

# The Change Lab Fieldbook

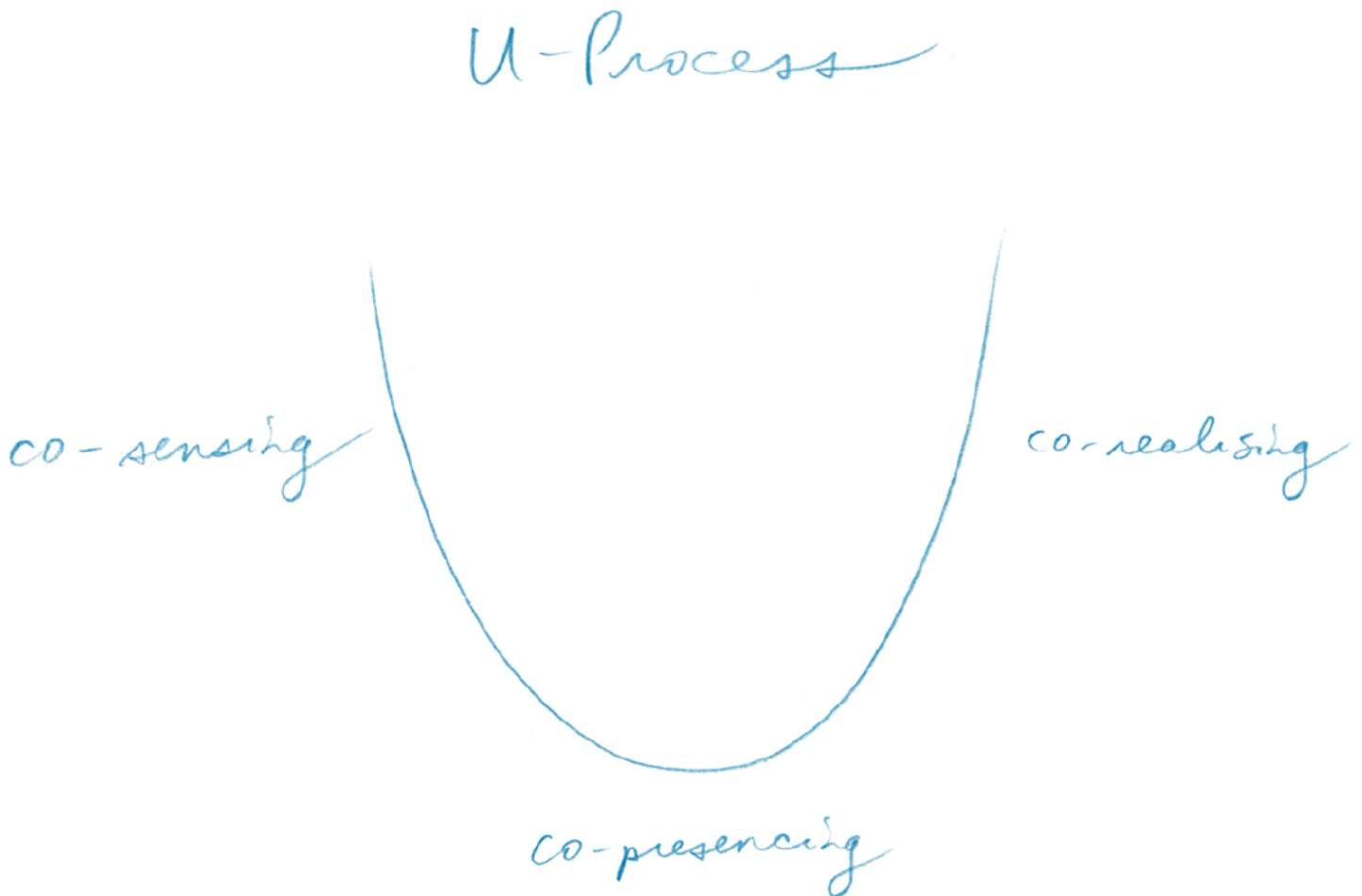
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“The success of  
an intervention  
depends on the  
interior conditions  
of the intervener.”

– Bill O’Brien

*enacting new reality*

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# Welcome

This Fieldbook is a living document. Version 2.0 is the result of an extensive effort over the past year to record and codify Generon Consulting's approach to organizing and facilitating "Change Laboratories"- multi-stakeholder partnership processes designed to effect system-wide changes in complex problem situations.

The development of the Change Lab methodology is happening rapidly and it is an emergent process. New lessons are constantly being added to the repertoire from diverse contexts, and the intention is for this book to be able to absorb those lessons through future iterations.

The Fieldbook is an invitation to practice with us, and to engage in learning by doing. The intention of this book is to capture past experiences and use them as springboards for new practices, in order to contribute to creating an open, dynamic, and growing field of practice. It's not a substitute for your own observation, which sits at the heart of your action-learning and apprenticeship, or a single 'best practice' model to be replicated. Rather, all of the information presented here should be seen as a point of departure, a starting point for innovation. Each Change Lab will be different.

Because of the nature of a fieldbook, much of the information is also largely independent of context. We use examples and draw on stories from existing Change Labs, but it's hard to provide the reader with information about the exact conditions and circumstances within which the work took place. Ultimately, it is the context of your work that determines what's most useful and what isn't, and it is your capacity to sense and understand that context which largely determines the success of your practice.

As you make your way through this book, bear in mind that it's one thing to learn the theoretical rules of driving a car and quite another thing to actually drive it! The rules of driving a car are easy to apply mechanically when it's a nice, clear day on a flat road with no traffic. As we all know, such ideal conditions are rare. You may find yourself driving on the wrong side of the road, in intense traffic, or for that matter driving where there are no roads in the middle of a storm. In such situations, check-lists are of little value. Rather what will serve you best is preparation, presence, experience-and your own best judgment.

This book ends with an invitation to contribute to future versions. We hope that the information offered here will serve to enrich your practice and that your practice will in turn enrich the shared body of knowledge developing around the Change Lab and the U-Process.

Mille Bojer & Zaid Hassan  
Co-Editors

# The U-Process: Introduction

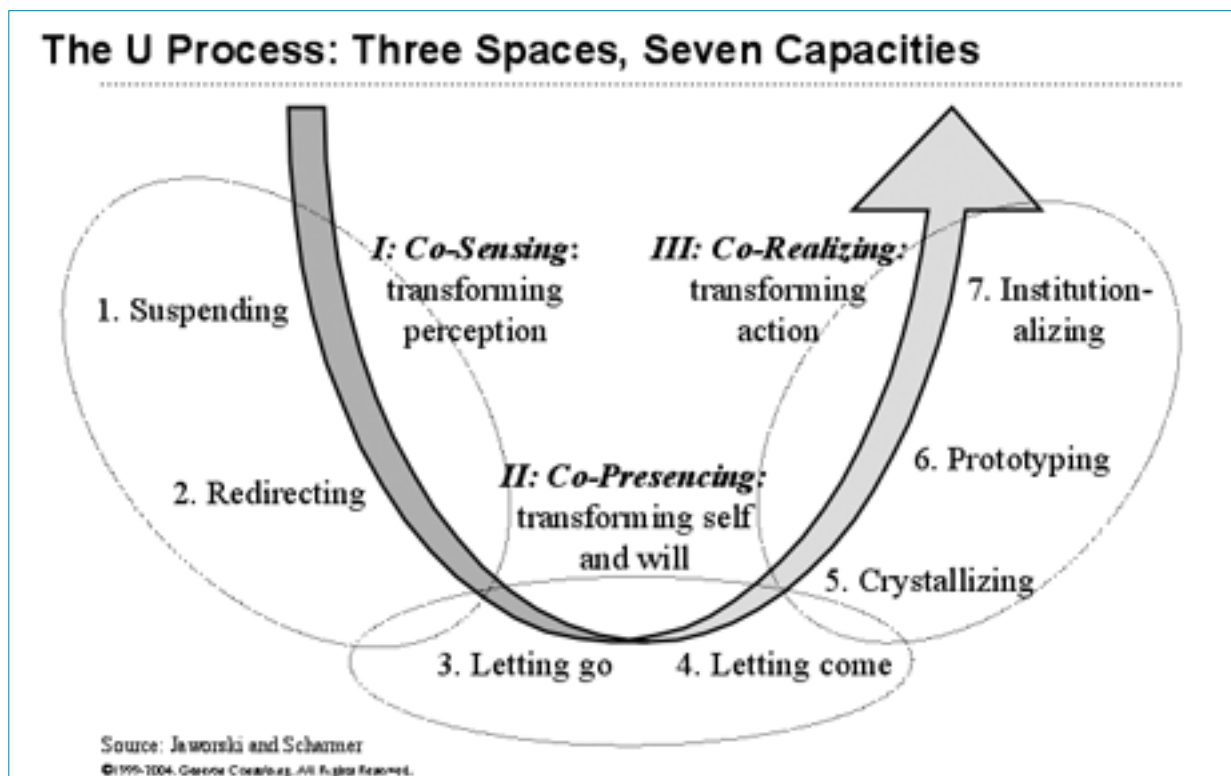
The core inspiration and foundation of the Change Lab is the U-Process. The U-Process, co-developed by Joseph Jaworski and Otto Scharmer, is a social technology for addressing highly complex challenges – for solving complex problems or realizing complex opportunities. It is an innovation process, a theory, a set of practices, and a language for producing extraordinary breakthroughs within and across the worlds of business, government, and civil society.

In using the U-Process, an individual or team undertakes three activities or movements: Sensing the current reality of the system of which they are part, carefully and in depth; Presencing and reflecting to allow their “inner knowing” to emerge, about what is going on and what they have to do; and **Realizing**, acting swiftly to bring forth a new reality. When working in groups, as in the case of the Change

Lab, these three phases become **Co-Sensing**, **Co-Presencing**, and **Co-Realizing**.

Connected to these three phases, the U-Process outlines seven “capacities” that enable the process of re-generation and which again apply both at an individual and a group level. These practices are: suspending, redirecting, letting go, letting come, crystallizing, prototyping, and institutionalizing. The processes of prototyping and institutionalizing may make the most sense as group practices.

The U-Process is simultaneously a cutting-edge technology and a distillation of ancient wisdom. We believe it’s a process that many creative people-business and social entrepreneurs, inventors, artists-use when they generate breakthroughs. The U-Process takes what has previously been an individual, tacit, intuitive, and largely unreplicable practice, and embodies it in



a methodology that can be used collectively and consciously to open up and make visible concrete fields of opportunity.

When used collectively, the U-Process creates shared learning spaces within which teams of highly diverse individuals become capable of operating as a single intelligence. This mode of operation allows them to share what each of them knows, so that together they can see the whole system and their roles in enacting it. The resulting “system sight” enables extraordinarily effective individual and collective leadership. From this place of greater clarity and connection, the teams are able to co-create breakthrough innovations that address their most complex challenges.

While the U-Process may at first impression appear to be a linear process (sense-presence-realize), it actually has a holographic quality to it by which we mean that each part reflects and contains the whole. The capacities and movements are related to each other and while one may be in focus at a given time, the others are always present as well. You do not need only one capacity at a time! Part of the beauty of the U-Process is that it is immediately recognizable to many people on the surface and at the same time opens doors to ever deeper levels of understanding.

A large and growing body of basic research on the U-Process has been developed over the last twenty years. The core of this research consists of over 150 interviews with some of the world’s leading entrepreneurs, scientists, and artists, from businessman David Marsing-to economist Brian Arthur-to cognitive scientist Francisco Varela-to violinist Miha Pogacnik. The U-Process

is the synthesis of these diverse innovation experiences, and therefore resonates across a range of contexts and cultures.

In parallel to this body of basic research, Generon and its partners have been involved in a wide variety of applied problem-solving and systemic transformation projects. They have done this work both in organizational systems, within single business, government, or civil society organizations, and in broader societal systems involving stakeholders from all three sectors.

These phases and capacities of the U-Process are elaborated on in this fieldbook only in the specific context of the Change Labs. For more on the U-Process, see *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*, by Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers; *Theory U: Leading from the Emerging Future*, by Scharmer (forthcoming); and *Connecting to Source* by Hassan.

“I can summarize what I’ve learned in those 15 years in the following way. Tough problems usually do not get solved peacefully. They either don’t get solved at all, which means they remain stuck. Or they get solved by force, which means that either the people who are part of the problem can’t agree on what the solution is, or the people who have power-money or authority or guns-force their solution on everybody else. The reason that we usually are not able to solve our tough problems peacefully has to do with the way we talk and the way we listen. The most common way we talk is telling-downloading. The most common way we listen is not listening. This is the kind of listening where you’re being quiet, but you’re really just preparing your rebuttal-just reloading. And as long as we talk and listen in this way, we guarantee that we will never be able to solve our tough problems peacefully. So, if we want to be able to solve our tough problems peacefully, we need a different, uncommon, more open way of talking and listening. That’s 15 years in one paragraph.”

– Adam **Kahane**



# The Change Lab

## Introduction

The Change Laboratory is an adaptation of the U-Process, developed by Generon specifically for use on complex, stuck, social problems. The primary purpose of the Change Lab process is to enable stakeholders to solve such stuck problems by “connecting to Source.”

In a Change Lab, a diverse group of leaders from different parts of a poorly performing societal system work together to shift the system-to generate breakthrough innovations that create a new and better reality. Their work occurs in four phases: Convening the Lab, and then using a collective version of the U-Process to undertake Co-Sensing, Co-Presencing, and Co-Realizing. This fieldbook is built up around these phases and contains overviews of each phase as well as details on the roles involved, and the tools and practices associated with each phase.

Each Change Lab is convened around a particular “solution in sight. Such problems are typically characterized by three types of complexity:

- **Dynamic complexity**, where cause and effect are far apart in space and time, resulting in the need for a systemic solution,
- **Generative complexity**, where the future is unfamiliar and undetermined, resulting in the need for a creative solution, and
- **Social complexity**, where no single entity owns the problem and the stakeholders involved have diverse-potentially entrenched and antagonistic-perspectives and interests, resulting in the need for a participative solution.

Examples of systemic problems we are working

on through Change Lab projects to date (October 2005) include sustainable food (global), children’s malnutrition (India), HIV/AIDS (South Africa), and aboriginal-settler relations (Canada).

The longer such problems remain “stuck” the more damage they do, which, in theory at least, leads to an over-whelming need to resolve or somehow shift the system. The Change Lab starts when one or several formal or informal leaders of a system decide-know-that change is needed, and that they cannot effect that change alone.

Each Change Lab brings together 25-30 key stakeholders representing a microcosm of the (problem) system, who come together with the stated intention of achieving a systemic breakthrough in the problem context. They are committed to changing the system-and critically-are also open to changing themselves.

Currently each of the Change Labs we are running is a multi-year project with significant attention and time invested into the process of convening the Lab. The Change Lab process requires large commitments of time and resources and thus is not a process that should be taken lightly.

In evaluating the need for a Change Lab, it is imperative to establish if the involved parties really see the problem as genuinely stuck-the other solutions they can think of have been tried without success and they are now open to something different. If the involved parties believe that a less-intensive process might yield a solution then it seems sensible for them to first attempt an alternative, less resource-intensive process and exhaust the alternative possibilities. Part of the feasibility for determining the

applicability of a Change Lab to a situation is concerned with such an assessment of alternatives and “fit” with the Change Lab model.

While Change Labs may be impactful within organizations or sub-systems, this fieldbook focuses on Generon’s work with public service, tri-sector Change Labs. The public service Change Labs are committed to involving government, civil society, and businesses as equal partners in an on-going process. This means that at some level parties involved from these three sectors must, at least in principle, be willing to initiate a process together—even if their continued engagement might be dependent on initial results. If one of the three sectors is unwilling to even engage in the process, then this is a clear signal that a Change Lab is not the right vehicle in that particular context. It should, however, be noted that it’s rare for an entire sector to take a unified position on such questions. This often means discerning between the contradictory signals coming from a sector.

