. But however we bound the system, the result is – as John Kania would say – a ‘useful fiction’: It’s not completely real but it reduces the fuzziness and we can start saying ah, I can see some things now, key actors, important relationships, critical dynamics and behaviours that we need to keep in mind.”

Mark Cabaj

Figure 1: Example of a system¹



¹ ABERCROMBIE, R., HARRIES, E. & WHARTON, R. 2015. Systems Change: A guide to what it is and how to do it. New Philanthropy Capital and Lankelly Chase Foundation.

Practice Tip: Participatory system mapping

When trying to 'see the system', participatory system mapping can be a useful collective activity that surfaces mental models within the group.

There are many types of system maps. One example is a causal map, where we look to map the key relationships and interconnections that influence the system or issue we are focusing on.

When mapping, involving as many diverse stakeholders as possible means a shared model can be developed that builds on our individual (but inherently limited) knowledge of the system and surfaces hidden assumptions.

As the group maps out different influences and factors, arrows should be drawn between those that impact each other. These might be factors that reinforce each other, or cancel each other out - through the direct and indirect feedback loops in the system.

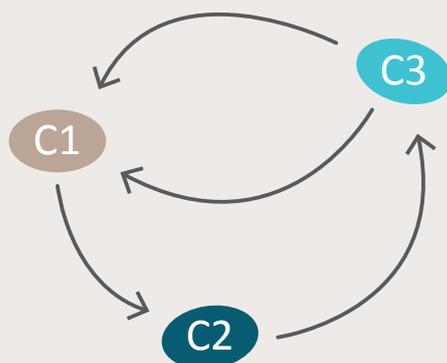
Once a system map is created, the group can then explore the key dynamics which need to be shifted and possible entry points for systemic change.

For helpful tips on how to create a systems map using feedback loops, see:

<https://blog.kumu.io/how-do-you-kumu-with-rob-ricigliano-f4210c635df7>

“You can not navigate well in an interconnected, feedback-dominated world unless you take your eyes off short-term events and look for long-term behaviour and structure; unless you are aware of false-boundaries and bounded rationality; unless you take in to account limiting factors, non-linearities and delays”.

Donella Meadows, 2008



A causal loop

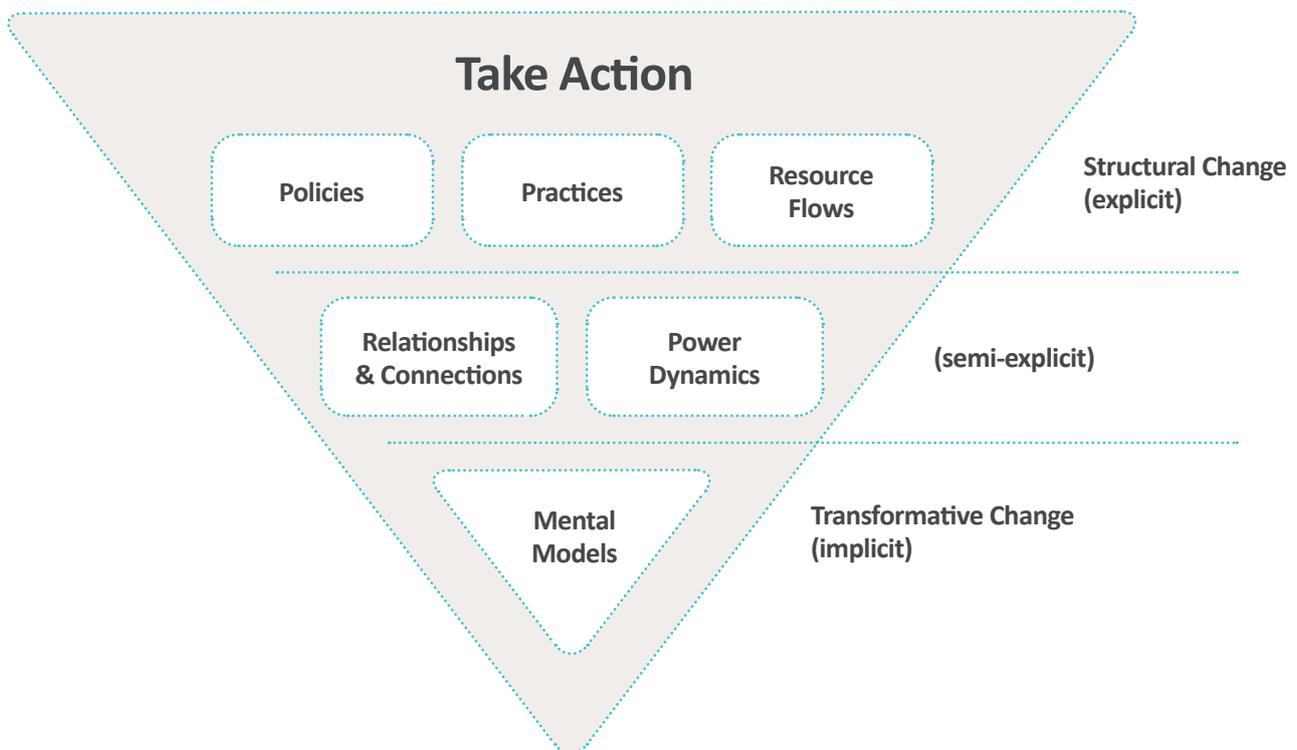


What is 'Systems change'?

When we talk about systems change we are talking about intentionally nudging, changing, influencing and incentivising systems to work better for the people and the places and the communities we care about.

While we can't control or predict complex systems, we can seek to influence the deep structures and underlying patterns of the system - such as mindsets, institutions and behaviour - that can hold a problem in place. One simple framework for thinking about these underlying elements of the system is this model from FSG.