## Change Lab Process Overview

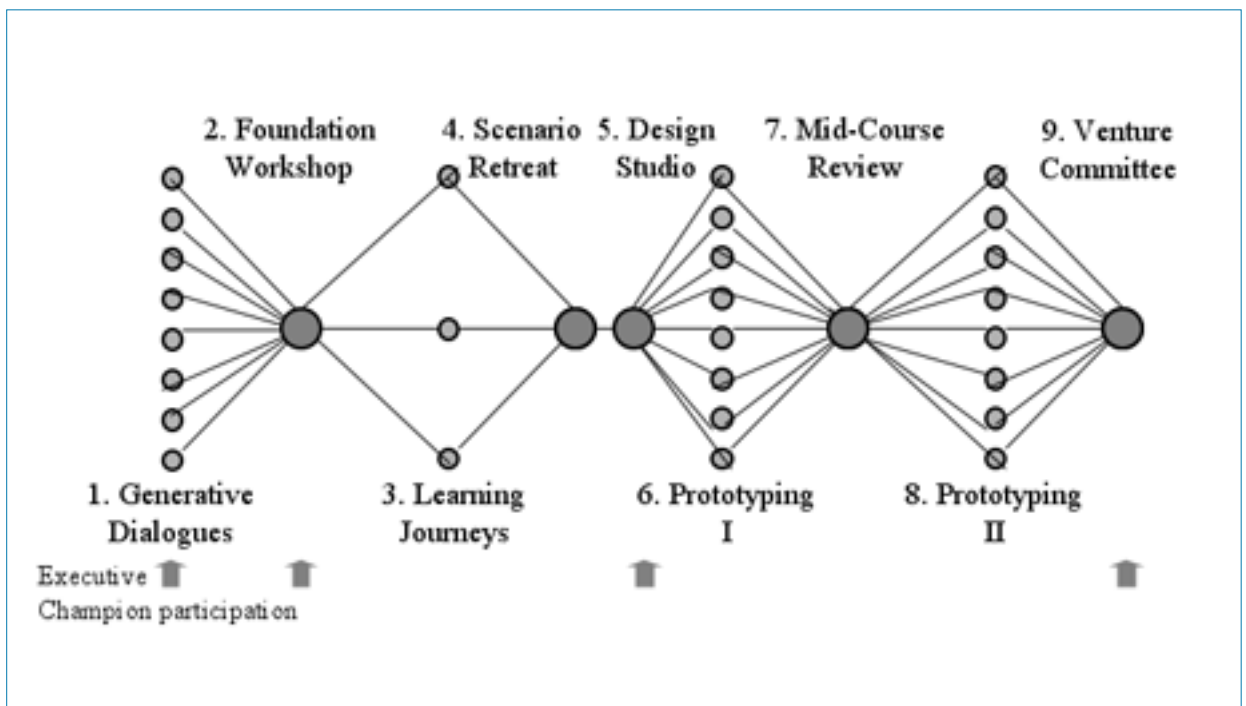
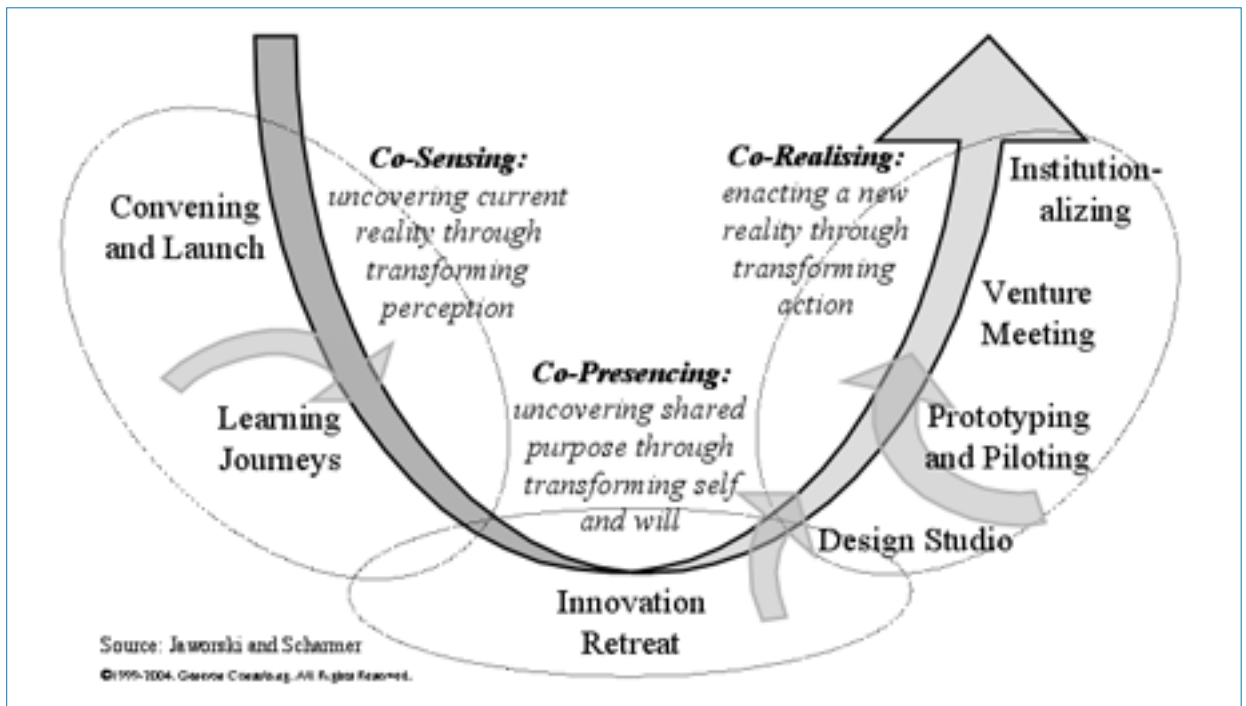
The Change Lab begins with an extensive process of convening-identifying Lab Team members through stakeholder mapping and dialogue interviewing. This phase also includes initial research to assess whether the Lab is appropriate for the specific issue and the timing is right, and to build a shared fact base for the project moving forward.

Once the Lab Team members have been convened, they embark on the Change Lab journey together, going through a series of activities associated with each phase of the U-Process. This begins with the Sensing Phase where participants transform the way they perceive the problem through dialogue interviewing, surfacing their shared body of knowledge, and most importantly through experiential “learning journeys” during which they immerse themselves in the field of the problem at hand.

Toward the end of the Sensing Phase, Lab Team members meet in an Innovation Retreat which involves a “wilderness solo” as a powerful practice to enable the capacities of presencing. As they come out of the Presencing Phase their insights in terms of the “DNA” of a new system, and ideas for breakthrough solutions are crystallized into prototype ideas which are developed through several iterations at the “Design Studio.” Drawing on industrial design and venture incubation techniques, the Design Studio’s rapid-cycle prototyping approach enables team members to build, test, improve, and re-test interventions in the real world. Innovations which, on the basis of this prototyping, hold the greatest promise for effecting systemic change, are then developed into one-year regional pilots. Finally, these pilots are scaled up, mainstreamed, and institutionalized with support from committed government, business, and civil society partners.

The phases and activities of the Change Lab are

outlined in the chapters of this fieldbook. As stated earlier, this should be seen as a generic point of departure—a model that will be adapted in many different situations. One key aspect to be aware of in the design of the Change Lab is that there will tend to be small U-Processes along the way, within the overarching U-Process of the Change Lab. All seven capacities appear at different stages of the process, even though they are associated primarily with a specific stage.



# Change Lab Roles

## Conveners

Convening is less of a task and more of a vocation. The task of a convener is to form a group through issuing good, compelling invitations. In the case of the Change Lab, a convener is typically someone who is deeply and visibly committed to the resolution of a particular issue or problem. This depth of commitment gives them the credibility to convene a group around a common purpose and demand a similar commitment from the group. The convener is ideally someone who people trust in this role and someone people value for inviting them into a process that addresses their own commitments and needs. A good convener will issue invitations which compellingly answer the questions of “Why would I want to be involved in this project?” with clear statements: this is what you’re being invited to, this is why it’s of interest and this is why you should come.

## The Change Lab Secretariat

The Change Lab Secretariat is the core group working on implementing the Change Lab. This group usually includes one or more facilitators, a project manager, a retreat leader, a learning historian, and additional hosts or logistics support. Note that some of the roles in the Secretariat may be held by multiple people or one person may hold multiple roles. It is key, however, that the roles are clearly defined and that all the members of the Secretariat are clear on their own responsibilities and deliverables as well as how the roles interact.

The Secretariat is convened not only based on skill, but also with a perspective of needing to bring in people who themselves practice the seven capacities of the U-Process, and who internalize the values of the Change Lab. They do not need to be super-human, but it is important that they are continuously learning and working with the capacities of the U-Process and that they are as committed as the Lab Team members themselves to the work of the Change Lab.

## Facilitator(s)

The facilitator (or “process leader”) is the person who is responsible for guiding participants through the Change Lab process. He or she enables the members of the group to trust the process and engage with it and works to ensure that each person’s full contribution can be offered to the group’s shared purpose.

The facilitator needs to be very clear on process, while allowing the main content (assessment of the problem, solution ideas, etc.) to come from participants. Sometimes, a facilitator may find that this line between content and process becomes blurry, particularly in relation to applying the principles and approaches of the Change Lab and his/her knowledge in terms of useful processes for addressing systemic challenges. The facilitator needs to use judgment to offer what s/he can without telling participants how to solve the problems.

If the facilitator is a different person from the convener (as they usually are) it’s useful for the facilitator to begin by restating the invitation in some way and hence revisiting the original purpose of the group. A primary task of the facilitator throughout the process is to hold the group to its purpose and ensure that the group doesn’t lose sight of this purpose. Often individual agendas or dynamics will intrude into the group. The facilitator, while not ignoring such events, needs to ensure that they don’t derail the group.

The way a facilitator ensures that the group remains focused on its purpose is through creating a safe space for people in the group to be themselves, or rather their higher selves, dedicated to a common purpose. This safe space is sometimes called a *container*. It is important for the group to feel that the process is being “held”-that the facilitator help them to define their collective agreements and their boundaries-and to orient themselves as to where they are in the process at any given time. While the facilitator needs to be clear on where the process is going, it is also important to be open to feedback and to listen to participants’ comments

as to what is working and what can be improved along the way.

As with the convener role, facilitation is also very much a vocation, and the skills and qualities of facilitation are primarily learned through experience. This fieldbook assumes that facilitators who are brought in to lead Change Lab processes are well-versed in the general skills of facilitating group processes, that they know how to host dialogue, create safe space, and deal with conflict, diversity, and power imbalances in a group. The guidelines for facilitators in this fieldbook are focused specifically on what facilitators need to know in order to guide a Change Lab process.

**Further reading:**

*The Complete Facilitators Handbook* by John Heron, *Solving Tough Problems* by Adam Kahane, and *The Container Principle: Resilience, Chaos and Trust* by Crane W. Stookey

**Project Manager**

Each Change Lab presents a massive coordination challenge, often across complex geographies. The scope of the project means that there are many moving parts, all of which need to be tracked and managed. The overall task of coordination and day-to-day management of the project falls on the Project Manager. The Project Manager also coordinates the participants (which can involve liaising with over 35 separate organizations) and the Change Lab Secretariat (which itself can span several organizations). On more complex Change Labs, this is a full-time role.

**Retreat Leader**

The Solo Retreat is one part of the Change Lab that requires a very specific and special type of hosting. The Retreat Leader is responsible for organizing, shaping, and leading the Solo Retreat.

**Learning Historian**

The role of the learning historian is to capture

and document the history of the project as it unfolds and provide this history as a way for the group to learn about itself as it moves through the lifecycle of the project.

**Host (and Logistics Support)**

A large part of the success of a meeting is the quality of the space in which we meet. Often this aspect is underestimated but in fact it can make or break a gathering. There is typically a large amount of work that goes on behind the scenes in order to locate and then shape the ideal space. The host is someone who has an intuitive feel for the right space and is responsible for ensuring that the Change Lab's space requirements are met. The host is normally also responsible for the overall Lab logistics along with the Project Manager.

**The Change Lab Team**

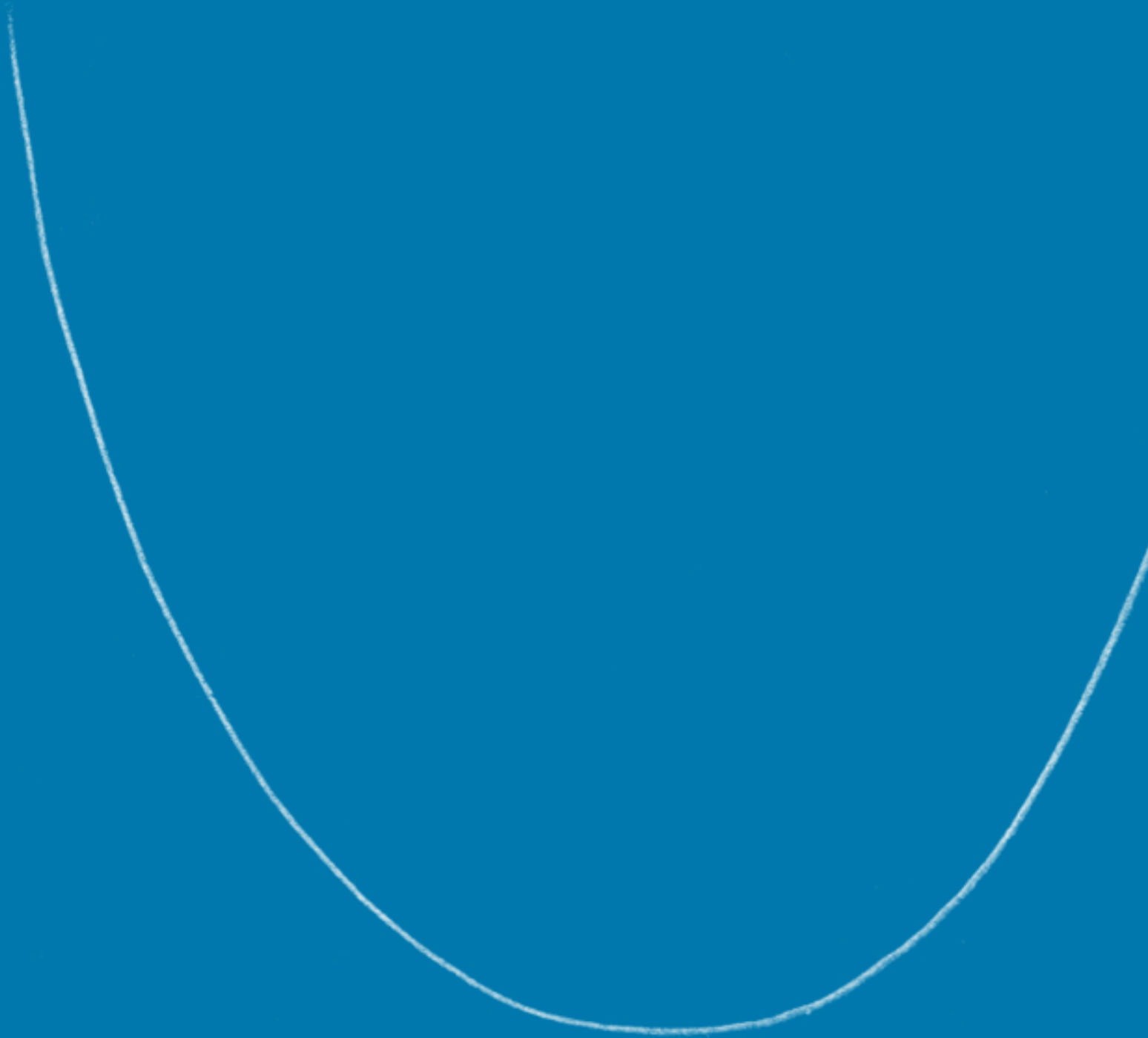
The Change Lab Team usually comprises between 25-35 people who will go through the U-Process and are ultimately responsible for enacting a new reality. Drawn from the corporate sector, civil society (NGOs), and the public sector, together they represent a microcosm of the system in which they wish to achieve a breakthrough, and as they bring their different perspectives together they have the potential to see the system as a whole and affect system-wide changes.

The Lab Team members will be people who have a direct stake in the Change Lab problem and who have a strong desire and vested interest in the complex problem being solved. They have the backing and commitment from their organizations to devote time to the Lab Team's work, but it is important that they are not people who are simply sent to represent their organizations. They need to be willing to be personally and honestly engaged in the process and to speak for themselves, while at the same time bringing in the buy-in, the knowledge base, and the sphere of influence of their organizations.

## **The Change Lab Champions**

One Executive Champion described his role as being “to open doors and make phone calls when needed,” which at least conveys the essence of what an Executive Champion is required to do. In general they are high-profile individuals who give the project legitimacy and act as spokespeople when required. Their role is especially crucial during the convening phase but can also be pivotal during the entire Change Lab lifecycle. Typically Executive Champions are not a part of the Change Lab Team although they can be in some cases.

U-Process



# Phase I

## Convening the Change Lab

### Introduction & Purpose

“If you could do something really ambitious—more ambitious than you could imagine in your everyday job—what would that be?”

In all complex systems, the “initial conditions at birth” determine the future characteristics of the system. Once the system is “in motion” it becomes increasingly harder to influence its characteristics.

Given the complexity of the problems addressed by the Change Lab and the unfolding nature of the Change Lab itself, the intention with the Convening Phase is to establish these crucial initial conditions. This includes identifying appropriate participants, Champions, and Lab Secretariat, as well as establishing funding and related relationships. It also involves an initial assessment of the problem, its context, current initiatives being undertaken, existing solution ideas, and the stakeholders involved, as well as whether the problem is ripe, the will exists, and the fit is right for a Change Lab on the particular issue. The Convening Phase is conducted with a great deal of deep listening and attention to detail, quality, and relationships.