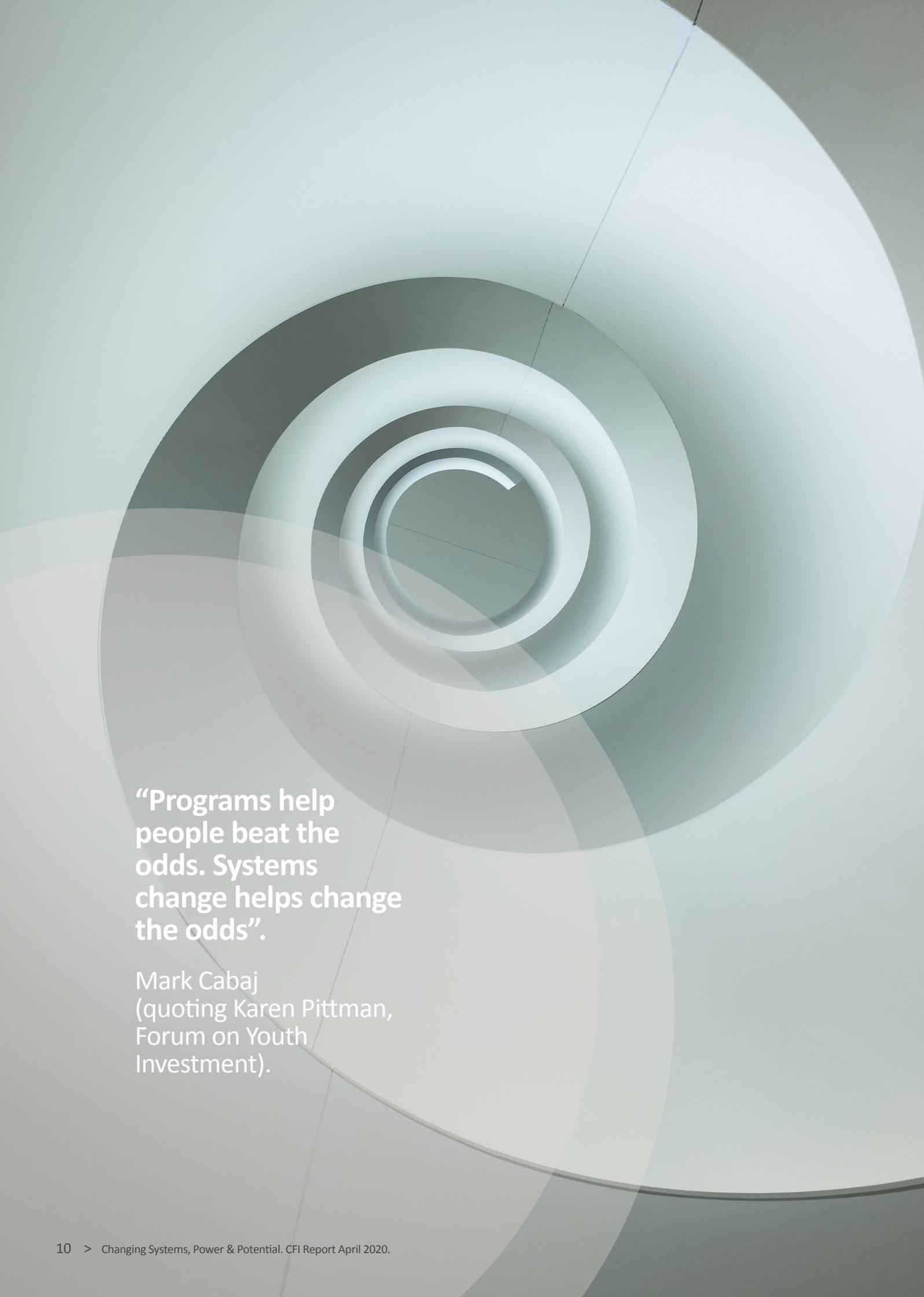
Figure 2. Shifting the conditions that hold the problem in place²



Systems change requires transformation across individual, organisational and system-wide scales. It requires carefully

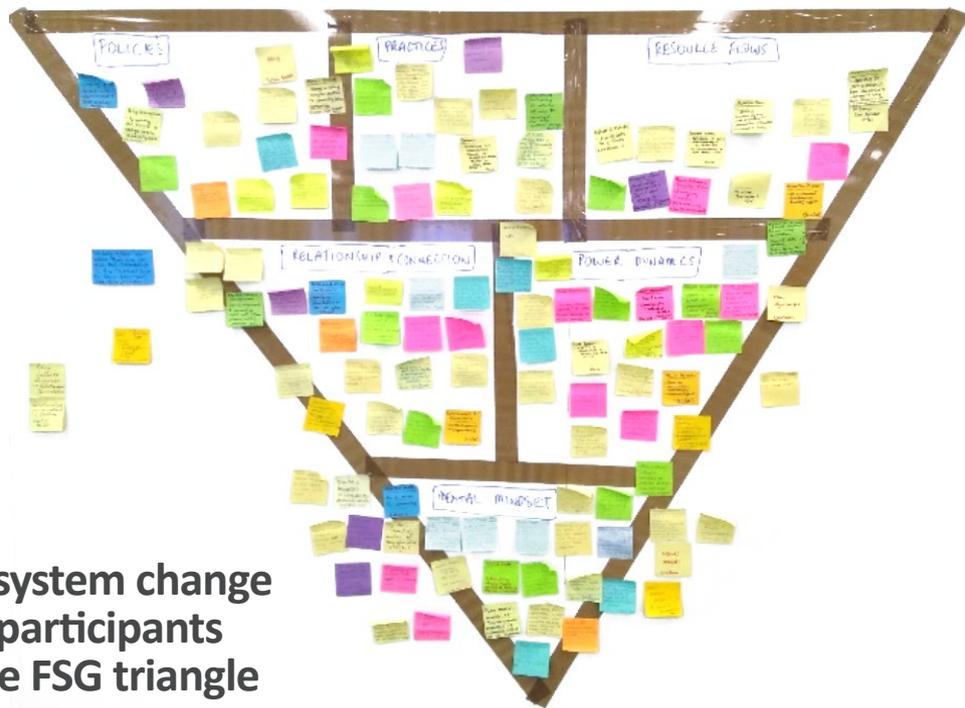
considered social processes, genuine collaborations, and often a portfolio approach to interventions that allow for ongoing learning and adaptation.