The Convening Phase can also be seen as a feasibility phase. The organizers must allow for the possibility of saying “no” to moving forward based on the insights gained—there should be a “go” or “no-go” milestone built into this phase. Meanwhile, the Convening Phase should not be seen only as preparation for an intervention—*it is a key part of the intervention itself*. It affects the system already by starting the conversation, raising questions, affecting commitment, generating insights and ideas, making

connections among stakeholders, and by, in effect, making the system more aware of itself. As knowledge about what is going on surfaces through the Convening Phase, it can seem as if a mirror is being held up to reality, which has an impact on how actors think and behave.

Convening a Change Lab involves trying to resolve the questions of “Problem, Purpose, Process, and Players” all at the same time. This means that even though the project has yet to be completely formed, in order to become a part of the project people often want to know exactly what “Problem” the project will address, what the “Purpose” of the project is, what the “Process” will be and who exactly will be involved, that is, who the “Players” are.

Adam Kahane talks about the intellectual challenge of convening a Change Lab as being able to solve these “simultaneous equations.” The answers to questions about the 4 P’s will, of course, change over time. As new people enter the project, they will inevitably bring new perspectives and ideas that will need to be factored into the subsequent invitations.

### On Assembling a Microcosm of the System

The Change Lab Process is ideally suited to problem situations where a single organization, no matter how resourceful, cannot possibly have a fundamental impact on shifting the system, and where partnerships across sectors and organizational divides are therefore paramount. Each public service Change Lab is committed to being a tri-sector partnership, between business, civil society, and government.

Through an interviewing process, we identify



and invite into the Change Lab the Executive Champions of the project and 25 or so diverse people from different sectors, who are deeply committed to the mission of achieving a breakthrough within the system at hand, and who have the knowledge, skills, passion, and influence to be able to deliver on the Lab objective together. These people form the Change Lab Team.

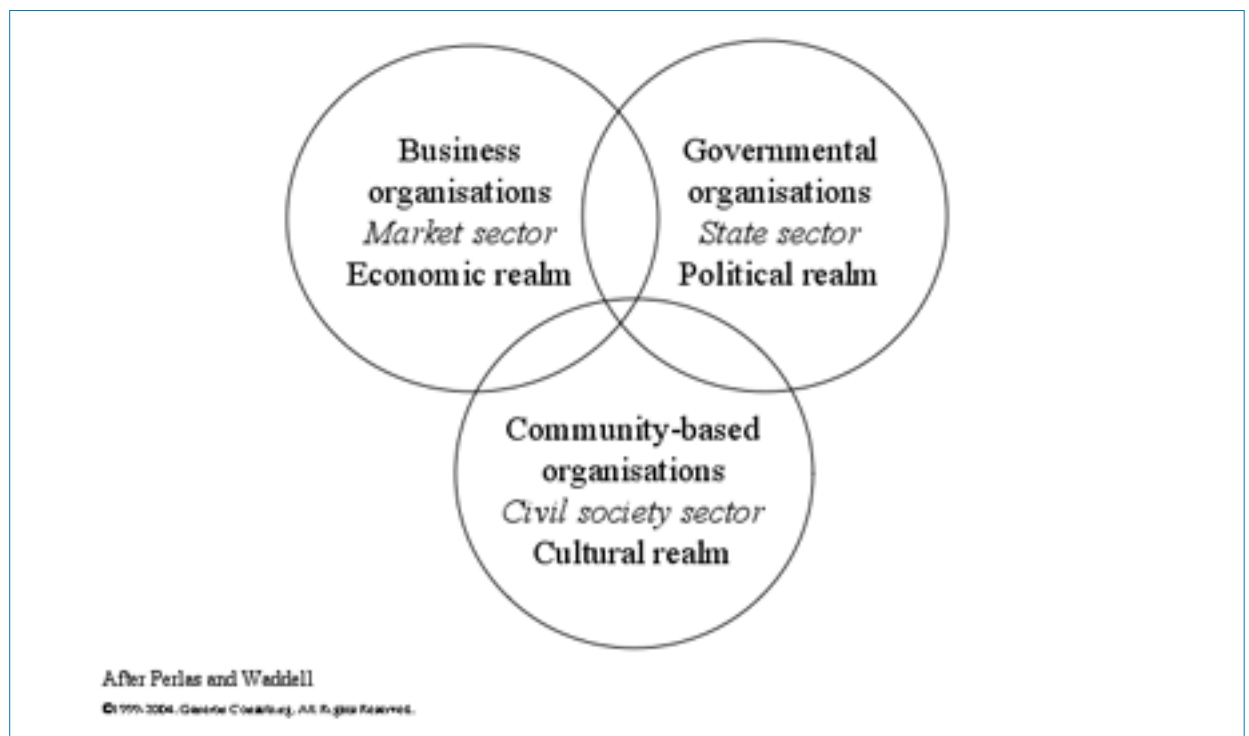
Individually, they are:

- people for whom the Lab objective is of paramount importance, both professionally and personally;
- respected, influential leaders of their organizations and sectors;
- fully supported by their organisations- seconded part-time to the Lab;
- entrepreneurial and action-oriented; and,
- innovative, systemic thinkers.

The Change Lab Team is brought together around the principle of “assembling a microcosm of the system.” The intention behind such a constitution is to ensure that the various parts of the system are present and that perspectives from “the whole system” are brought into the

decision-making processes of the group. This meets a number of needs. It primarily enables “system sight” thus preventing strategic interventions-intended to be systemic-from overlooking some critical part of the whole. It also ensures that when the group chooses to act, it has the influence to shift the whole system.

The practicalities of implementing such principles are complex. This is partly because it’s actually impossible to convene an exact representation of the system, as this would be the system itself. The microcosm is assembled keeping in mind the message that “the map is not the territory.” Effectively, we are constituting what could be thought of as a map of the system. All maps are necessarily approximate representations of the territory they claim to cover. The creation of a map involves a large number of decisions and compromises. It involves developing an intuitive and holistic understanding of what data is crucial and what data is extraneous. It’s basically a negotiation. Once the map is created, its utility is put to test and often it needs to be amended or added to because some blind spot has been left unfilled.



Tri-Sector Partnerships (three-folding model)

## Ownership: “If not us, then who?”

No one owns systemic problems as a whole. In fact it could be argued that the definition of a systemic problem is that no one owns it. No single organization, entity, or representative body has control or authority over a systemic problem. This also means that no single body has legitimacy to resolve a systemic issue. The logic of a tri-sector approach is to bring together a group which *together* has *legitimacy* to act with the many different constituents that form the whole system. The point isn't to bring together a number of people who together own the whole problem-which in practice is impossible.

So, for example, bringing in civil society organizations means that they have authority and legitimacy with community groups on the ground; corporations have legitimacy within the market, with buyers and sellers; governments have legitimacy with citizens, other governments, and trans-nationals because they represent an electorate.

Assumptions of legitimacy and authority should be tested during the interview phase of the Change Lab. That is, one should *not* assume that all civil society organizations enjoy legitimacy across the entire sector of civil society simply because they claim to be a civil society organization, or that a particular business school professor is universally credible because all the business sector participants think so.

In bringing together a tri-sector partnership, the convener has to take the first step despite the fact that they do not own the problem or have legitimacy to resolve the problem on their own. Such a unilateral move is often the first step in breaking the status quo of a stuck problem. This unilateral move results in energy starting to flow towards the resolution of a systemic problem (See “Six or Seven Axioms of Mass Social Change” by Hassan). It can be thought of as a very special kind of leadership act that requires initiative, commitment, and grounding. The spirit of it is politically incorrect-almost irrational-one of “enough is enough, I’m going to act even if I’m not ‘supposed’ to act.”

Once the Lab starts taking shape, a key task for the convener becomes finding an institutional home for the Change Lab. In some cases specific NGOs have been created to house projects, in other cases new programs are created within neutral or mutually acceptable NGOs.

## Process

The spark for a Change Lab can come from different places. Often, it begins first with a passionate individual who is completely dedicated to seeing the resolution of a particular problem. The key advantage and characteristic that such people have in getting these projects off the ground is persistence. In many ways, the story of convening a Change Lab is the story of a person who cares deeply finding other people who care until there is a critical mass of people to get moving.

The Change Lab can also grow out of a conversation between a group of people who are involved in organizations or work addressing the issue. What is important is that there is a deep commitment and concern at a human level among those involved in taking the first steps to launch the Lab.

## Convener/s

The role of the official convener/s was mentioned in the previous section on Change Lab Roles. It is important quite early on to be clear on who is convening the Lab, and that the institutions involved are trusted and not seen as having a specific controversial agenda that will bias the Lab from the start. The convener should be a person or institution that will be able to attract people to the Lab, whom people will value for inviting them in. It can be a single convener or a small group of co-conveners.

It’s critical to note that the U-Process is a genuinely open process and is not about implementing predetermined outcomes. This point needs to be communicated very clearly during the convening phase. The task of the convener is not to convince potential

participants of the likelihood of a particular outcome (however attractive) but rather to convince them to become a part of a group characterized by an open mind, an open heart, and an open will, dedicated to working together to create new breakthrough solutions.

### Dialogue Interviews

At the heart of the process of convening a Change Lab is the generative dialogue interviewing process. A series of in-depth interviews are conducted with key formal and informal players from different parts of a system. This iterative process, with one interviewee leading to the next, is, in part, intended to draw out the highest purpose of the project. Joseph Jaworski sees this phase as being a process of “social anthropology.” This is almost like uncovering the field that wants to emerge through a process of following one person to another to another.

The aim of the dialogue interviews is *not* simply to gather information—this is a point which is often not understood. Rather, through the process, as described in the following section, curiosity, commitment, and excitement are generated about the potential for the Change Lab overall, and relationships are built. The interviewing process starts with asking interviewees for their life story, and links their journey to their current commitment and deepest questions about the problem. Often, this is the point where people become enrolled—not because they officially sign on the “dotted line,” but because they are drawn to the conversation and the idea of the Change Lab. There is a sense of shared fundamental intentions between the interviewer and the interviewee although there may be divergent opinions about what should be done about the issue. A “field” starts to be created which forms part of the essential initial conditions of the Lab.

The dialogue interviewing process will be described in the next section in detail.

### Desk Research

Generally, desk research is done to complement the interviewing process. The extent will vary from Lab to Lab. The desk research should not be trying to answer all the questions before the Lab even starts, and is considered secondary to the interviewing process, but it can help to inform the design of the Change Lab moving forward and to create a very useful shared fact base for Lab Team members to refer to. It can also guide the interviewing process in terms of informing questions and conversations, and identifying potential interviewees. If the interviewers and desk researchers are different people it is important that they continuously meet to cross-pollinate their findings.

Key areas for the desk research to look at include:

- historical, institutional, political background related to the focus problem
- stakeholder analysis
- existing initiatives
- media coverage
- facts and figures
- systemic issues related to the focus problem
- selecting useful materials for a reader specific to this Change Lab

### Group Processes

In addition to the dialogue interviews and desk research, the sensing process of the convening phase can include group dialogues. It may also test the Change Lab process overall through a ‘mini-lab,’ where stakeholders can have an in-depth and advance understanding of the process to help them assess the best strategies for applying the process to the specific problem at hand. (See Mini-Lab section.)

### Go/No Go

At the end of the interviewing and research process the convener(s) need to decide whether the process is a go or not. This needs to happen before starting to officially invite participants into the process, designing the Lab, and holding the Foundation Workshop.

## The Domino Effect

Conveners should initially focus on recruiting individuals who can serve as Executive Champions for the project. In their role as door openers, the recruitment of a single, good Executive Champion can mean unleashing a “domino effect.” The Executive Champions act as catalysts and spur on others to join the project. They can also play a big role in helping to identify allies and critical constituents of a system.

## Inviting in Lab Team Members

Assembling a group which, at least in principle, aims to represent a system presents us with something of a paradox. Individuals are invited to join the Change Lab because they represent their organizations and sometimes they’re invited because of their expertise in a particular area. The U-Process, as a learning process, demands that the individual participate as a “whole person” and not simply as a representative of an organization or an expert (which only partially represents who they are).

Any individuals invited into the Change Lab must be invited personally by the convener(s). They should not be invited solely on the basis of their organizational representation but also because they are personally committed to a systemic breakthrough in their area. Such a commitment must necessarily transcend purely institutional ties. Related to this, it isn’t much use involving people who are official spokespeople for their organizations.

Having said that, it is also absolutely critical that individuals who are passionately committed to creating systemic change bring the strength of their organizations with them. A large part of the convening task then is to help passionate individuals make the organizational case for their significant time involvement with the Lab, and for other organizational resources. This means taking the needs of their organizations seriously and responding to them. This is rarely a one-off process but is something that needs to be done

through the life-cycle of the Change Lab. The U-Process provides a language for making this case. Of specific use is published material on the “U” and dialogue processes.

## Designing the Lab

In parallel to the process of recruiting Lab Team members, the Lab design begins. The Lab design needs to be informed by what has come out of the interviews and the desk research in order to be appropriate to the specific context and problem of the Lab at hand. The processes outlined in this fieldbook are illustrative, but as we have mentioned before, each Lab will be different.

## The Foundation Workshop

The Foundation Workshop is the generic name given to the *first* workshop which brings together the Lab Team for the first time. In a very real sense the success of the entire Lab is dependent on this workshop since in many instances this will be the participants’ first exposure to the U-Process. Ideally, the Foundation Workshop will give participants practical experience of the U-Process, which legitimizes the process moving forward. In addition to exposure to the process, in many instances participants will experience the diversity of the problem system. For participants who are not experienced with such environments, the Lab could come across as hopelessly diverse, with no hope of agreement or common action. The Foundation Workshop must demonstrate a reasonable and viable plan for moving the Team forward.

The aims of the Foundation Workshop include:

- Generating a preliminary shared understanding of the problem system from the diverse perspectives of members of the Lab Team and from Lab Champions
- Learning from parts of local reality
- Understanding and agreement on the methodology and plan for the entire Lab process

- Agreement on what we need to learn more about and how we are going to learn, including through Learning Journeys (next stage of the process)
- Experiencing the U-Process as a whole

### **A Note on Transparency**

As the project grows, conscious decisions should be made on policy around openness and transparency as it relates to the finances of the Change Lab. Building a culture of transparency can help create security as well as a sense of accountability and ownership between the conveners, the Secretariat, the participants, and the Executive Champions.

## **Convening: Generative Dialogue Interviews**

“The long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory. For certain descriptive and analytical purposes, no instrument of enquiry is more revealing. The method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the lifeworld of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves.” - *Grant McCracken, The Long Interview.*

Many efforts to effect change in a system begin with conversations among people with a stake in that system. Yet such interactions often fail to penetrate to the depth necessary to release latent forces for change. Generative dialogue interviews are a set of in-depth, one-on-one conversations between you-the practitioner, consultant, or other kind of change agent-and key stakeholders. These conversations catalyze the Lab.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the generative dialogue interviews is to get the Lab process started by strengthening the connections of key stakeholders to the system (its current reality and its potential), to each other, and to the sources of their own commitments to effecting change. These interviews are not simply objective diagnostic or data-collecting activities. On the contrary, they are generative interventions in themselves, with three objectives:

- 1 To help the interviewee connect to their own thinking and to their own commitment-and, via the interview, for the interviewer to understand and connect to these as well
- 2 To generate or inspire action by the interviewee, possibly including to join in action with the interviewer (e.g., in a Change Lab)
- 3 To build the relationship between the

interviewee and the interviewer and, via them, to other interviewees

## Outcomes

Specific outcomes include clarification of the following:

- The “why”-the specific purpose of the Lab
- The “what”-challenges and concerns that must be addressed to release the full potential of the system
- The “who”-key individuals who will be selected to participate in the Lab
- The “how”-design of the initial steps in the Lab process

In addition, generative dialogue interviews raise the quality of thinking and relating in the system. These conversations are the first steps toward creating access to the field that will enable the change process.

## Illustrative Process

The process of engaging in generative dialogue interviews is iterative. An initial set of dialogues leads to a broader circle, until you have identified and spoken with a critical mass of key stakeholders, who together have the capacity to understand and influence the system. You and your fellow conveners of the Lab will then invite some or all of these stakeholders who can form a microcosm of the system to become members of the Lab team and participate in the rest of the Lab process.

Below we offer guidelines for preparing for, conducting, and debriefing the dialogues. This is a sample menu that experienced professionals will customize by drawing on their own experience.