² KANIA, J., KRAMER, M. & SENGE, P. 2018. The water of systems change. Boston: FSG.

The background features a large, light blue circle on the right side, partially overlapping a larger, semi-transparent grey circle on the left. In the center, there is a series of concentric, slightly offset circles that create a spiral effect, drawing the eye towards the center. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, with a focus on geometric shapes and a cool color palette.

**“Programs help
people beat the
odds. Systems
change helps change
the odds”.**

Mark Cabaj
(quoting Karen Pittman,
Forum on Youth
Investment).



Mapping system change efforts of participants against the FSG triangle

During the workshop, as participants mapped their own activities against the FSG triangle, common threads emerged about efforts to create system change. These included:

Policies

Moving away from a programmatic focus to place based strategies
 Moving away from punitive measures to working with community

Practices

Utilising systems thinking to identify leverage points
 Engaging in ongoing collaboration and codesign

Resource Flows

Ensuring data flow to and from the community in an accessible way
 Changing funding parameters to better respond to community aspirations

Relationships and connections

Identifying boundaries and how to span them
 Creating connections across actors in the system

Power dynamics

Ensuring community has a seat at the leadership table
 Creating the space for unheard voices, including indigenous and youth voices
 Codesigning interventions with, not for, community

Mental models

Focusing on shifting attitudes and beliefs
 Surfacing mental models in order to reframe the collective approach

Leading for systems change

Holding the work

Creating intentional systems change is not straight forward. It is challenging, cumulative and can take time. The challenge is creating the space, container or holding environment for the work that needs to be done. For some, the 'container' is a function such as a backbone team or role. For others, the container is the place for dialogue and adaptive conversations that is very different from any technical work. It's culture, values and ways of working.

While there can be orchestrating or coordinating functions, holding the work is also about creating the enabling conditions for new patterns to emerge. Who and what this is will depend on the context. It could be a loose coalition or a structured team. Whatever the structure or space, it should evolve or diminish depending on the context. It should avoid becoming yet another means of reinforcing existing system patterns.

“You need to create a container for change that allows people to humanise each other, tolerate uncertainty and conflict, and focus on solutions.”

Mark Cabaj

“When you are in a choir and you are out of breath, you can take a breath knowing people will hold the note and the song continues”

Kerry Graham



Systems leadership

Creating such enabling conditions, whatever they are labelled, requires a certain type of leadership – systems leadership. This means leadership with humility and leaders who don't need to be the hero in the story or the commander in control. They are instead willing to draw upon the emergent and self-organising nature of complex adaptive systems through empowering others (regardless of hierarchy) and continuous re-calibration. In systems leadership, the goal is that everyone can exercise leadership regardless of the position they hold, and that the work is framed in a way that people choose to step in.

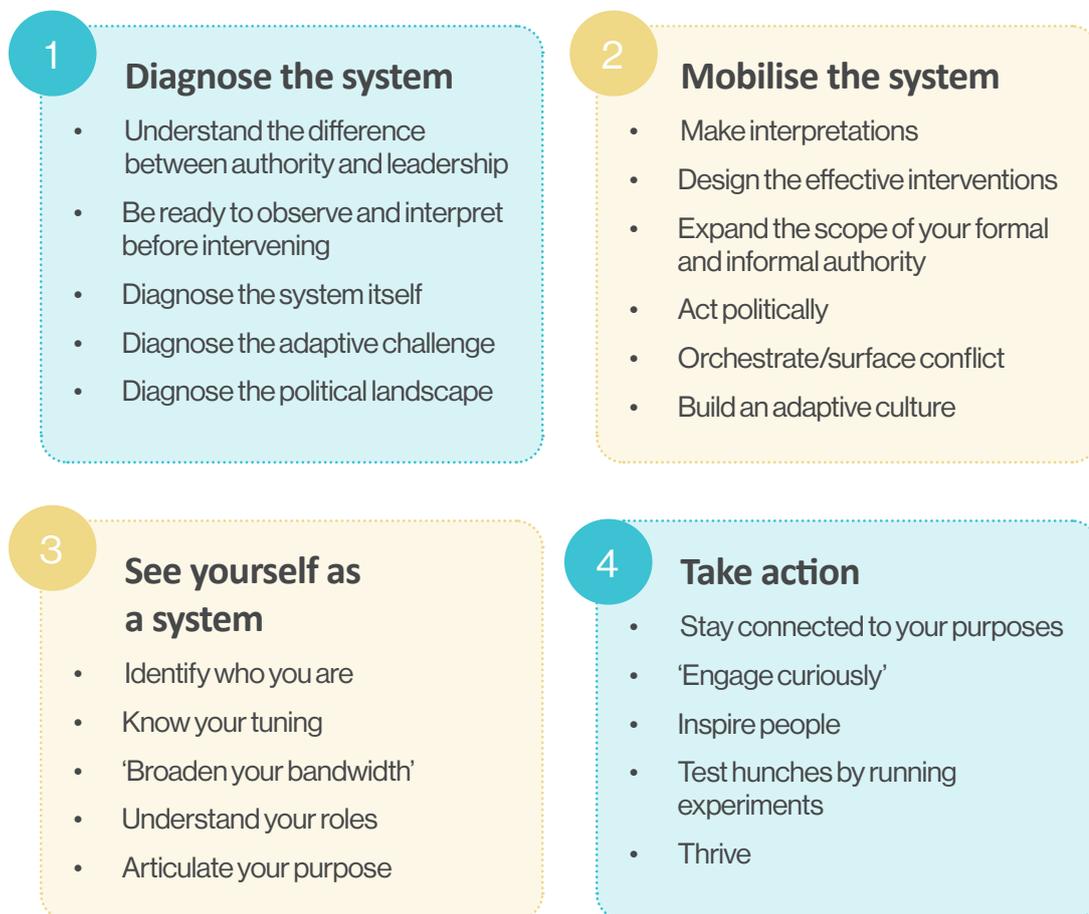
An important part of systems leadership is adaptive leadership - leadership that can hold different views, builds trust, surfaces conflict and builds alignment. This type of leadership embraces diversity and difference, and is able to simultaneously hold and engage with multiple world views or paradigms. They deeply understand the type of challenge being faced and are able to pivot at any moment to what is most needed in the system. This has to be done while navigating a context of competing priorities, accountabilities, interests and constraints.

“How do we start to think about the collective and personal power we've got and how do we use that well on behalf of the challenges that we're trying to address, in a context that's becoming increasingly polarised where there's no real forum to come together and hear different views and to hold different views long enough so we can actually start to get some of the innovation from that? To be able to see where might we intervene and leverage so that we can realise the potential of the work we're doing?”

Liz Skelton

As the figure below shows, there is a lot of diagnostic work involved before taking action. This includes how we see ourselves as a system and how the system is currently navigated and negotiated. We often skip this step and move straight to mobilisation.

Figure 3. Four activities for adaptive leadership for systems change



Source: "Leadership without easy answers", by Ronald Heifetz, adapted by Ledoux

Authority for technical work – coordination, delegating for simple and complicated challenges – is also important. But the responses and behaviours are different. In this context, it's important to consider:

- Where is authority required (the technical work)?
- What direction, protection and order are required?
- Who takes up these functions of authority?

Adaptive leadership is distinguished from technical leadership in how it deploys and acts with authority. For this it is worth asking:

- Where is leadership required? (the adaptive work)
- What new reality is the system facing?
- What adaptation is required?



Figure 4. Leadership from a position of authority

Function	Technical	Adaptive
Direction	Provide problem definition & solution	Ask questions to identify the adaptive challenge
Protection	Protect from external threats	Disclose external threats
Orientation	People to current roles	Disorient current roles; resist orienting people to new roles too quickly
Conflict	Restore order & manage difference	Expose conflict or let it emerge
Norms	Maintain norms	Challenge norms or let them be challenged

Recognise: A Case Study

During the workshop, an exploration of the Recognise campaign with Mark Yettica-Paulson revealed a range of insights. Mark reflected on his own role as well as the wider campaign's evolution. He recalled his personal journey from a campaigner with informal authority to holding a more formal authority role. He also reflected on the lessons learnt from an initiative that faced a range of complex challenges from the start. For example, the need to shift a whole nation's consciousness was no small task and the fear of loss was great for everyone involved. This drove a range of behaviours that led to 'work avoidance' and the

delegation of hard decisions and responsibility to intermediaries. There were unresolved tensions that made finding a balance difficult between self-determination and empowerment versus collaboration and the complexities of 'white power'. Structures were created that controlled the process while the social process itself lacked a supportive structure. With hands tied from day one, the campaign was unable to exert the necessary power or change the rules of the system at that time. However, it has informed new approaches and sowed the seeds for future change.

Practice Tip: Diagnosis on the run

As we are deep in the work and running hard in adaptation mode, it can be useful to ask:

1. What is the adaptive work here?
2. What is it we need to conserve, and what do we need to let go of?
3. Where do we need to innovate?
4. What are we avoiding? Are we facing up to new realities?
5. Where is the urgency coming from?
6. What who is seen as leading and following and why?

Spotlight on power

An often-overlooked element of systems change is the role of power. Power dictates our ability and capacity to influence, interact and act in different ways. Paying attention to how power is constructed and exerted within a system is vital, lest we keep replicating existing power structures in our work. It is also important to be alert to how the system resists or responds to challenges to the status quo.

Seeing and understanding power is the first step. We can often not see ourselves or our own power. In particular, helping communities' step in to that space of power and understand their role when they've never had it before is a massive challenge for many. It's about a careful rebalancing, renegotiating or rebuilding different power structures and genuinely putting people in the centre. It's also about a shift of mindset, removing ourselves from the margins or disrupting the common narrative of low power that perpetuates status quo.

Practice Tip: Being alert to the role of power

Throughout your work, remember to keep asking:

1. What spaces are open or closed?
2. Who is included or excluded?
3. Is it visible or invisible power? Has it been named?
4. Do First Nations have strong powerful voices?
5. Are communities empowered to drive change?
6. Who/what is likely to be authorised or deauthorised in the system that you are in?

“In systems change, so much of the work gets done outside the formal system.”

Liz Skelton

“I want to remind you that there are desperate forces resisting the change that you and I are advocating for.”

Mark Yettica-Paulson



Practice Tip: Power Audit Exercise

A simple exercise that be a conversation with a colleague is the power audit exercise. It is a discussion of:

1. Where do you have power?
2. In what contexts?
3. Which kind of power do you have?
4. What resources or privileges does it bring?
5. How could you use it differently?

Taking up the power we have at our disposal can be hard. It can helpful to think about the different types of power that give us agency. We can have this power whether we're in the mainstream or whether we're on the margins. Below are five types:

- 1. Authority:** Sector/ organisation/ position/ role in the system
- 2. Social power:** Advantages granted or denied due to social identity (ie. gender, race, class, religion, ethnicity, physical or mental ability)
- 3. Knowledge:** Power based on expertise, information, skills and knowledge
- 4. Personal:** Innate and developed skills, traits, experience and characteristics that help us succeed in life
- 5. Informal:** Rank in a group based on degrees of belonging ie. popularity, seniority, alliances

Power based on authority and position gives us the licence to act. Personal power gives us the capacity to act. Informal power is often dismissed as it is invisible, intangible and very context specific. Yet people know who's got it.