## Laying the Groundwork for the Generative Dialogues

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- 1 Identify initial dialogue interviewees. Develop an initial list of potential dialogue interviewees consisting of the key individuals you and the convener(s) believe are essential for moving the system toward a better future. Include any individuals who will sponsor the project or whose support will be important. Also include individuals who don't hold formal positions of authority but who exercise leadership in informal ways, such as the ability to inspire others or generate a sense of shared urgency for change. Find out (from others, from the Web) something about the interviewee, their background and interests, why they are important to interview, and how you might connect with them. Your first set of dialogues will elicit suggestions for additional people to meet with.
- 2 Compose an interviewing team of two (one primary, the other secondary). The secondary interviewer will take notes during the dialogues, so the primary interviewer can focus on the conversation and have a partner for reflection on the exchange. The notetaker should take full notes, trying not to judge what is or isn't important and paying particular attention to (and taking down semi-verbatim quotes) points that seem important *to the interviewee*. Make sure the two interviewers always have at least 30 minutes immediately before each interview for preparation and role clarification, and one hour immediately afterwards for debriefing. In some cases, using a sound recorder may provide a more efficient and thorough form of transcription, although recording sometimes inhibits candor-always ask before recording an interview. We usually do both-notetaking and recording.
- 3 Schedule dialogues. Explain on the phone or email a brief note about the context and purpose of the meeting (*do not* send interview questions). Ask each dialogue participant to set aside at least two hours for the conversation at a time when they have the flexibility to go longer if desired. Conduct the conversation in the person's "home base" if

this can be done without interruptions. If the person expresses surprise or concern about the amount of time involved, explain in practical terms why such an investment is necessary: that it will enable an in-depth understanding of their view of the system and the actions that may help move the system forward. Most dialogues go beyond the scheduled time, as people become drawn into conversations in which they experience the rare opportunity to talk about their deepest purposes and concerns.

- 4 Prepare a list of sample questions. Although you will want to remain free to let the dialogue take whatever course naturally emerges, think through a list of questions that you believe will help you get at the issues at hand. Include questions that probe deep systemic aspects of the system.
- 5 Connect with your intention. Immediately before a dialogue, take time to enter into a state of mind conducive to your purpose, potentially through meditation. Visualize yourself, for example, as an instrument whose purpose is to be of service, bringing forth from the interaction the latent possibilities for growth and change. Your goal is to become deeply centered, relaxed, and open to embracing whatever emerges during the dialogue. If you have prior knowledge of the person, consciously acknowledge and set aside any mindsets you have formed. Remind yourself that your goal is to see as clearly as possible into the world of the other person, unclouded by preconceived notions you have about him or her. As Joseph Jaworski points out, "The most important hour of an interview is the hour before the interview."

### Conducting the Dialogues

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- 1 Set the container. Inquire into the person's understanding of the meeting and the larger process of which it is a part. Briefly introduce yourselves, the project, the purpose of the interview, and the process (taping for reference by the project team if it's okay,

taking notes *not for attribution* except within the project team, synthesizing results of all interviews into a project report which will be sent to interviewee, and other follow up). It is important to be as transparent as possible about the purpose of the conversation, explaining how the data will be reported and how the process is likely to unfold. Do whatever you can to create a climate of safety. For example, assure the person that you will not attribute any quotations to him or her and will take care not to use examples that are identifiable. Finally, make it safe for the interviewee to say "no" or not answer questions they are uncomfortable with. Tell them that they should feel free not to answer questions should they feel uncomfortable.

- 2 Invite their story. Begin by inviting the person to talk about his or her life story, starting with early childhood and the influences of family. This process of tracing life stories can help people reacquaint themselves with their sense of purpose. The focus on personal history may seem unusual, but this emphasis signals your aspiration to suspend the usual pattern of interaction and to go deeper. People rarely have the opportunity to explore the ways in which their personal beliefs and aspirations shape their view of their professional challenges.
- 3 Connect heart-to-heart to the interviewee, trying to hear and connect to what they care about—the source of their commitment. When you welcome people's personal stories, connections between personal dilemmas and core business issues are also more likely to reveal themselves. It is these connections that release energy and allow something new to be created. As the person recounts his or her story and gets closer to the present time or situation, the conversation will turn naturally toward systemic challenges. Of course, if you judge that an individual feels time pressured, it may make sense to start by focusing on present-day issues.
- 4 Monitor your listening. As the person begins

telling his or her story, notice how you are listening. Are you judging the person through the lens of your own mental models and values? Observing as an outsider? Strive for *reflective, empathetic, and generative* dialogue.

- 5 Seek to understand deeper structures in the system. A primary objective of generative dialogues is to unearth the system's reality as it is constructed by its members-structures involving deep assumptions, mental models, and embedded patterns of interaction. When the conversation turns to the present situation, probe for these underlying patterns. Once you have established a rapport with a person, probe more deeply into their own thinking by asking what has hindered their capacity to address the concerns they are expressing, and how they are contributing to the patterns they are concerned about. When people discover their part in creating and sustaining such disabilities, they often (re)discover their will to address the problems. Cover, as seems appropriate, some or all of the areas of inquiry on your list, in whatever order flows the most naturally.
- 6 Leave the door open. Move the dialogue toward closure by checking to see whether you have given the person an opportunity to fully express his or her concerns (e.g., "Is there any question you wish I had asked but didn't?"). Particularly at early stages in the dialogue process, invite suggestions for additional individuals to speak with. Finally, invite people to communicate any further thoughts, and ask permission to come back to them for clarification or insights on further questions. Ask if they have any questions for you, and respond to them if they do. Then thank them for their time and confirm follow up.
- 7 Reflect and debrief. Immediately after the dialogue concludes, take time with your partner to reflect on what you heard and saw during the conversation. What was distinctive about this conversation? What substantive

points were made? What is this person's source of commitment? Would this person be a valuable member of the Lab team? Record your chief impressions. Look through your own notes, underlining phrases that seemed important to you or (especially) to the interviewee. Go through the notes of both interviewers, making sure all key points are clarified and captured, looking for essence. The notetaker should type up the notes (without attribution) in the form of statements by the interviewee plus observations or conclusions by the interviewers.

- 8 Bring the dialogue process to a close. Continue broadening the circle of dialogues until you feel sufficiently clear on the "why," "what," "who," and "how" of the Lab. Interview 50 or so people, and identify about 10-25 individuals from these dialogues whom you think would be appropriate as Lab participants. The Lab team should be made up of people who together constitute a "strategic microcosm" of the system in question, including informal as well as formal leaders.

### Follow-up

- 1 Send thank you note to the interviewee
- 2 Follow up later with conclusions from the set of interviews, next steps, etc.

### Leveraging Dialogue Results

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- Present key findings. Describe the key findings from the dialogues to the conveners and Lab members. Illustrate each finding with one or more quotations from the dialogues that interviewees have permitted you to share (without attributing any quotations to specific individuals). Read these quotations slowly, in a clear, beautiful voice. Use silence to let quotations and insights sink into your listeners' minds.
- Encourage small-group dialogue. Invite people to talk together in small groups about how the key findings relate to their own experiences in the organization.



- Facilitate large-group dialogue. Engage the entire group in making sense of the key findings. Allow people time to engage in enough unstructured, open dialogue so that various perspectives rise to the surface.

## Principles

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Some Principles (from Otto Scharmer, after Joseph Jaworski, Michael Ray, and Ed Schein)

- 1 Inquiry: remember that the primary mode of interviewing is inquiry, not advocacy; focus the interview on hearing their point of view, not yours
- 2 VOJ: suspend your “Voice of Judgment” and cultivate a sense of wonder
- 3 Access your ignorance: pay attention to and trust the questions that occur to you; don’t be afraid to ask simple or ‘stupid’ questions
- 4 Access your empathetic listening: put yourself in the interviewee’s shoes and thoroughly appreciate/enjoy/love the story you hear unfolding
- 5 Access your generative listening: listen for your interviewee’s highest Self (their highest future potential); listen from that place
- 6 Go with the flow: let go of your own pre-existing concepts and perspectives
- 7 Generative silence: be fully attentive, respectful, and present, helping the interviewee to access the deeper aspects of their own story and self

## Notes from the field

The following is an excerpt from the Sustainable Food Lab Foundation Workshop (Bergen, the Netherlands, May 2004) Learning History by Susan Sweitzer. For more details on the Sustainable Food Lab Foundation Workshop, please see the Workshop Report and the Learning History.

### Group Dynamics: From Polarization to Shared Intent

The Sustainable Food Lab intentionally convenes a group that sees things from the perspective of different geographies, sectors, and histories in order to achieve changes more ambitious than any individual or institution could achieve separately. One of the primary challenges in bringing together people with this kind of diversity is how to use these differences as a catalyst for achieving significant systemic innovations.

In a number of areas, Team Members entered this project expecting to confront historically polarized positions, such as those between environmentalists and business interests, between the first and the third world in trade negotiations, and between small/medium-sized producers and agribusiness interests. A number of Team Members anticipated that polarization around these and other issues would impede the work of the Food Lab

Although the tangible work of the Food Lab brought forward many of these differing perspectives, the group attitude toward difference itself seemed to shift over the course of the Bergen Workshop. Team Members noted two specific areas in which **respect and trust increased**: (1) attitudes toward change, and (2) attitudes toward the ability of this diverse group of people to work effectively together.

In pre-workshop interviews, Lab Team

Members were asked what they felt were the biggest challenges facing food systems. Many expressed concern about the intentions and/or willingness of whole sectors of the food system to change. This unwillingness was attributed to “players in the system,” powerful political lobbies, corporations, consumers, and other Lab Team members. Several Team Members feared that differing attitudes toward the need for system change might hamper the group’s ability to agree on definitions of the problems, on strategies for intervention, and on practical initiatives.

A number of people used the word “impossible” in regard to the magnitude of the change needed in the food system. Others saw this challenge as particularly interesting and indicated that the diversity in the Lab Team contributed to their sense of potential for creating change.

Contributing to the skepticism about change in general, several Team Members asked whether personal commitment was sufficient to affect system or institutional change. These Lab Members said they doubted the ability of individuals to affect the institutions in which they work, even when the individuals were committed to doing so. However, comments by others made it clear that not everyone shared this sense of the limited impact of individual leadership.

In terms of the ability of this diverse group of people to work effectively together, many Lab Team Members again used the word “impossible” to describe the possibility of achieving open dialogue and deep learning. Some Team Members attributed this difficulty to the likelihood of polarization in a group this diverse. Balancing those doubts, other Team Members saw the Team’s diversity as an asset that would enable the Food Lab to

achieve more meaningful changes. In the same vein, some Team Members talked about the necessity of bringing together previous adversaries in order to achieve system innovations.

Over the course of the workshop, many Team Members began to view the differences within the group less as polarized and more as an opportunity to enrich the group understanding the challenges in food systems. The differences themselves were not necessarily resolved, but the perception that these differences needed to be reconciled before the group could agree on practical initiatives seemed to soften.

This change was brought about in part by the personal stories shared by a number of Team Members after dinner one evening, in which they expressed the source of their commitment to work in food systems. These stories revealed deep personal commitment to human life, to the earth, and something beyond individual agendas. They also revealed a sense of urgency about the need for change in the global system and in the way humans relate to the earth and to each other. This sharing dissipated some of the initial doubt about individuals and their motives. It provided inspiration for many, and it also re-framed the difficulties of an individual trying to change a system as an opportunity for valuable collaboration within the group.

In addition, the Team heard from those who are part of some of the largest global businesses and institutions in food systems. These Team Members expressed their deep concern that they are not powerful enough individually to accomplish the changes they feel are needed. Team Members representing other important sectors, governments, and institutions shared this frustration. Adam Kahane reminded the Team that in the diverging phase of the “U” process there

is no expectation of resolving differences and that the highly complex problems in food systems are difficult to solve by simply applying old solutions. His comments served to support the emerging shared recognition within the Lab Team of the commitment, curiosity, and collective challenge before them. In both small-group sessions and plenary sessions, Team Members began to express appreciation for the attitude of openness to learning and respectful listening that developed around contradictory and differing points of view. Many also voiced surprise at their own deepening awareness of the complexity in the system and at the tone of respect and curiosity that developed in the Lab Team over the course of this initial meeting.

Although a number of Team Members spoke of new appreciation for what they learned and for the diversity of perspectives in the Team, some questions about process still remain:

- How much agreement is necessary and desirable for successful innovation?
- Is it possible for successful innovations to shift the system on a global scale?
- How do we ensure that the voices at the edges remain in the dialogue?

These questions will inform the group's work of creating practical initiatives together.

## Tools for Convening

### Areas of Inquiry for the Convening Phase

Key areas of inquiry which the interviews, group processes, and desk research may focus on include:

**Context:** What is the historical, national, regional, institutional, political and policy background related to the focus problem or situation? What government (or inter-governmental) policies influence outcomes relative to the problem area?

**Stakeholder Analysis:** Who are the actors, institutions and individuals that have a stake in outcomes, are affected by, or deeply concerned about, the problem studied? What are the interests of the main stakeholders? What actors, institutions or individuals can influence change relative to the problem studied, and how? Are representatives from main stakeholder groups likely to devote the time and resources required to execute a Change Lab, why or why not? [Note: an effort will be made in stakeholder analysis to record the views and interests at different levels in society, both elites and the individuals or communities who most directly experience the problem].

**Scope/Systemic Issues:** What are the key systemic issues indirectly related to the lab theme? Which of these issues should be included in the scope of the Change Lab? If these issues are not covered in the Change Lab, will the intervention be successful?

**Interventions:** What initiatives have historically attempted to address this situation? What are their main strengths and weaknesses? What are the main successful or failed interventions on the issue and what can be learned from these experiences?

**Leadership:** Are leadership, political will, passion and commitment available to convene and sustain a partnership process? Specifically, which individuals could potentially convene, champion, participate in, and support a partnership?

**Partnership:** Which institutions could join a prospective partnership? What core interests of prospective partners would be served by joining the initiative? What benefit would prospective partner institutions bring?

**Collaboration:** What are the views of key stakeholders on the idea of collaboration across sectors to address the issue? Is there an appetite for collaboration, why or why not? What are the main opportunities or constraints for collaborative action on the issue studied?

**Ripeness:** Is the problem situation ripe for mitigation? Is there an appetite among key stakeholders to address the issue?

**Resources:** Is funding available to launch and sustain a partnership? Who are prospective donors, what are their core interests, and how could these interests be served through the proposed partnership?

**Fit:** Is the problem area ripe to be addressed by the Change Lab process? How could the process achieve results on the issue? Does the issue meet the test for social, dynamic and generative complexity? [*Social:* No one actor can address the issue; *Dynamic:* Cause and effect separated in time and place); *Generative:* New and innovative solutions are required to make sustainable change]. If the Change Lab process is not the appropriate intervention, what are alternatives?

**Risk Assessment:** What key risk factors would need to be taken into consideration in launching a partnership? Can risk factors be minimized, and how? (Risk factors may include those relating to political power, financial resources, media and public perception, disposition of potential partners, etc.)

**Results and Sustainability:** Is the project likely to yield results? Can we envision that the proposed partnership will lead to a substantial and sustained shift in the issue to be addressed? Is the anticipated investment, difficulty, and intensity of the initiative commensurate with possible outcomes?

Suggested areas for inquiry during interviews:

- 1 *Problems*, challenges, obstacles you see in the current situation; what's not working? (In this and the following questions, keep the scope of the inquiry wide; listen for alternative, larger, related or analogous perspectives.)
- 2 *Previous efforts* to address these problems, your learnings from these efforts?
- 3 *Possible solutions*, interventions, leverage points you see to address these problems?
- 4 Interesting and important *innovations* being tried; what's working; who is leading?
- 5 What's *missing*: what's not being seen, talked about, or done; blind spots?
- 6 *Stakeholders* in this situation; individuals or institutions who would have to be involved in order to change the situation?
- 7 Where to start; *first few steps*?
- 8 What of all of this you have *energy* for?
- 9 *People* we should talk with; people who are "dying to change" this situation?

## Foundation Workshop Illustrative Process (Based on the Sustainable Food Lab)

### Day One

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#### 13.30 Opening

Process Description: Plenary, presentation

Lab Conveners and leaders frame the Lab, summarize the convening process to date-what conversations brought us to this point?

Introduce the U-Process and outline what will happen over the next few days.

Participants are asked to introduce themselves by stating their role, organization and country as well as what their expectations are and what they will be able to contribute to the project.

#### 15.00 Entering Observation

Process Description: Small groups, café-style

In their workshop confirmation, participants are invited to bring an object (or two) which reflects the reality of the system.

If the group is small, these objects and the stories behind them can be shared in plenary. If the group is too big then small groups in café form are recommended.

#### 15.30 Systemic Challenges

Process Description: Small group, plenary presentation

Participants are asked what the biggest challenge relating to the problem system is and are invited to discuss this question in groups of three. Each person is then asked to write down a challenge on a paper hexagon. Once this is complete, participants are asked to explain their challenge and to stick the hexagon on a simple “skeleton” representation of the problem system (on a chart).