“If you are in the game of systems change then you are in the game of building, yielding and sharing power... progress depends on the willingness and ability to manage conflict and competition amongst diverse actors with different values, interests and powers. We're going to have to embrace conflict and cooperation. We have to get good at it.”

Mark Cabaj

Engaging with diverse perspectives

Clearly, we need to be able to have spaces where we can hold different views, different ways of operating, and do that directly and openly. This means dialogue is happening within the process rather than being pushed outside it. In systems work, its about learning from and leveraging multiple perspectives – to find common ground despite of different agendas. Unless it is named it can't be addressed. And if consensus is forced, disagreements can just be taken away and dealt with somewhere else. There is a key role here for deeper, more meaningful and productive dialogue. It can be useful to consider the Otto Scharmer's generative dialogue model of the four fields of conversation (below). In the diagram, each successive field represents an increasingly complex pattern of conversation, moving from more closed to more open modes, generating new understanding and knowledge (learning) rather than simply negotiating from current understandings and positions.

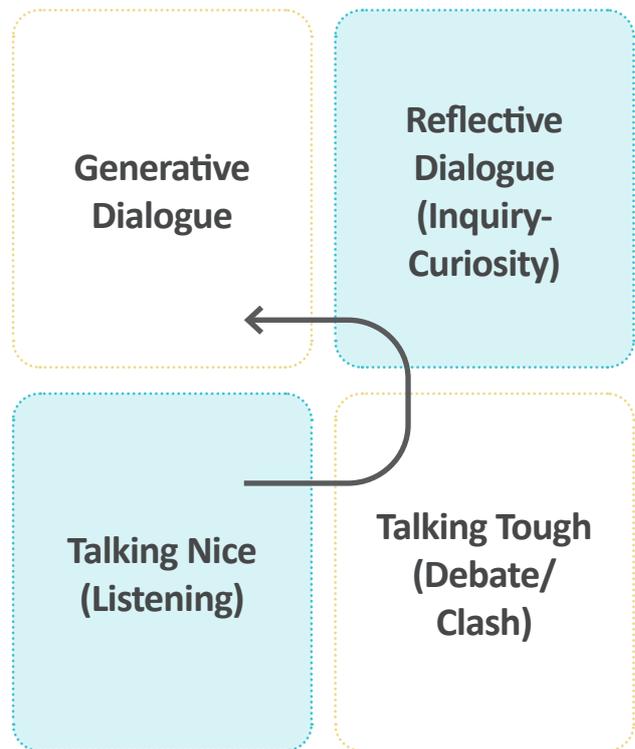
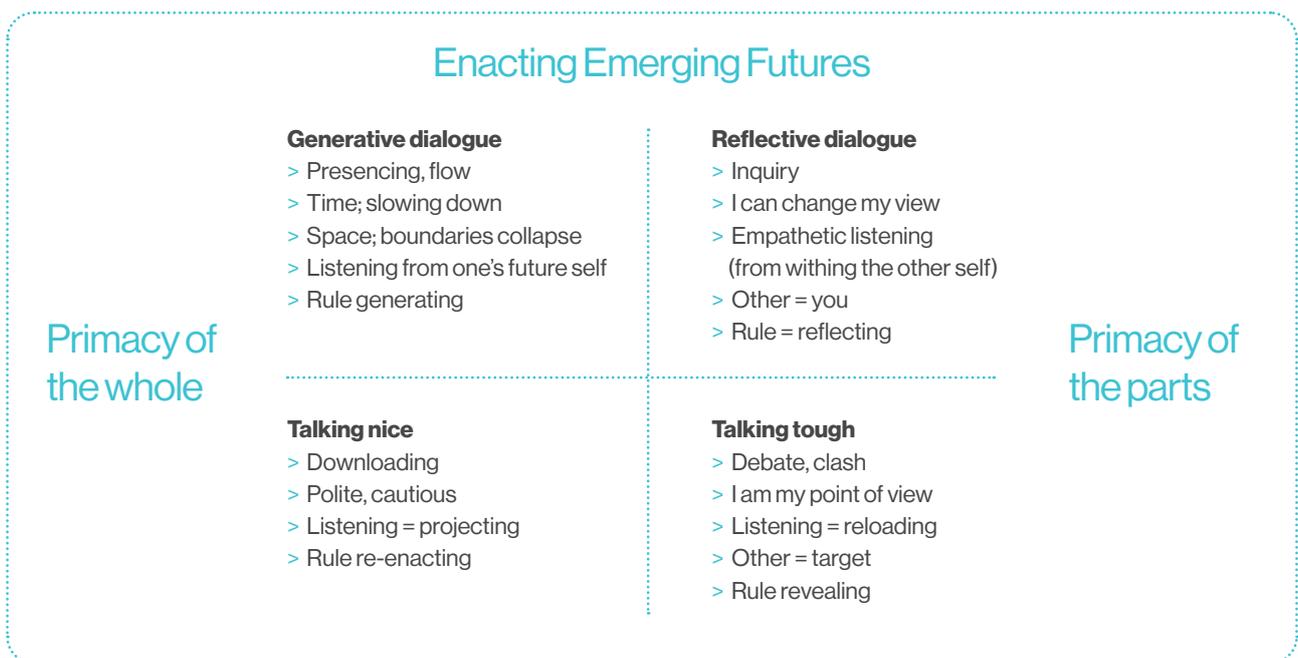


Figure 5. Four fields of conversation³



³ Scharmer, C. O., 2003. Four fields of generative dialogue: Generative Dialogue Course Pack, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge.



“The thing with power is that we don’t often see that we’ve got it. We think that someone else has it – sometimes someone with it is conveniently not in the room.”

Mark Yettica-Paulson

Learning for systems change

Multiple results

Given the adaptive nature of complex systems, an important asset in any systems change effort is the capacity for collective learning, based on real time feedback, continuously. The challenge is finding ways to listen and hear from the whole system in ways that help inform good strategic decisions and help people feel empowered to make change.

Part of this is about understanding impact. And it can be helpful to consider impact in three different ways – each having an important role in informing ongoing efforts to change systems underlying tough challenges: systems change; mission outcomes; and strategic learning.

Figure 6. A multiple results framework

(source: Here To There Consulting Inc)





The system change questions are essentially asking three things:

1. Are we changing drivers (or leverage points or conditions)?
2. Are those changes in drivers resulting in any behaviour change? Is someone doing something differently?
3. And are enough actors behaving differently in a way that results in a significant pattern change? Has the system shifted or tilted enough to create a new pattern?

The reality is never as linear as these questions make out but can be a helpful way to frame learning about impact. Often when you're dealing with systems you're dealing with multiple scales at the same time. If we want mission level impact, it requires cumulative change. The process of change is more effective when there are mutually reinforcing actions at multiple levels, which create pressure for the next level. Not just collective impact, but cumulative impact. Because it's the accumulation of little things, over time, that creates the conditions for big things. It's little things that create the conditions for big things.

Multiple levels

This is where a second framework can come in handy - the 'Multi-level framework on systems change'. The multi-level perspective is rooted in complexity thinking. With an eye to mission impact, it asks us to widen our gaze to what it might take to actually move the needle. At one level, changes in factors such as public awareness and policy shift influence and leverage niche innovations at another level.

It requires us to ask:

- How do we shift awareness?
- What kinds of systems and infrastructure do we have to nudge?
- What are the supporting niche innovations?

It's an adaptation of a prominent sustainability transition framework by Frank Geels called "The multi-level perspective on sustainability transitions". Geels' framework posits that transitions come about through interaction processes within and among three analytical levels: niches, socio-technical regimes and a socio-technical landscape. The concept is that while niche innovations are essential, they are incredibly difficult to scale if the wider system (regimes and landscapes) hasn't been disrupted in anyway.

Figure 7. The Multi-level framework on systems change

(source: Here To There Consulting Inc)



Within this framework, the strengthening of both capacity and agency are essential inputs, as is shared strategic learning on the systemic nature of the challenge.

While noting that all frameworks are inaccurate because they don't reflect complexity, they can still be useful. They can reveal certain things about what we're doing and provide a degree of coherence.

Multiple lenses, adaptive stance

The process of change is emergent, long term, and requires constant adaptation. This means that complex change initiatives often get tackled through emergent strategy. People learn about an issue by zooming out, zooming in, intervening and adapting. Zooming in and out means constantly shifting lens to consider the wider system and the specific challenge at hand.

Over time, emergent strategy can evolve into an umbrella strategy as more structure and clarity emerges. Such a strategy is still led by outcomes rather than a recipe for implementation. Solutions will work for a while and then the context shifts and they will stop working. Players will come and go, rules change and the endpoint is hard to recognise.

Evaluation design needs to adapt to suit, being highly sensitive to the dynamics of innovation and change. Just as solutions to complex issues have a half-life, so too does any evaluation and learning design.

To enable adaptability in evaluation and learning, it's important to build design around principles not just recipes or best practice. Best practice is by definition anti-innovation, because it doesn't pay attention to context or allow for creativity. It follows a recipe. Context matters and we have to pay attention to where we are and what is being attempted. This will require creativity. For example, innovators often start without a theory of change and evaluators have a role of running alongside the innovators to help them think better. If the innovators questions change, then the evaluation design has to change as well. Put simply, if we want to tackle complex issues, we have to adopt an adaptive stance.

“Purpose, framing and principles drive evaluation. If you just want to focus on methods and indicators you are going to get lost.”

Mark Cabaj



Contribution rather than attribution

When working on systems change, and when impacts are cumulative over time and from many efforts, it can be hard to evaluate impact and effectiveness. The traditional approach to assessing attribution (experimental designs, with a preference for using randomized controlled trials) are impractical except in a few niche situations.

Contribution Analysis, in the early stage of development, is a practical approach for better understanding how a mission or program might have contributed to a wider systemic outcome.

The value of contribution analysis is that it offers an approach designed to reduce uncertainty about the contribution an intervention is making to the observed results through an increased understanding of why the observed results have occurred (or not!) and the roles played by the intervention alongside other internal and external factors.

There are at least three broad methods for contribution:

- **Stakeholder Estimates:** The evaluator acts like a journalist to obtain stakeholder estimates of the different contributions to outcomes.
- **General Elimination Method:** The evaluator is a detective that explores all the possible contributions to an outcome and settles on the most likely ones based on the evidence on hand.
- **Counterfactual Scenario:** The evaluator works with innovators and experts to create scenarios of what would have happened without the intervention.

Figure 8. Attribution versus contribution

(source: Here To There Consulting Inc)