#### 17.00 Executive Champions’ Panel

Process Description: Panel discussion

The Change Lab Executive Champions are asked to introduce themselves and say a few words about why they think the Change Lab matters and how they intend to support it.

### Day Two

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#### 09.00 Check-In

Process Description: Plenary and paired dialogue

Participants are asked to reflect on “What questions are coming up this morning? What are you asking yourself?” After a silent reflection, participants talk about their questions in pairs and are then asked to share in plenary.

At the end of the check-in, the facilitator reviews where the group is in the process and addresses any related questions that arise. The facilitator should be prepared to address questions relating to an impatience for action.

#### 12.00 Mini-Learning Journey

Process description: Visiting the problem system

Participants are briefed on the learning journey and invited to shift from a space of analysis to perception. Small groups are formed and each participant is instructed to take at least one Polaroid photograph of something on the trip that they consider to be critical to understanding the whole.

#### 16.30 Learning Journey Debrief

Process description: Small group reflection

Participants are asked to pick one photograph they have taken on the learning journey. They pass this photograph around (silently) so that each participant sees it before it is returned to the owner. The Polaroid owner explains what they think this photograph tells us about the whole.

### Day Three

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#### 08.30 Check-in

Process description: Plenary

The group is asked to spend ten minutes in silence, reflecting and journaling. Then the group is asked to share their thoughts around the question “What is becoming clearer for you?”

After the check-in, the facilitator outlines the agenda for the day and what the group should achieve by the closing. The facilitator might say, “This morning, the key work of the group is not to agree on principles but to search and find from a systemic point of view the entry

points for shifting the larger system and to act on those entry points.”

### **09.30 Better Future**

Process description: Plenary, small groups

Participants are invited to describe already existing seeds and examples of projects which shed light on the problem system. Small groups discuss the essence of the seeds. They list initiatives for entry points and report these back in plenary.

### **11.00 What would success look like?**

Process description: Plenary, presentation

The facilitator asks each person to share a brief description of what success would look like from their point of view.

### **11.45 Communication Review**

Process description: Presentation, plenary

The facilitator presents a proposal for how communications within and external to the group will be handled during the course of the project.

### **12.00 Process Review**

Process description: Plenary

The facilitator invites the group to review the process going forward, inviting comments, suggestions, and questions on how the results that have been discussed will be accomplished.

### **14.00 Learning Agenda Questions**

Process description: Plenary, small group, presentations

Participants are asked the question: “What action-learning experiments can we do now? Who are the people and places from the learning journeys that we need to learn more about?” Paper hexagons can be used to group the results.

### **15.00 Change Lab Research Agenda**

Process description: Presentation

The facilitators take the data generated from the previous session, organize it and present it back to the group.

### **16.00 Closing**

Process description: Plenary

The group is asked “What’s the one thing that surprised you and what’s a hope you have for the process?”

“Learning to see – habituating the eye to repose, to patience, to letting things come to it; learning to defer judgement, to investigate and comprehend the individual case in all its aspects. This is the first preliminary schooling...”

– Friedrich Nietzsche

co-sensing

observe

observe

observe

## Phase II

# Co-Sensing - Uncover Current Reality

### Introduction and Purpose

If we were to name a single primary obstacle to systemic change then that obstacle would be a failure to see. This is where the U-Process starts. The Sensing Phase involves “seeing” the situation, the problem, the material that one has to work with through a process of immersion into the world of the task, and becoming “one” with it. It means putting your tools down, and using your own self as an antenna. “Sensing” is a tactile act- it’s about intimate relationship, not about observing from the outside.

All participants within Change Lab teams are invited because of their in-depth knowledge and experience within a particular system. With this expertise often comes an unspoken belief that we understand the system overall when, in fact, we deeply grasp only one or some particular facets of the system.

The nature of many of today’s most complex problems means that it is impossible to effect radical change through piecemeal tinkering with the parts. Joseph Jaworski describes this as “the battle of the parts against the whole.” The only way to fundamentally affect the problem is through engagement with the system-as a whole. Given the complexity and diffusion that characterize many of our most difficult problems, this presents us with a unique and unprecedented challenge. How does a busy individual in today’s fast moving world see or sense the totality of a systemic problem?

The left-hand side, the downward curve, of the U-Process and the Change Lab aims to address this challenge. In order to grasp the system as a whole, participants need to work in

collaboration with others in order to build “system sight” and to become intimately familiar with the system. This is done through building the capacity of observation and in a very real sense working together at “uncovering reality.”

We mentioned in the introduction to the U-Process its “holographic” nature, meaning that the seven capacities and the three practices of sensing, presencing, and realizing go with certain phases of the “U,” but are also practiced throughout-each part refers to, and contains, the whole. The whole U-Process is continually being practiced in smaller iterations, while going through the Change Lab. This is particularly true of the sensing process, and this section is the hardest to separate from the others. It should be clear that much of what happens in the Convening Phase is also about sensing-the dialogue interviewing process, the process of coming to understand whether a Change Lab is needed and appropriate, etc. The overall Sensing Phase of the Lab Team starts with the Foundation Workshop and runs into the Innovation Workshop of the Presencing Phase. It also returns in the beginning of the Realizing Phase when sub-teams have to reframe the specific problems they are working on.

### Capacities

The two key capacities for this phase are suspending and redirecting. Both of these capacities are about shifting our field of attention. Often, when we perceive what is going on around us, we are actually just looking for something that corresponds to our pre-existing mental pictures. Our own beliefs and assumptions about how things work become like a pair of glasses that affect what we actually



notice and are able to take in. Yet, as Goethe used to say, the clues to the most complex phenomena are often to be found in the exceptions to the rule. *Suspending* is about seeing beyond the habitual lenses and filters—suspending our mental pictures and concepts, our judgment, our positions, and our expectations about what we will see.

*Redirecting* allows us to shift away from being outside what we are observing. Our most common ways of seeing are to look at something from an outside point of view and from the perspective of our own needs and experiences. When we redirect our attention, we are trying to see things from a different vantage point. The first step of redirecting might be “stepping into someone else’s shoes,” or for example imagining that one is either one inch or 1000 feet tall and trying to just see from a different perspective. But ultimately, we are trying to redirect to seeing from the perspective of the whole, from inside the problem, from inside the system—no longer separating ourselves from what we are looking at. We start to understand the source of the problem and the movement in it—its process of “becoming”—as opposed to seeing it as a static separate phenomenon.

## **Process**

The Sensing Phase for the Lab Team begins at the Foundation Workshop, described in the Convening section. This workshop is designed so that the participants can start to see and sense the reality of the system. They begin to construct a shared map of the emerging reality of the system, and decide on the aspects of the system that they need to learn more about, which in effect becomes the team’s learning agenda.

The two most important practices or methods used for the Sensing Phase are learning journeys and generative dialogue interviews.

## **Learning Journeys**

The learning journeys are usually physical journeys where the Lab Team members travel together in order to immerse themselves in the problem, to experience a reality they do not normally come in contact with, and to sense the system through practicing the capacities of suspending and redirecting. The learning journeys impact the perspectives and understandings of individual Lab Team members but importantly also create a shared context for participants to refer back to. The next section is devoted to a detailed description of learning journeys.

## **Dialogue Interviewing**

The generative dialogue interviewing process was described in the Convening section in relation to interviewing potential Lab Team members and direct stakeholders of the Change Lab. During the Sensing Phase, Lab Team members may use this approach to interviewing as part of their learning journeys, with each other, with people in their organizations, or by setting up meetings with other stakeholders. The key is to learn to distinguish between different kinds of listening (see Tools Section).

While an interview might seem to be a focused engagement with clear purpose and objectives, in many circumstances it’s best to soften one’s approach to the interview process. This means simultaneously being alert to information directly relevant to the larger context while being careful not to push the interviewee into discussing issues they don’t have the energy for or for some reason would rather not talk about.

As an example, during one interview, during a Change Lab focused on immigration, an interviewer was talking to an immigrant. The interviewer wanted to know about the interviewee’s experience as an immigrant. The immigrant however kept deflecting all questions relating to any difficulties he might have experienced as an immigrant. The interviewer kept asking the same question again and again using slightly different words. The net result of

this was for the immigrant to close up towards the interviewer. In this instance, the second interviewer, by asking the immigrant about something else entirely- in this case, how their business was going-led to a discussion of his experiences as an immigrant but through a route that was much more comfortable for the interviewee.

One way of understanding this is to see the interviewee as having multiple identities, in this case the man was indeed an immigrant, but he was also a businessman, an Egyptian, a father, and so on. It is a mistake to see interviewees through the lens of a single identity.

The interviewer must understand that there are many doorways and routes towards the experiences most directly relevant to the wider context. The process of starting an interview involves finding the doorway and path that the interviewee is most comfortable with. This is not necessarily the most direct path. It usually turns out that the route the interviewee takes often reveals information and ideas that the interviewer could not have anticipated at the start.

This is especially important to remember when conducting interviews with a specially sensitive or personal framing, such as the ones we've done around teenage aboriginal suicide or health care. The interviewer may, inadvertently, be enquiring about highly traumatic experiences. If the interviewer is skillful then these experiences will emerge, but only when the interviewee feels safe in giving them voice. The path of an interview done well leads from a description of events or policy into deeply personal terrain.

The opening into an interview may not be obvious at the onset. This is where preparing a set of initial questions is useful. An array of questions that are well thought out will probably elicit an energetic response. The moment this happens the interviewee's body language, tone, and energy will change. It's almost as if they will have started talking about the issue that's closest to their heart.

One sign that the interview is approaching this terrain is that it will slow down. The interviewee will start accessing experiences and memories that they might not have spoken about for a long time. The interviewer needs to give such reflection space and not be too quick to prompt the interviewee to expand or say more. Sometimes just repeating back in different words what the interviewee has said, rather than asking another question, can help them to go deeper and feel heard. (This process is called "reflective listening".)

While some interviewees need to be approached with great care and sensitivity, other interviewees may be different. One typical interviewee is a person who is relatively senior, and who is used to speaking about the issues the interviewer is interested in. In such cases the interviewee may simply start downloading a great deal of information, without ever touching on deeper, formative experiences. While information is, of course, relevant, often data is available in much more efficient forms elsewhere. The opportunity of a dialogue interview is to gain insight into the unique experiences and world view of an individual.

Lab Team members can be trained in the process of dialogue interviewing as part of this phase as they are learning the capacities of sensing. We have included a sample outline of a training session in the Tools section.

### **Ethnography and Development of Personas**

While the Sensing Phase needs to have a quality of openness and free observation, it is useful to already design this phase with the needs of the Realizing Phase in mind. One of the tools that may be used in the Realizing Phase is the development of "personas," rooted in the field of Ethnography.

Ethnography essentially seeks to understand people's behavior and unearth their requirements and tacit needs through observing and gaining insight into how they interact with their surroundings. The focus is on

understanding individuals, partly because the communities they are taken to represent are large and diverse. We find it useful in the process of sensing to go both into the micro-level of trying to understand individuals deeply while simultaneously looking at the meta-level of the system as a whole.

During the learning journeys, participants can gather raw material to understand stakeholder goals, needs, aspirations, beliefs, fears, values, potentials, etc. This is done through interviewing, open conversations, just seeing and sensing, taking photos and asking stakeholders from outside the Lab Team to take photos responding to different question, and with a variety of other tools. This material can then be translated into “personas”-hypothetical but believable characters who are usually a composite of characteristics drawn from real people encountered on the journeys. In the Prototyping Phase the personas, which have been developed with names and life-narratives, are used to test project prototypes for their relevance to various stakeholders.

### Sensing in the Microcosm

It is important to remember that the Lab Team is also a living microcosm of the system, and thus many of the stakeholders’ values and needs will be embodied in the Lab Team members themselves. As much learning and observation will happen within the Team as outside of it. Practicing dialogue interviewing within the team is a great way to learn from each other, build relationships, and experience what suspending and redirecting mean in practice. Lab Team members will interview each other and through formal and informal conversations gain insight into the system.

If the Lab Team is a true microcosm, many of the patterns of the system “out there” will be alive and present “in here” within the group. It is not only what the team members say to each other and inform each other about, but also what they do in the process of getting to know each other and working together that matters. The

facilitator needs to be aware of this and to listen to it, to bring it out where useful, and to draw on whatever dynamics, conflicts, or patterns arise in the group to help the Team draw parallels to the content of the Lab and the problem it is trying to address. It should not be seen as a problem, disappointment, or frustration if someone remarks, “We are no different from the very system we are trying to change!” This is a source of learning and it is what makes the Lab Team’s potential to shift the system real.

Related to this, Lab Team members should be encouraged to be in a state of sensing throughout this phase, including in between workshops when they are back in their organizations. The knowledge that they may gain while living their lives and doing their work outside of the Lab, once they have become aware of the capacities of sensing, can be extremely valuable to the work of the Team. Sensing is a way of being in this phase, not an activity restricted to the learning journeys.

### Synthesizing

**“Many eyeballs tame complexity”**  
– Eric S. Raymond

Synthesizing the learnings is a key part of the Sensing Phase. This is done at various stages of the Sensing Phase (in the Foundation Workshop, at the end of learning journeys, etc.) and is a way of making the perception of each participant visible to the whole group, thus expanding each person’s field of vision. Synthesizing is not just adding up the different pieces of the puzzle, but it is also a process for finding connections between what different people are seeing, between different aspects of the system, and then, starting to look at leverage points for change and scenarios for the future.

In some Change Labs, the whole team may reconvene after having gone on learning journeys in subteams, for a Scenario Retreat. At this session, the team will share and make sense of the observations and learning from their journeys; construct a set of scenarios as to how

the system might develop in the future; crystallize their vision as to the future that they want and believe needs to come forth; and identify leverage points for shifting the system towards this vision.

One key tool we use for synthesizing is “affinity mapping” where participants write on paper hexagons different elements of the system or the answer to a given question. These are then grouped by theme and a paper hexagon of a different color is attached to each group with a header for the group. This can also be done with photographs.

The Sensing Phase can be the most creative phase for the facilitator and the Secretariat members involved in designing the Lab process. A number of tools are available to help Lab Team members sense the reality in a new way. Some of these are described in the Tools section at the end of this chapter. How they are combined will depend on the individual Change Lab.

The Sensing Phase rounds off during the first couple of days of the Innovation Retreat (described in the Presencing section).

“Seeing, in the finest and broadest sense, means using your senses, your intellect and your emotions. It means encountering your subject matter with your whole being. It means looking beyond the labels of things and discovering the remarkable world around you.”

– Freeman **Patterson**

## Co-Sensing: Learning Journeys

### Introduction and Purpose

Travel as education has a long and honorable tradition. While it might seem that we travel more than ever, in many ways our stamina for travel has gone down. We no longer imagine spending decades on the road, as many medieval travellers did. In fact, we travel less to learn than to get from A to B.

Our need for travel as learning, however, has not gone away. John Le Carre gives us a sense of this need when he writes, “The desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world.” Since the rise of the “knowledge economy” we find that many of us work in offices, behind desks, and deal with issues with which we have very little direct, face-to-face experience. This creates a disconnection between our actions and the implications of our actions. It makes it difficult for us to understand the true significance and impact of what we do and who it effects. It also means that we act with a relatively limited understanding of the whole picture. If we are truly interested in changing a particular system, we cannot outsource our perception to field researchers. Rather we must take responsibility for our own “seeing” by becoming a part of a system and experiencing it as fully as possible.

The point of learning journeys is to get people out from behind their desks into the world, to learn about the things that they wish to change or somehow influence. The journeys, regardless of how far you physically travel, are always about cross-cultural communication. At one level a learning journey is about creating the conditions for honest conversation across barriers. This is surprisingly hard to do. In part this is because it’s rare for people to travel with an open mind and in part because cross-cultural communication is difficult.

John Steinbeck, late in his career, decided to travel around the US in order to learn what he

could about Americans. His friends told him that he would get in trouble because everyone he met would be suspicious of an old man with such a strange motive. He decided to tell people he was out hunting, which was an acceptable reason to travel and have honest conversations with people. Similarly, when a group of politicians, activists, businessmen, and women want to visit a site, it becomes a fairly delicate and central task to communicate exactly why this group is coming and what they want. Change Lab projects are typically complex and not easy to explain, especially where barriers to communication exist. In the case of learning journeys it makes sense to be as honest as possible about the intentions and identity of the group—that we are here to listen and learn.