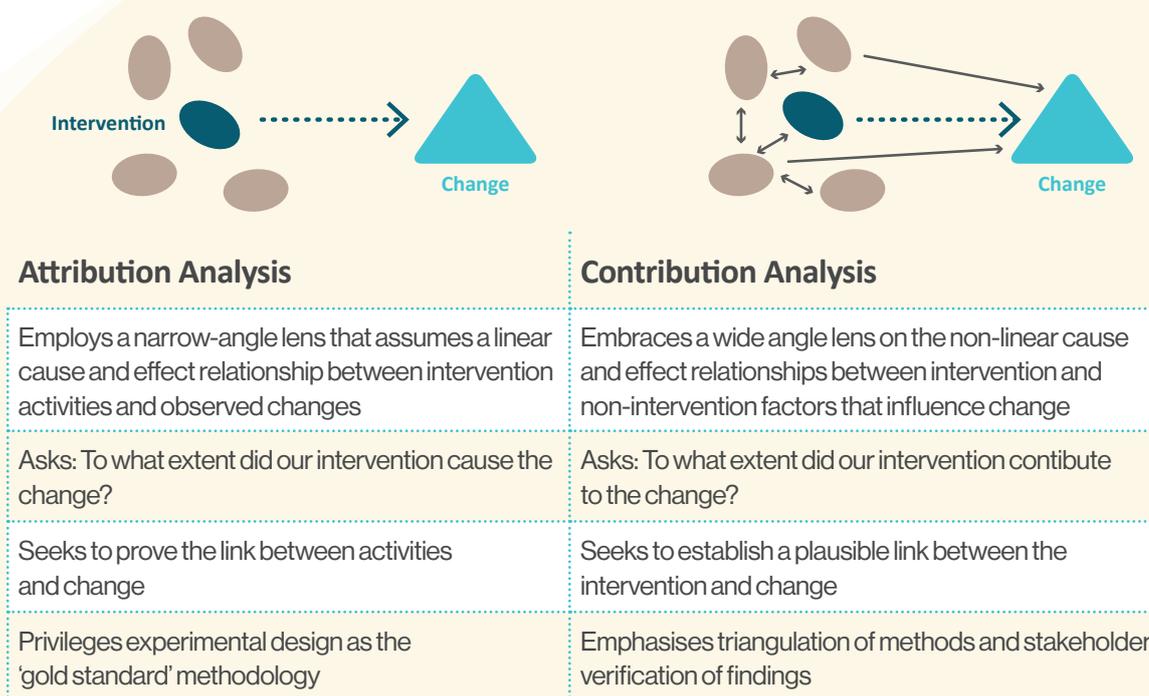


Figure 9. Contribution analysis methods

(source: Here To There Consulting Inc)

	Stakeholder Assessment	General Elimination Method	Counterfactual Scenarios
Evaluator Role	Journalist	Detective	Time Traveler
Unique Techniques	Stakeholder Estimates	Casual Mapping	Attribution/Contribution Scale
	Outcome Harvesting	Process Tracing	Rapid Impact Evaluation
	Collaborative Outcomes Reporting	Contribution Courts	
Strengths	Easy to understand; can handle a lot of outcomes, flexibility in approach	Thorough process that is credible in western cultures	Very useful when a group is faced with different strategies and policy level interventions
Limitations	Open to stakeholder biases; not thorough in considering and eliminating other factors	Can take a long time to complete	Important to follow model with high fidelity; may not be perceived as credible by external people
Expertise	Modest expertise required; effort varies	Specialist skills in GEM and process tracing required	Requires multiple types of 'content' expertise

The website [Better Evaluation](#) has further information . Here to There Consulting Inc will also be releasing a new resource guide on contribution analysis in the second half of 2020.



GENERAL
ELIMINATION

COUNTERFACTUAL
SCENARIO

⇒ ATTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

- DISCUSS CAUSE OF INT
- DETERMINE THE LINKS
ACTIVITY > CHANGE

⇒ CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

- WHAT EXTENT DID THE
CAUSE CHANGE?