The phrase “learning journey” is becoming increasingly common. It is important to understand that within the context of the Sensing Phase of the “U” we are using the phrase in a relatively specific way. While sharing characteristics with what is normally called a “study tour,” there are important distinctions. A study tour is typically a data gathering (facts and figures) and hence a cognitive exercise. While this fits the needs of the “U” (sensing also requires cognitive data) it’s a limited use and a somewhat squandered opportunity. On a learning journey, each visit is seen as a “doorway” to understanding the whole. A learning journey can be used to meet several purposes:

- To give participants an understanding of the “whole system” and their role within it.
- To enable participants to engage with stakeholders and to map and assess stakeholder needs.
- To create a basis of building more intuitive, holistic, and human pictures of a system.
- To give participants a deeper emotional as well as intellectual sense of the system under study.

- To train participants in “suspending judgement” and “re-directing” which are essential to “seeing” the system.
- For participants to learn from each other as well as from external stakeholders about the whole system.
- For participants to build a network they can draw on at later stages of the Change Lab.

## Roles

The roles of the facilitator, learning historian, and logistics support are very important for the learning journeys and some specific requirements apply.

## Facilitator

The facilitator needs to be aware that facilitating learning journeys can be quite different from facilitating a workshop in a static venue. Participants on a learning journey in an unfamiliar context can get tired, emotional, confused, and disoriented. They may also feel that their freedom is being constrained because they have to go everywhere together and they may have special sudden needs in terms of health requirements, shopping, phone calls to make, etc. Because of this, it can be a significant challenge to make sure participants follow the activities and approaches of the learning journey, and experience how impactful following them can be.

The facilitator needs to be able to “contract” with the participants for the journey and set the intent for this to really be a “learning journey” and not simply a field visit or study tour. This involves working with participants to see what the group can tell about the whole through the “doorway” of each visit, and insisting that time be created for learning and not just for journeying. It is good for participants to leave a learning journey feeling they have been pushed and stretched. While needing to be assertive, the facilitator should not appear too controlling, or s/he may contribute to the participants feeling constrained. The facilitator needs to remain calm

and centered, and to primarily inspire participants to want to follow the learning journey's activities.

The facilitator should take time to listen to and connect with each and every participant on the trip making extra effort with those who may be hard to connect with, or who seem to be outside of or struggling with the process. Meals and bus rides can be used to sit with each person and listen to how the process is working for them, where they are coming from etc. As this happens, even those participants originally on a bit of the fringe will feel included or valued by a process that "listens to each person's ideas."

The facilitator needs to be particularly attentive on a learning journey to making sure participants understand where they are in the U-Process and the Change Lab linking it to what has happened so far and what is to happen after the journeys. S/he needs to have deeply internalized the reason why we do learning journeys and their relation to the U-Process, and needs to ensure that participants realize the importance of attending visits, briefings, and debriefings, and that they know the meaning of the sensing capacities, are guided on how to practice them, and become excited about learning.

For this, the facilitator needs to be quite clear on his/her own personal experiences with practicing suspending and redirecting as well as how to enable these in a group context. S/he needs to teach and share about sensing and seeing on multiple levels so the group sees how this process can work and how personal and group transformation is essential for the deeper abilities. Enabling participants to shift from projecting their own reality onto the world, which some may not even be aware they are doing, to suspending and redirecting requires a lot of skill and presence.

It's critical to grasp that, at this stage of the Change Lab, some participants may tend to still not be entirely "sold" on the process. Because the learning journeys are so real and experiential, and because of the early timing in terms of

where the learning journeys come in the Change Lab process, participants' doubts may particularly come to the fore at this point. One participant asked, "What is the reasoning behind suspending judgment? I've been honing my judgment for many years, I get paid to exercise my judgment." Another participant felt frustrated by the notion of sensing because it de-emphasized intellectual analysis over using other senses. She pointed out that if she did not analyze and judge the situation then she had no other way of processing the data to which she was being exposed and this meant being totally lost. What was she supposed to do about that?

The facilitator, assisted by the rest of the hosting team, must be confident enough in the U-Process and its logic to meet the questions, both curious and critical, that participants might have around the process. The facilitator should assist the participants in experiencing the U-Process over the course of the learning journey through providing brief explanations and facilitating exercises in sensing.

If the facilitator isn't so deeply versed in the U-Process as to feel confident about this aspect of the learning journey, an additional staff member (a "U-trainer") could be included in the team, who has a deeper understanding of the U-Process.

### **Learning Historian**

As the most important process for the participants to gather knowledge and learn about the system, the learning journeys are perhaps also the most important part of the process for the team to document in detail with the help of the learning historian. It is however a difficult process to document because there is a wealth of information being shared, all the participants are seeing different things and sharing different perspectives, and because much of the documenting happens on the move.

The participants are often invited to be "journalists" in order to report on site visits, which decreases the overall need for the learning

historian to be documenting everything. Journal entries and photographs by participants give depth, color, and life to a learning journey report and enable a more nuanced and complex description of the journey and its content. There are certain sessions such as the synthesis session where it is particularly important for the learning historian to be recording.

It's also recommended that the learning historian carries a digital video camera and keeps it handy for taping certain sessions. This should be done for purely internal purposes. Small digital cameras do not intrude and can be used discretely-although please remember to explicitly ask the group for permission before filming and point out that any material is only for internal use. The video camera can also be used for "barometer" interviews with participants during the course of the journey. A particularly interesting use of such interviews is to use them as a feedback loop for the group itself, by showing them the interviews soon after they've been shot. Remember to ask participants for permission to share these interviews with the rest of the group.

Note that the learning historian's role shouldn't be seen as documenting "everything" and being solely responsible for this. It works best if the team together takes responsibility for documenting and the learning historian is the one who integrates the information. During the pre-journey hosting team meeting, it is helpful for the learning historian if expectations and ideas from the team around documentation can be made clear. It's helpful to set out what the reporting requirements are for each session ahead of time, and then during the journey, team members can help point out moments of significance that need to be captured. (It doesn't help the learning historian to be given the instruction that "everything" should be documented. This is obviously impossible and in effect means the learning historian needs to decide on his/her own what is important.)

## Logistics

Again, the level of complexity of a learning journey also makes the logistics role incredibly important. The logistics person takes care of transport, accommodation, meals, and materials during the learning journey and needs to be prepared for special needs that may come up for example as a result of health issues or emergencies. It's critical that the logistics person is local or at least speaks the local language and has a deep understanding of the local context. S/he may also be the liaison with the host organizations.

In addition to the overall logistics responsible it is a good idea to have a "runner" who can just be on standby if someone needs something bought, a fax sent, a ticket reconfirmed, etc. Otherwise you suddenly find participants are missing because they just had to "sort something out".

## Translator

Having a professional translator on the team (especially when travelling in non-English speaking countries) can dramatically improve the learning journey experience. On the Sustainable Food Lab journeys in Brazil we made extensive use of simultaneous translation. Hosts at the site visits who spoke some English were encouraged to speak their native Portuguese as their fluency of expression was dramatically improved. Often speaking English, however imperfect, is a matter of pride. During site visits learning journey participants who spoke Portuguese were encouraged to express themselves in this language in order to set an example for hosts. In general it's good practice to allow participants to express themselves in their native language and to provide translation services whenever possible.

## Laying the Groundwork

### Briefing of hosts

One of the most crucial (and time-consuming) tasks is for the learning journey organizer to visit each of the sites in person and to work with the

host(s) to plan a good visit. By “hosts” in this context we mean the local people leading the organizations or communities the group will visit on its journey.

The key is to explain to the host the purpose of the learning journey and to emphasize that our team wants to *meet people and talk with them and to see and feel for ourselves what’s going on*. What we want in practice is to be able to see reality and to have a chance to personally sit down and talk with people, preferably one-on-one (not just as part of a large tour group walking around). An ideal journey may be a combination of providing information, creating an experience for participants, and enabling small group or one-on-one conversations with diverse stakeholders of the given host organization, project, or community. This means that our team must in many cases split up at each site and talk with different people.

This also includes being clear on what kind of space the team requires for debriefing and plenary sessions. At the risk of being repetitive, what we absolutely don’t want—except for a very brief introduction or in the case of a visit to a very exceptional host—is to be seated in the organization’s Board Room and to be shown a video or a PowerPoint presentation (downloading).

We can’t assume that the host will understand what we want: in most cases they will not, because it’s not a typical visit. The risk is that we show up and have, through politeness, to endure a highly inadequate visit. Some adjustments can be made at this stage, but the design of the visits really has to be done beforehand—it is very difficult to change things once the visit has begun and hosts have an idea of what they want to do with the visit. At the same time, it’s important to be aware if the hosts have culturally-derived expectations of us and to be willing to follow their protocol in some cases.

In addition to the pre-journey visits and face-to-face conversations, host organizations should be given a briefing in writing as a reminder of the

purpose, principles, and needs of the journey. If possible and appropriate, give them a list of the bios of participants as well—they are often curious to know who is coming.

## Logistics

The logistical preparation was touched on above. It is complex and it is key for learning journeys. It includes booking hotels, transport, and meals, putting together a first aid kit and carrying this through the journey, organizing meeting venues, and materials, liaising on logistics with the host organizations, etc.

Problems with logistics can cause unnecessary stress and irritation for participants. Of course unplanned for logistical changes and problems may arise, which is a part of the experience, but if it is the result of bad planning, it can really interfere with the process. Even when all the logistics are completely in place before the journey, the logistics coordinator may still be busy with emerging needs during the journey.

## Hosting Team Meeting

It’s critical for the Hosting Team (facilitator(s), learning historian(s), logistics coordinator(s)) to spend the day before the learning journey starts in order to clarify roles and expectations. Because flights often get delayed, it’s imperative to build in some contingency when arriving for a learning journey. The purpose of the pre-journey Team Meeting is to ensure that all members of the team are clear on what their role will be during the journey and what is expected of them.

During the Hosting Team Meeting it’s worth discussing what the team’s hopes and success criteria for the journey are. What is it that the Team would like to see at the end of the journey? What would the team like to see happen during the journey? The clearer a shared picture the hosting team has around these questions, the more obvious their role during the journey will be, and the better will be their ability to synergize with each other. Particularly on a learning journey the energy in the Hosting Team



can have a strong effect on the field-sometimes it is as if the relationships in the Hosting Team get amplified to the group overall.

## **Process**

The learning journeys are usually five to seven days long, and often involve traveling to more than one city or region. A Change Lab may include multiple shorter learning journeys or longer ones, depending on context, process, logistics, geography, etc.

## **Orientation**

The orientation session is vital and creates the conditions for the whole journey. This is the key time when participants can be oriented to where they are in the U-Process (where they have come from and where they are going), to the difference between learning journeys and field visits or study tours, to the sensing capacities and to the process and methodology that will be followed during the journey. Participants are reminded of different ways of talking and listening and invited to pay attention to not just “downloading” what they already know on the journey. “Contracting”-finding out the hopes and fears of participants, setting collective agreements, and getting buy-in to the shared learning journey process is important at this stage.

The orientation session is also a good time to organize as much of the logistics as possible-passport copies, flight home info, health needs, dietary needs, etc.

## **Briefings**

The briefings usually take place every morning. This is a time to brief the participants on the day’s schedule, but more importantly to prepare mentally for engaging with the visits. The briefing sessions will usually include a check-in around a shared question, a review of the day before and a “process check,” time for journaling and brief meditation.

## **Visits**

As described above under “laying the groundwork,” it is important that the visits do not consist of primarily intellectual presentations. A balanced visit will include some information, some direct experience, some powerful visual impressions, and some deep dialogue with those involved (in small groups or one- on-one). Host organizations should be clear that you are coming to learn and have honest conversations.

It’s also important that participants are aware of the difference between dialogue interviewing and learning journeys. While intimate conversations may happen on learning journeys one-on-one, this is not the only or primary mode of learning on the journey and participants generally shouldn’t spend the learning journey scouting for interview subjects. “Peripheral vision,” sensing beyond conversation, and seeing what happens in informal, unstructured conversations are all useful on learning journeys, which are a much broader, freer, and generative engagement than the dialogue interviewing experience.

If the learning journey group is large then it should be split up into smaller groups, ideally no larger than eight people per group.

During each visit one person can be assigned to be a leader and one to be a reporter. The leader will introduce the group to the host organizations or communities. The participants on the visits are given some thinking prompts and a learning journey “protocol” (see Tools section) and are usually instructed to take and label a few (e.g., three) photographs during the visit.

## **Debriefings**

Briefings and debriefings are the main times during the journey when participants are together making their learning conscious. They enable the group to “see together”-so each individual isn’t just seeing what was already in their heads. This makes the experience very clear that what each person is seeing is only part of the whole, and when it comes together the perception is widely expanded.

This is essential for making clear the need for group learning from each other and for creating the multi-eyed and multi-perspective vision of what we are seeing. The debriefings are crucial and it is important for the facilitator to be assertive in making sure time is set aside for the debriefings to happen. The learning journey is not an easy environment in which to enforce reflection time. It is very important that participants get into the habit of debriefing from the beginning and that they experience the value of it as of the first session. Participants will sense whether the facilitator sees this as vital.

Participants should take time to record notes in silence after each experience. A debriefing generally starts with 10-15 minutes of silence for people to take notes and reflect on what they have seen, and then a 45-60 minute session, which includes hearing from each participant what they saw and sharing photographs.

The debriefing practice can have a fascinating effect on the group in the sense that people start to be more consciously observant knowing that afterwards they will have to share their reflections with the group.

## Synthesis

The final session of the learning journey attempts to construct a synthesis for the journey overall. This can be done with paper hexagons and using the photos. Participants write an element of the DNA of the system which they have seen this week on each hexagon or just put a photograph on it or both. These are then mapped on a wall to give a full picture of what the group has seen. Participants are asked to reflect on leverage points in the system and to bring these ideas to the next workshop.

The journey would always end with a check-out and evaluation where each participant shares their "take-aways" and their assessment of the journey- what worked well and what can be improved.

## Limitations & Pitfalls

The best way of understanding a system is to live immersed within it. Learning journeys cannot, of course, provide this level of insight and nor should they be expected to. Rather they provide a limited snapshot of the reality of the system- which can nonetheless be transformative and a doorway to understanding the whole. It is important to be conscious that one is seeing a specific case and to be careful in over-generalizing from a single, limited experience.

The value of the snapshot is a function of the state of the participants. If they are suspending judgement and are open to truly "seeing," then learning journeys have the potential of being transformative. Beyond this, the success or failure of a learning journey is a function of how well prepared the learning journey guides (the Change Lab Secretariat) are, and how well the host organizations understand the purpose and methods of the learning journey.

For host organizations, often the default mode of dealing with a group visit is to put on some form of presentation, be it a speech from the Mayor, a PowerPoint slide, or a video. As mentioned earlier, it should be made clear as early on as possible that the group is coming to learn through conversation and dialogue. Sometimes this makes a lot of sense to the host organizations and sometimes such a request causes confusion and consternation. It's a matter of making expectations clear.

It's also not uncommon that the person initially briefed turns out to be different from the person responsible for hosting the group. It makes sense to write a simple letter to host organizations (ideally in their own language) that explains who the group is, that they're coming to learn with an open mind and heart and that the ideal mode would be conversations in small groups.

Double check and then re-check all travel distances and timing! All too often conceptions of time and space are culturally determined and are not universal.

## Learning Journeys in Developing Countries

Executing learning journeys in developing countries presents a special challenge and a higher level of complexity. Here the possibility of an “honest conversation” becomes even more remote due to vast cultural and social boundaries and power differentials.

All complexities, be they with host organizations or the participants themselves, can be handled through remaining clear on the purpose of the learning journey and the intentions of the participants to learn and engage as honestly and as openly as possible. Often the greatest barriers to conversation are the assumptions, judgements, and barriers of the participants themselves.

Western participants often arrive at “Third World” sites (especially rural sites) with the assumption in their mind that people who have less material wealth than them are “poor.” Individuals on site can often also reinforce this label through their own actions—partially because this is the only relationship they have known with Westerners. This leads to a reinforcing of power structures which only entrench the barriers to honest conversation.

The alternative is to arrive differently. Rather than assume that people with less material wealth are “poor” it makes much more sense to arrive with at least the possibility in mind that they are equally, or more wealthy in other domains, and that they have something to teach us. This creates the space for a conversation between equals.

A number of times we’ve had participants ask what we’re giving back to a site, it being clear that we have somehow “taken something away.” Such an attitude, again tells us more about the mindsets of participants than it does about the real needs of people at a site. It assumes that people “need” something that we have and they don’t. While this may be true at some level, it’s an assumption and a judgement which should be questioned. Sometimes the greatest gift we can give to a community is to

enable them to be teachers to us for once, and to not see them as needy.

It is generally good practice to follow-up with sites with some form of a thank you. This could range from a simple thank you note to copies of any reports that come from the learning journey.

Further reading:

*Helping, in the Development Dictionary*, Ed. Wolfgang Sachs; *Process Consultation Revisited* by Edgar Schein

“We have learned to see the world from the outside, as it were; objectively, so-called. We have learned to act on the world (and on others) as if it were entirely separate from ourselves; we have learned to manipulate, to esteem control and predictability. We have learned to define boundaries, and always put ourselves on the other side of the line.”

– Allan Kaplan

# Notes from the field

The following notes were made by Alison Sander who participated in the first Sustainable Food Lab Learning Journey to Brazil in August 2004. The learning journey was facilitated by Adam Kahane with Alison providing support. The logistics of the learning journey were managed by Margaret Sweitzer-Hamilton and Tacito Nobre. The learning journey made use of the “illustrative process” outlined above. These notes can be considered as a commentary on the process and how it all turned out in practice. As you read, notice in particular the progression in terms of the sensing capacities and the gradual opening of mind, heart, and will, as well as the descriptions of the facilitator’s role.

## 1) Day one Sunday. 3 hour orientation

- a) Included check ins around the question “What are you thinking and feeling right now as we start this journey.” Then Tacito and Cindy offered a review of the plan for the week and then equal time (almost one hour) was given as an introduction to “seeing and sensing.” In this process Adam also reminded us of where we are in the U-Process, of the questions that were asked in Bergen, and of the role that learning journeys play in our broader process as the point where we are trying to deepen co-sensing to looking at parts together to see the whole in order to select possible points of intervention. All participants were introduced: the translator, Margaret, Cindy, Tacito, and their role explained. Background readings were given out. Also important to have participants fill out one page forms with passports, flight home info, health needs etc.
- b) Adam’s Sunday orientation included handing out yellow and blue cards explaining the methodology we would use to prepare ourselves before each visit, to affect our framework on a visit, and

to debrief for 60 min after a visit. Adam told us that this process “may seem a bit formal but is designed to help us get as much as we can out of an elaborate process.” He explained that our objective is to “see together-not only see what is in our heads.” He offered the metaphor of the person who thinks he has a headlight on his head to light the road but really has a slide projector and what he thinks he is seeing is what he is projecting out.

- c) To reinforce this point Adam brought a DVD about seeing. (“Surprising Studies of Visual Awareness.” Available from VisCog Productions. [www.viscog.com](http://www.viscog.com)) He described the big challenge of the week as “really seeing what we are seeing...and the biggest risk that we are only seeing what we expect to see or see what we think we know.” Tacito introduced these same principles through the use of two sponges and a clear and brown soda. The point of this exercise is that if you don’t empty yourself out, who you are will affect what you see.
- d) Adam also introduced the 4 ways of talking and listening and said our goal for the beginning of the week was to move from download to debate—to inspect our thoughts and views and be aware of assumptions and beliefs that we have. The goal he gave everyone for the first few days was trying to see our own seeing, paying attention and noticing our own reactions.
- e) Very importantly Adam put the U diagram on the wall and in each person’s hands and explained where we were in Bergen, where we are now, and how the learning journeys fit in to the process. Tacito reinforced that the LJs were created by taking the questions for the LJs that people had requested in Bergen, ideas from lab team members particularly

Brazilians and then dividing with Cindy into three trips.

## 2) Day Two Monday

- a) Briefing meeting: Adam introduced us to an approach for quieting the mind where participants close their eyes, and then the facilitator says to open your eyes half way and look sharply down for 30 seconds, then close the eyes, then open your eyes a quarter of the way and look sharply down for 30 seconds, then close the eyes and meditate for 10 minutes paying attention to breathing and watching the thoughts that arise. Adam also included some teaching on brain wave frequencies (beta, alpha, theta and delta) asking each person when they got their most interesting breakthrough or creative insights and talking about how these techniques for quieting the mind can move us to deeper patterns. Adam noticed that the brainwave pattern for the group was to focus on a problem but often insights come when you retreat from the problem. He said that on the LJ insight could come during the journey or it may come when we step back from it. He talked about the real challenge for the week of “sensing the whole of the global food system through a particular study of the parts” and talked about the Detroit auto executives who went to Japan in the 1970s and thought they had been shown a fake factory because they saw “no parts lying around.”
- b) Adam took time for us to take notes after the visit and started the debrief by asking us to each share what was the most “surprising thing we heard.” Adam reinforced the methodology by reading the questions and steps from the cards that were handed out Sunday.
- c) We had one visit the first day so it was easier to take the time to really share

what we heard and to practice the “debrief.” Adam remarked how from a simple meeting/presentation people had taken away very different messages.

## 3) Day Three Tuesday

- a) Briefing started with a check in on “seeing where we are and what has come up from the experience of yesterday.” We repeated the exercise from Monday to quiet the mind, then took 5 min to journal thoughts about where we are, and then discussion of those thoughts. We had a check in not only on what we saw and were experiencing but Adam also asked each person to review yesterday’s process and share what worked well and what could work better. He observed that each of us including himself heard things that we might have already been interested in or thought before we came to Brazil and urged us to “really see something that isn’t already in our heads.”

## 4) Day Four Wednesday

- a) Adam observed that we were half way through the journey (hard to believe since most of us felt we had just started). He said now is the time to go deeper to the next level on two skills: practice being present and listening more deeply. In the period of silence he introduced the concept of being completely here now, noticing not only what is around you but the quality of what is happening in the energy of the group. A theme for the day was to be aware of what happens in the field around us. He asked for “morning thoughts—what thoughts or questions are coming up for you this morning?” Adam urged us to see also those thoughts at the periphery of our consciousness and to listen in a particular way. He pointed out how the energy in the room thuds when someone downloads and asked us to move beyond the move from download

to debate but to try to move to “redirecting.” He gave an example of what this meant using one of the lab team members who had shared from her heart the day before and pointed out how much we all listened “from inside instead of objectively listening from outside and observing.” Adam pointed out “when you listen and talk from the heart, opportunities open up.” He urged us to use our hearts as an organ of listening. Even when one person speaks from the heart it opens up a new energy field. Then Adam asked us to debrief the process asking “what went well yesterday, what did not.”

b) It helped that our day was spent in a very heart filled place where people clearly cared about the work they were doing and the land they worked on. We spent the morning at a settlement and then the afternoon listening to government representatives. We had one of our best debriefs where you could sense people in the group really listening and the quality of comments shifting at the end of the day Wednesday. We found a great quiet space to debrief and had a full 90 minutes. Adam started the second debrief at the end of the day giving time for people to journal in quiet and then asked “what did you notice—what struck you?” Adam read some of the questions that had been added on the new card we were given Wednesday morning which included “What was the essence of the whole of what I saw?” “What did you learn about the choices people are making and why?” “What impact does our work have on the people we visited if any?” “What are we seeing of the whole and how are we part of it.”

c) Wednesday was a deepening of the LJ for the whole group. We talked about the fact that the host groups were looking to our Lab for help and answers and that

our Lab is part of the system. Adam urged us to really listen to each other and not to download or to prepare our comments while others are speaking. People shared more about their struggles to reconcile what they were seeing, the parts that struck them, and less about observations we would have had before the trip. We talked about our confusion as a group about the concept of mainstreaming and how this fits in and what this means. How to create large scale food production systems while people were working to eek out sustainable livelihoods from inhospitable lands. Many participants talked about the desire “to do more” and what that meant. People shared from their heart and made personal revelations to the group.

d) Wednesday night by pre-design we had a great cultural bonding evening with dancing, live music, and those incredible Brazilian drinks. Dancing clearly is part of the solution and all should be encouraged to learn a Brazilian dance or two.

## 5) Day Five Thursday

a) In the preparation meeting Adam pointed out that our discussion had been heartfelt yesterday as we were in a settlement but urged us to have the same open heart as we looked at more corporate settings. We started out with a period of quiet around the theme of “leaving the known and moving deeper into the unknown.” Then Adam asked participants “what is coming up for you this morning” and began the discussion by sharing on a personal level that in yesterday’s debrief he felt himself “being drawn across a bridge of being involved leaving safe protected space of studying a problem.” He added that “a key to this work is connecting through the heart.” He pointed out we

are moving from “seeing out there to sensing in here.” He pointed out that we had to learn to see the role we play in the system showing that the correct version of the 60s expression should be “if you are not part of the problem you can’t be part of the solution.”

- b) In addition to preparation, and debrief we had a special end of day 120 min synthesis of the week. The agenda for this was as follows: Debrief the two visits of the day, construct synthesis of whole LJ, agree procedure for assembling report, review LJ process (what worked and what didn’t). The last agenda item was deferred to Friday. We started with 10 min of silence and looking at our notes. For debriefing the visits Adam asked “What was the essence of what we saw?” In our debrief of the two visits, people expressed strong feelings and value judgements. Adam picked up on this and asked us to “notice the strong feelings being attached to our observations. He said we are starting to see pieces of the puzzle and strengths and weaknesses but we should avoid focusing on “whether we like it or not.” “The point is to ask not whether what we see is perfect but is there a seed here—is there something from which a vision could grow?” The second debrief began with the question “what did we see about the whole in this afternoon?”
- c) Then the exercise for “constructing the synthesis for the whole LJ” began with the instruction that we were going to “try to collectively build on a sheet of paper a picture of the whole system.” Each person got 15 yellow hexagons, a marker, and had their polaroids. The instructions were “write key aspects of the DNA of the whole food system that you saw this week.” Adam gave two examples: “narrowly focused entrepreneurs in frontier areas” and

“visionary mavericks.” We took 20 minutes to reflect on this, reviewing our notes from the week. Then we put 5 sheets of blank paper on the wall and built a semi-circle of chairs. We took turns going around, each placing a hexagon or picture on a hexagon on the wall—similarly phrased ideas were placed near to each other. After all hexagons were placed on the wall as a group we tried to cluster and categorize them using blue hexagons to write descriptive cluster labels.

#### 6) Day Six Friday

- a) Our schedule did not allow for much debriefing time as we needed to fly from Recife to Sao Paulo, fit in two visits, and fly out of the Sao Paulo airport that evening, but this did not stop Adam from insisting on our last debrief which took place in an airport restaurant. I believe that Friday was the only morning that we did not have a period of preparation for the visits since our morning began at 4:00 am with a trip to the airport for a 6:15 am flight. Adam offered us meditation opportunities at the airport but the group, assuming he was jesting, headed off for coffee.
- b) Our last debrief consisted of asking each person for “One A-HA” from the morning visit and “One A-HA” from the second visit. Adam brought us back to the concept of “leverage points” which will be the big theme for November saying “we need to find out leverage points for the Sustainable Food Lab”. Then we switched to process and reviewed the week as a whole with “what went well that we want to be sure other LJs repeat” and “what could be improved that we learned and what other LJs to be spared.” Adam thanked each member of the LJ and we all agreed it had been an amazing week.

c) Finally at the airport Margaret made sure there was an accommodation for people who stayed, several people had dinner together, and we said our goodbyes. There is no question but that the LJ process brought us closer as a group, showed us how to listen to each other, gave us a methodology for starting to silence our minds, and moved us further down the slippery U.

“We have inhibitions to repress, hesitations to conquer, habits of introversion or bookishness to break, anxieties to sublimate. Our third rate stay-at-home consciousness seems safe and cozy compared to the dangers and discomforts of the Road with its eternal novelty, its constant demands on our attention. ‘Fear of freedom’ poisons our unconscious, despite our conscious desire for freedom in travel. The art we’re seeking seldom occurs as a natural talent. It must be cultivated, practiced, perfected. We must summon up the will for *intentional* travel.”

– Hakim Bey

## Tools for Co-Sensing

### Learning Journey Protocols

#### Learning Journey Visit Protocol I: “Seeing Our Seeing”

##### Before

- Agree visit leader and reporter.
- Spend ten 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 five assumptions or expectations you are carrying.
- What do you want to know about the site and the people? Write down five questions or areas of interest.

##### During

- Listen and observe carefully. Pay attention both to the visible and to the invisible.
- At some point, if possible, strike out on your own.
- Interview people you meet. Ask questions. Pay attention to their thinking. Also notice your own thinking: your reactions, judgements, projections, etc.
- Take at least three Polaroid photographs.

##### After

- 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.

##### 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?
- What was sustainable in what I saw? Why?
- What was unsustainable in what I saw? Why?



- What new questions and puzzles are coming up for me?
- After ten minutes, gather for a team debrief. The visit reporter must take careful notes.
- Each person passes around one of their photographs and shares their observations, thoughts, and reflections.
- After every person has shared, take five more minutes in silence to flesh out your notes.

### Learning Journey Visit Protocol II: “Sensing the Whole”

#### Before

- Agree visit leader and reporter.
- Spend ten 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?
- What do you want to know about the site and the people?

#### During

- Listen and observe carefully. Pay attention both to the visible and to the invisible. Listen to both the words and the music.
- At some point, if possible, strike out on your own.
- Pay attention to where you are coming from. Open up your heart to what is going on around you and inside you.
- Interview people you meet. Listen to where they are coming from. Listen from within them, without judgement, with empathy.
- Take at least three Polaroid photographs.

#### After

- Immediately find some space to write up your notes. Keep silent-delay sharing and chatting.
- Write down, in a stream of consciousness, your observations, feelings, and thoughts.

#### Consider:

- What stood out for me? What struck me most strongly?

- What surprised me?
- What for me was the essence of the whole of what I saw? What images, stories and metaphors capture that essence?
- What did I learn about choices people are making and why they are making them? What does sustainability mean to them?
- Putting myself in the shoes of the people I met, what advice would they have for our Lab Team?
- What options does this visit open up for the work of our Lab Team?
- What impact might our work have on the people I met?
- What new questions and puzzles are coming up for me?
- After ten minutes, gather for a team debrief. The visit reporter must take careful notes.
- Each person passes around one of their photographs and shares their observations, feelings, thoughts, and reflections. After every person has shared, take five more minutes in silence to flesh out your notes.

### Learning Journey Materials

Requirements will obviously vary considerably from learning journey to learning journey. Here’s an instructive list of what we took on one of the Sustainable Food Lab Learning Journeys, on which there were 14 participants.

- two packs of [the scented] flipchart markers
- one roll of narrow masking tape
- 100 small yellow and 100 small blue paper hexagons
- journals (one per participant)
- Polaroid cameras (one per participant)
- 200 pieces of Polaroid film (i.e. enough cartons of film to take 200 photos)
- the digital camera
- “spy game” DVD
- DVD about visual perception
- 20 thin black or blue overhead markers (to caption the Polaroid photos)
- blue tack (to affix the photos to flipcharts)
- 200 normal size Post-It notes (not 200 pads)
- business card-sized “observation prompts”

## Observation Prompts: Developing “System Sight”

The following observation prompts are adapted from material of the International Futures Forum ([www.internationalfuturesforum.com](http://www.internationalfuturesforum.com)) and can be used to stimulate participants’ capacity for observation and sensing:

- Pay attention to your projections and reactions
- Suspend judgement
- Listen, don’t interrogate
- Be hyper-aware of your inner filter
- Allow room for silence
- Silence is a dramatic answer
- Ask yourself questions
- Be curious
- Follow your senses
- Observe your thought flow
- Perception, not analysis
- Try other world views on for size
- Participation rather than detachment
- Expand your circle of empathy
- Context is everything
- Listen to how you’re listening
- Listen with your entire body
- How many cows are in the field?
- Pay attention to the periphery
- Practice active patience
- Be alert

## Voices from the Field Exercise

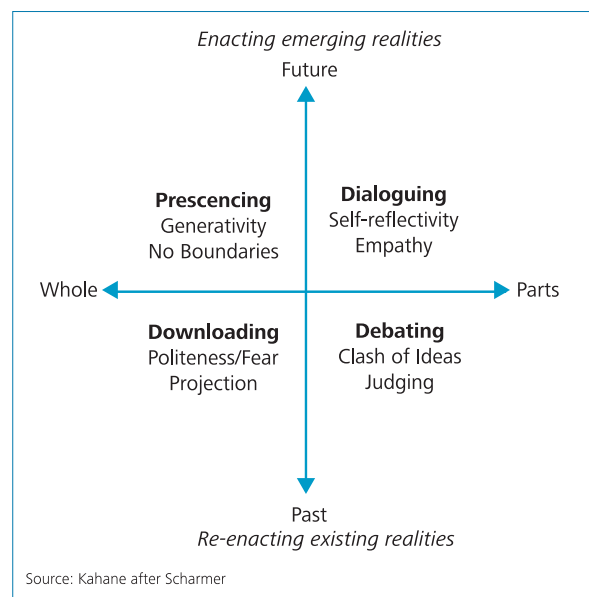
The purpose of this exercise is partly to practice redirecting and to bring the key different stakeholder perspectives and needs observed on a learning journey into the room. The voices of the stakeholders blend together in order to create a sense of the whole field.