1. ~~~~~
2. ~~~~~
3. ~~~~~

~~~~~  
~~~~~  
~~~~~

- o ~~~~~
- o ~~~~~
- o ~~~~~

Video  
module

**“Innovation and change making is a creative act. Evaluation is a critical act, the act of reality testing. Developmental evaluation is the overlap between the two.”**

Mark Cabaj

# Practice library

Systems change is complex. There is no complete framework or recipe to navigate it. Instead, we have to be creative and comfortable working with a mix of frameworks and methods that are tailored to suit the specific context we face. As stated above, if we want to tackle complex issues, we have to adopt an adaptive stance. The following resources and references are provided in that spirit – useful as potential sources of inspiration and practice on the journey to systems change.

## **Developmental Evaluation Exemplars: Principles in Practice (Eds: Patton, McKegg, and Wehipeihana, 2015)**

Responding to evaluator and instructor demand, this book presents a diverse set of high-quality developmental evaluation (DE) case studies. Twelve insightful exemplars illustrate how DE is used to evaluate innovative initiatives in complex, dynamic environments, including a range of fields and international settings. Written by leading practitioners, chapters offer a rare window into what it takes to do DE, what roles must be fulfilled, and what results can be expected.

<https://www.amazon.com/Developmental-Evaluation-Exemplars-Principles-Practice/dp/1462522963>

## **Bellwether Evaluation**

The Bellwether Methodology and Policymaker Ratings were both designed by Harvard Family Research Project. It was developed to find out where a policy issue or proposal is positioned on the policy agenda, what is the attitude of decision makers towards it, and how likely they are to act on it.

<https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/tools/Unique-Methods-Advocacy-Evaluation>

## **Collaborating with the Enemy: How to Work with People You Don't Agree with or Like or Trust (Kahane, 2017)**

Kahane proposes the concept of stretch collaboration, which he says enables us to get things done even in complex situations with people we don't agree with or like or trust.

<https://reospartners.com/publications/introduction-collaborating-enemy/>

## **Evaluating Complexity: Propositions for Improving Practice (Preskill, Gopal, Mack and Cook, 2014)**

This guide is focused on bringing together knowledge of systems change, complexity, and evaluation in order to clarify and describe how the role of evaluation needs to change in order to better serve the social sector.

<https://www.fsg.org/publications/evaluating-complexity>



## **Evaluation for Strategic Learning: Principles and Practices (Coffman and Beer, 2011)**

This brief defines the concept of evaluation for strategic learning and the principles that underlie it. Its aim is to increase awareness about, and use of, this approach.

<https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/publication/evaluation-to-support-strategic-learning-principles-and-practices/>

## **Evaluating Systems Change: A Planning Guide (Hargreaves, 2010)**

The Guide was prepared by Meg Hargreaves, one of the most experienced and well known evaluators of systems change initiatives in North America. It reflects her understanding of system theory and evaluation, as well as her skill at making the work of evaluation accessible and practical.

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/planning-systems-change-evaluation>

## **Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed (Westley, Zimmerman and Patton, 2007)**

Getting to Maybe applies the insights of complexity theory and harvests the experiences of a wide range of people and organizations – including the ministers behind the Boston Miracle (and its aftermath); the Grameen Bank, in which one man's dream of micro-credit sparked a financial revolution for the world's poor; the efforts of a Canadian clothing designer to help transform the lives of Indigenous women and children; and many more – to lay out a brand new way of thinking about making change in communities, in business, and in the world.

<https://www.amazon.com/Getting-Maybe-How-World-Changed/dp/067931444X>

## **Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System (Meadows, 2010)**

Donella Meadows' Leverage Points is a classic reference for those seeking to implement change. Those who would like to read further should consult her Thinking in Systems: A Primer (Chelsea Green, 2008).

<https://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/article/leverage-points-places-to-intervene-in-a-system/>

## **Outcome Harvesting**

Outcome Harvesting collects ("harvests") evidence of what has changed ("outcomes") and, then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention has contributed to these changes. Outcome Harvesting has proven to be especially useful in complex situations when it is not possible to define concretely most of what an intervention aims to achieve, or even, what specific actions will be taken over a multi-year period.

[https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome\\_harvesting](https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting)

## **Pathways to Change: Ten Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts**

This brief lays out 10 theories grounded in diverse social science disciplines and worldviews that have relevance to the world of advocacy and policy change. The theories can help to untangle beliefs and assumptions about the inner workings of the policymaking process and identify causal connections supported by research to explain how and why a change may or may not occur.

This piece is not meant to be comprehensive of all possible relevant theories and approaches; rather, it introduces and illustrates a handful of theories that may be useful to advocates, funders, and evaluators.

<https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/publication/pathways-for-change-10-theories-to-inform-advocacy-and-policy-change-efforts/>

## Principles-Focused Evaluation

An approach to evaluating change efforts, popularized by Michael Quinn Patton, where the innovators are guided by principles as much as logic models or theories of change.

<http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/evaluating-impact-principles-focused-evaluation>

## Sensemaker

A software developed by the team at Cognitive Edge, leading edge thinkers on how to address complex issues, that allows for the gathering, analysis and visualization of qualitative data.

<https://sensemaker.cognitive-edge.com/>

## Systemic Intervention: Philosophy, Methodology, and Practice (Midgley, 2000)

This book aims to rethink systemic intervention to enhance its relevance for supporting social change in the 21st Century. It offers a new systems philosophy and methodology, focusing upon the fundamental importance of exploring value and boundary judgements as part of the intervention process. A pluralist practice is also promoted, and the reader learns how s/he can draw upon a wide variety of theories and methods to maximise flexibility and responsiveness during interventions. Four detailed examples of the practice of systemic intervention are also provided, each of which is used to illustrate a different aspect of the methodology outlined in the book.

<https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9780306464881>

## Systems change: A guide to what it is and how to do it (Lankelly Chase and NPC, 2015)

This systems change guide: clarifies what is meant by systems and systems change describes the main perspectives on systems change and outlines good practice for systems change.

<https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/systems-change-a-guide-to-what-it-is-and-how-to-do-it/>

## Systems Concepts in Action: A Practitioner's Toolkit (Williams and Hummelbrunner, 2010)

This book explores the application of systems ideas to investigate, evaluate, and intervene in complex and messy situations. The text serves as a field guide, with each chapter representing a method for describing and analysing; learning about; or changing and managing a challenge or set of problems.

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Systems-Concepts-Action-Practitioners-Toolkit/dp/0804770638>

## The High Cost of Accurate Knowledge (Sutcliffe and Weber, 2003)

In the complex world in which most business leaders operate, information about the environment, though abundant, is seldom obvious in its implications. Executives therefore have no choice but to interpret and intuit the data they receive. In light of that reality, it's not the accuracy and abundance of information that should matter most to top executives—rather, it's how that information is interpreted.

<https://hbr.org/2003/05/the-high-cost-of-accurate-knowledge>



## The Strategy Continuum

A summary of the strategy continuum, another way to approach conceptualizing a community change strategy.

<http://here2there.ca/the-strategy-continuum/>

## The Tyranny of Metrics (Muller, 2018)

How the obsession with quantifying human performance threatens our schools, medical care, businesses, and government

<https://www.amazon.com/Tyranny-Metrics-Jerry-Z-Muller/dp/0691174954>

## Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges, 2nd Edition (Scharmer, 2016)

In most large systems today, we collectively create results that no one wants. What keeps us stuck in such patterns of the past? It's our blind spot, that is, our lack of awareness of the inner place from which our attention and intention originate. By moving through Scharmer's U process, we consciously access the blind spot and learn to connect to our authentic Self—the deepest source of knowledge and inspiration. Theory U offers a rich diversity of compelling stories, examples, exercises, and practices that allow leaders, organizations, and larger systems to co-sense and co-shape the future that is wanting to emerge.

[https://www.amazon.com/Theory-Leading-Emerges-Otto-Scharmer/dp/1626567980/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0](https://www.amazon.com/Theory-Leading-Emerges-Otto-Scharmer/dp/1626567980/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0)

## Three Horizons: The Patterning of Hope (Sharpe, 2013)

Bill Sharpe introduces the Three Horizons framework as a prompt for developing a 'future consciousness' – a rich and multi-faceted awareness of the future potential of the present moment – and explores how to put that awareness to work to create the futures we aspire to.

<https://www.internationalfuturesforum.com/p/three-horizons-the-patterning-of-hope>

## Think Again: Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions and How to Keep It From Happening to You (Finkelstein, Whitehead, and Campbell, 2009)

The authors show how the usually beneficial processes of the human mind can become traps when we face big decisions. The authors show how the shortcuts our brains have learned to take over millennia of evolution can derail our decision making. Think Again offers a powerful model for making better decisions, describing the key red flags to watch for and detailing the decision-making safeguards we need.

<https://www.amazon.com/Think-Again-Leaders-Decisions-Happening/dp/1422126129>

# Changing Systems, Power & Potential

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April 2020