Participants stand in a circle. The facilitator explains that we want to let the voices of different stakeholders sink in. Participants will, when they feel called to do so, embody a different stakeholder and speak their voice. Encourage participants when thinking of a specific person or composite character or role in the system, to try and feel what it would be like to be that person and really embody that as they

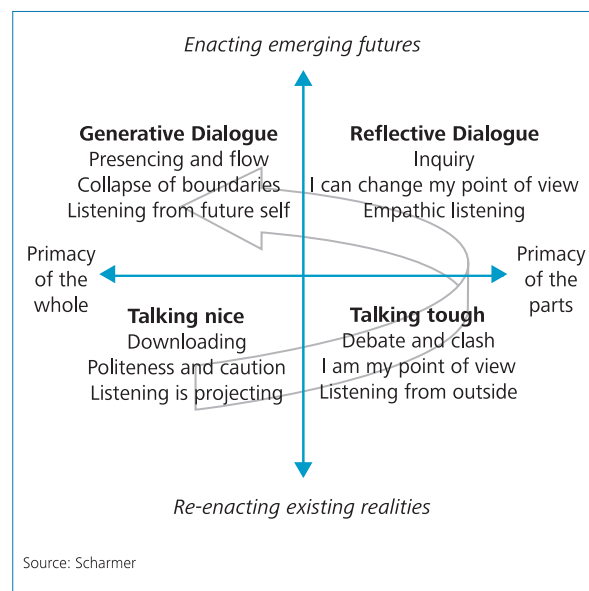
speak. The facilitator may start by modeling one, and then allow other participants to follow. It’s important that participants don’t feel they are misappropriating or caricaturing stakeholders but that the point is to bring the voices into the circle and blend them together.

The exercise can go on for as long as feels appropriate (eg. 10-15 minutes). It works well as a synthesis of a learning journey when many different perspectives have been encountered which have touched participants’ minds and hearts.

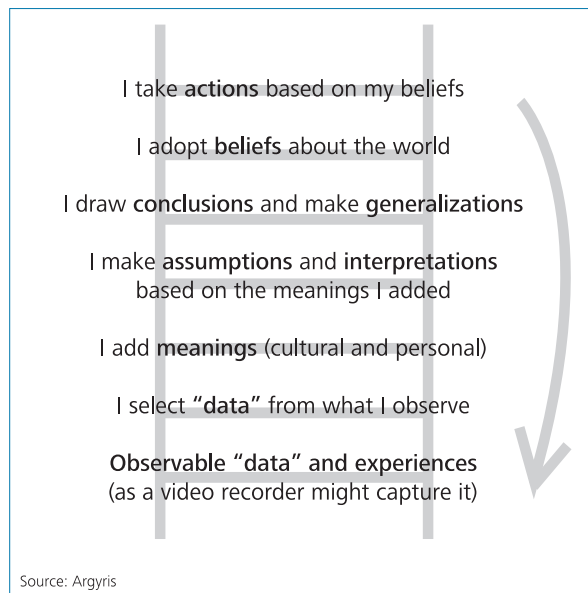
## Four Ways of Talking and Listening



## Four Field Structures of Conversation



## Ladder of Inference



## Other 'Observation & Seeing' Activities

The design group IDEO offers the following ideas around observation. These tips are created specifically for market research and product development, but the approaches can be relevant to our purposes as well:

**Shadowing** Observing people using products, shopping, going to hospitals, taking the train, using their cell phones.

**Behavioral Mapping** Photographing people within a space, such as a hospital waiting room, over two or three days.

**Consumer Journey** Keeping track of all the interactions a consumer has with a product, service, or space.

**Camera Journals** Asking consumers to keep visual diaries of their activities and impressions relating to a product.

**Extreme User Interviews** Talking to people who really know-or know nothing-about a product or service, and evaluating their experience using it.

**Storytelling** Prompting people to tell personal stories about their consumer experiences.

**Unfocus Groups** Interviewing a diverse group of people: To explore ideas about sandals, IDEO gathered an artist, a bodybuilder, a podiatrist, and a shoe fetishist.

Source: Business Week article, [www.ideo.com](http://www.ideo.com)

## Generative Dialogue Interview Training Process

These notes are intended as an illustrative process for trainers who intend to provide Lab Team or Secretariat members with some training in the Generative Dialogue Interview process.

6hrs 15 mins of workshop work + 1hr lunch = 7hrs 15 mins

### 1 Create an Interview Roster

Once you know the number of people in the training, create an interview roster, which includes the trainers. Ideally the roster will allow each participant to experience being an interviewer, a scribe, and an interviewee.

### 2 Check-in/ Introductions (15 mins)

### 3 Framing by facilitator (30 mins)

Introduction/ review of convening and sensing phases and capacities, and placing dialogue interviews in context alongside learning journeys as key tools of the left hand side of the U. Draw and explain the three-phase U as a context for the interview *and also, in miniature, as a model for the interview*. Explain that/why Generon's interviewing process is different from the interviewing methods participants may be familiar with.

Draw and explain the four ways of talking and listening.

Explain structure of the day-there will be three interviews during the day, each with a different preceding exercise/ framing that should enable us to go deeper. Participants will work in threes for each interview-one person interviewing, one being interviewed, the third taking notes, so that each participant will have a chance to be in each role. Provide suggestions for each role.

- Interviewer: guidelines on how to introduce and conduct the interview (from Fieldbook, referring to printout)
- Interviewee: be yourself
- Scribe: what to pay attention to

#### 4 Anna Deveare Smith video (30 mins)

Explain background to video. Show four clips of Smith's interviews with different characters. (AD Smith interviewed different characters after the riots in Los Angeles and then redirected to impersonate a large number of different stakeholders in this video called Twilight LA.) Ask group to discuss first in pairs and then in large group, what they think characterized the approach that she took in order to get people to open up like this. Record suggestions.

#### 5 Preparing for the first interview (15 mins)

Start by noting down a set of questions you are interested in covering in this interview, including questions that probe deep, systemic aspects of the issue. These will serve as a guide, but you should be aware that the conversation may go in a different direction. Introduce the concept of "reflective listening"-sometimes you don't need to ask a question, just repeating what the person just said, trying to sharpen it a bit or infer the feeling, may help to get them to say more about the topic or to go deeper into their personal story.

Remind participants of the distinction between advocacy and inquiry and that the stance of the interviewer should be 100% inquiry.

Invite participants to close their eyes to connect with their intention. From the Fieldbook, remind them: "Immediately before a dialogue, take time to enter into a state of mind conducive to your purpose. Visualize yourself, for example, as an instrument whose purpose is to be of service, bringing forth from the interaction the latent possibilities for growth and change. Your goal is to become deeply centered, relaxed, and open to embracing whatever emerges during the dialogue. If you have prior knowledge of the person, consciously acknowledge and set aside any mindsets you have formed. Remind yourself that your goal is to see as clearly as possible into the world of the other person, unclouded by preconceived notions you have about him or her."

#### 6 Interview #1 (one hour)

Participants work in threes (40 mins)

Share the experience with your partner-what worked/could be improved? (5 mins)

Reflections from interviewers and interviewees. (15 mins)

#### 7 Break (15 mins)

#### 8 Bodywork (15 mins)

Working with a partner, take turns moving and responding with your body. You could choose to use sitting poses, lying poses, standing poses. You are communicating. Doesn't need to be ballet, just responding to body language. After a little while you can start to let the movements flow with each other-not one at a time, and start to align them in a pattern.

Reflection-what did you experience?

#### 9 Interview #2 (one hour)

Participants interview a partner. (40 mins)

Share the interview with your partner-what worked/could be improved? (5 mins)

Try to close your eyes and imagine with compassion and empathy what it is like to be the person you just interviewed. What do you care about? What do you worry about? What is it like to be in this person's body? Notice if you become aware of judgments of your own-what is your stuff, and what is their stuff? (5 mins)

Reflections (10 mins)

#### 10 Break (15 mins)

#### 11 Meditation practice (15 mins)

Introduce meditation as a practice to do before each interview in order to be fully present to the interviewee.

#### 12 Interview #3 (one hour)

Participants interview a partner (40 mins)

Share the experience with your partner-what worked/could be improved? (5 mins)

Reflections from interviewers and interviewees (15 mins)

#### 13 Way forward (30 mins)

Facilitator speaks to leveraging dialogue results

Participants take 10-20 mins to journal learnings and if relevant, to draw up strategies for their own way forward with dialogue interviewing process in the project at hand.

#### 14 Check-out (15 mins)

What are you taking away from today?

“Time alone in silence in nature is one of the most reliable ways we know to become completely present-to the living generative field that connects all of humanity, to an expanded sense of self, and ultimately to what is emerging through us. As we remain completely present, in these moments, we discover a depth of wisdom far beyond that ordinarily available to us.”

– Joseph **Jaworski**



allow inner know



easy to emerge

## Phase III

# Co-Presencing: Retreating and Reflecting

“The state at the bottom of the U is presencing—seeing from source and becoming a vehicle for that source.”

If the Sensing Phase is a phase of “diverging” and the Realizing phase is a phase of “converging”, the Presencing Phase in the middle is a phase of “emerging”. This phase is very core to what makes the U-Process, the Change Lab and Generon’s work unique, and what makes the outcomes of these processes different from what is already happening in the field.

In the Sensing Phase, the Lab Team members uncovered the current reality of the system as a whole. They were perhaps overwhelmed with information, experiences, and impressions. In the Presencing Phase they both retreat and advance, uncovering their deeper inner knowing about what is going on in the system, their role in it, and what they, individually and collectively, are being called upon to do. The acquired knowledge of the previous phase emerges in an inner clarity and commitment, which can then be applied in the projects and activities of the third phase.

In the Change Lab, the process of the Presencing Phase is usually built into an “Innovation Retreat”. The Innovation Retreat overlaps with the other phases, rounding off the Sensing Phase and initiating the Realizing Phase. The retreat includes a “Solo”, where participants spend time on their own in nature. The Solo is explicitly designed to allow Lab Team members to connect to what is going on in the system as a whole, to uncover their own vocation or calling in that system, and to access creative potential.

This phase of the process, which corresponds to the bottom of the U, is the “eye of the needle” in the U-Process. The metaphor of the “eye of the needle” comes from a legend that there was a gate in Jerusalem called the “eye of the needle” through which a camel couldn’t pass unless it first took off all its baggage and stooped down. The core capacities of this phase are *letting go* and *letting come*. Letting go of your own baggage, the needs of your ego, your attachments and expectations about what needs to happen. Letting come that deeper knowing and sense of purpose that surfaces when you experience your own connection to the whole.

In the book *Presence*, the authors explain that, “This experience has been termed presencing because it is about becoming totally present-to the larger space or field around us, to an expanded sense of self, and, ultimately, to what is emerging through us. Once we have achieved that stance, as individuals and as a team, moving up the U involves acting in service of bringing that emerging reality into being.”

Becoming totally present will not come naturally to most Lab Team members. It is common for participants, regardless of their background, to operate under conditions of high responsibility, time pressure, and complexity. These conditions reinforce a sense of separation and alienation from ourselves, each other, and nature that we have been socialized to accept. In this alienated state, it becomes increasingly difficult to access one’s highest form of creativity.

Most of us are trained to objectify problems and systems as something separate and distinct from ourselves. In doing so, we forget that we are very much an active part of the systems we’re trying



to change. It's impossible to grasp the system as a whole without engaging in consideration of our own relationships to it, and opening ourselves up to the question of what this whole is demanding of us.

Such engagement is normally difficult to practice within our day to day lives because we live in mediated environments. These are environments in which much of our stimuli are mediated through man-made features, from architecture to television. These environments evoke responses from us that overwhelm our inner landscape and dilute our inner knowing.

The Solo, along with other presencing practices, is designed to collapse the self-imposed boundaries of separation and free participants from the many distracting influences of their everyday environment. Participants can then gain access individually and collectively to primary knowing.

The biggest challenge for participants here is to "let go" and "let come" without intensely "looking for". Francisco Varela notes that, "Presencing can not be done if there is a little me saying, 'oh, I'm presencing'" (see <http://www.dialogonleadership.org/interviewVarela.html>). The pitfall or risk here is that participants are so eagerly expecting something to come that they fail to go into a complete openness and listen to what is really emerging. This means that it is important for the facilitator and Lab Secretariat in this phase not to sensationalize it and yet at the same time to help participants to understand the significance of this experience and the practice. It is a fine balance.

The intention of the Presencing Phase is to generate a deep clarity and commitment among the Lab Team members as to what they must do to create a new reality.

"A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security."

— Albert Einstein

# Co-Presencing: The Innovation Retreat

## Introduction and Purpose

The Innovation Retreat is the pivotal event in the Presencing Phase. It serves three purposes:

- Completing the Co-Sensing Phase
- Enabling the experience of individual and collective “presencing”
- Launching the Co-Realizing Phase

These purposes can be accomplished in different ways. However, an Innovation Retreat typically consists of the following principal elements:

- Debrief of the learning journeys
- Initial brainstorming of possible innovations to transform the system
- Presencing practices
- Solo in the wilderness
- Selection of a handful of Innovation Initiatives to carry into the Co-Realizing Phase

The Innovation Retreat is consciously designed to bridge the three phases because it is important for the knowledge and experiences of the Sensing Phase to be fresh in participants’ minds as they enter the Solo, and for there to be time and space to share ideas and crystallize insights (Realizing) upon returning from the Solo. The Solo is most effective when held within the context of an Innovation Retreat.

The ideal length of the Innovation Retreat is seven days, of which three nights will be spent on Solo. This means nine days for the staff—one day of preparation beforehand and one day to debrief after the workshop.

## About the Solo

The Solo is based on the principle that nature

works to give space to our deepest and quietest voices, which are in turn connected intimately to the whole. Experiences in and with nature can foster a sense of deep knowing that leads us to be clear in our purpose and move naturally toward innovation and social change. Such a retreat is the most reliable way we have discovered for opening up the hearts and minds of the Lab Team, enabling them to tap into their innate ability to sense a future that they can help emerge.

During the Solo, participants spend three nights on their own in as untouched a natural environment as possible, and away from noise from other people or the modern world. We generally recommend fasting as this has been a traditional practice which enables one to go deeper and aids the process of emptying oneself and opening up. Fasting is always optional especially in cases when people have health issues.

At Generon, the staff often participate in the Solo as well in order to be in the same space as the participants and to fully share in the debrief. However, because it is important for staff to be “on call” to participants, they do not fast, and perhaps also do not meditate as much as they would if they were on the Solo for themselves. There needs to be a balance between getting into the same space as participants and being there for their safety.

Among all the practices in this book, the Solo can provide the most transformational individual and collective experience. It can also prove the most challenging because of the subtlety of the experience and the need to set the field for participants before they embark on the Solo. The Solo can generate a deep clarity and commitment among participants as to what they must do to create a new reality.<sup>1</sup>

It should be made clear that participants are not

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Generon also conducts Personal Development Retreats, which bring together a group of individuals as part of a free-standing event. Typically these individuals have something in common but they are not a part of a specific project team. For example we have conducted Retreats for members of the Global Philanthropists Circle.

being asked to use the Solo to think in a focused way about their work, or the subject of the Lab, coming up with the answers to all their questions about the complex problem. Rather the purpose of the Solo is to open themselves up to their deepest sense of who they are and the nature of their “work” in the world. As Brian Arthur explains, the purpose of the Solo is to “reveal your authentic self,” using the rituals of fasting and being alone to “strip away” one’s inauthentic self. This enables participants to get greater clarity on the question “What is my Work?”

The purpose of the Solo can be framed in either spiritual or secular terms. It is important to fine tune the framing to suit the audience. Rituals in particular may disturb participants who are either not used to spiritual practices or who have a specific religious faith and a set of rituals of their own that they practice. In fact, it may be helpful to explicitly offer multiple framings. From a spiritual point of view the Solo can be seen as connecting to Source, becoming aware of the purpose for which one was put on Earth, and opening up oneself as a vehicle to realize that purpose. In secular terms, it can be seen as slowing down and discovering one’s most deeply held vision and passion. Either way, the idea is to retreat and then return to the collective in a different frame of mind, a more purposeful, but also open and intuitive state. Solving the particular challenges of the Lab by identifying specific innovations will come later.

Because the Solo is often new to participants, there is a tendency to have high expectations, and to see it as something almost mystical—as the moment where the presencing experience must happen. The fact that we in this fieldbook are using a lot of pages to describe the Solo may give the same impression. This is however primarily because of the importance of holding the space right, the logistical complexity, the risks involved, and the unfamiliarity of this experience. While we do find Solos to be extremely effective, it is not accurate to think that the Solo is the only time where presencing happens. As mentioned earlier such high

expectations for something to happen can actually have quite a limiting impact on the experience.

While the focus of the Solo is in many ways on one’s experience as an individual, it is also very much a collective experience. Individuals come back to the group with a different relationship to it both because of their individual experience but also because of the collective ritual they have experienced together. Paradoxically, the Solo is among the most powerful of team-building experiences.

## **Laying the Groundwork**

### **Initial Planning**

The price of the Innovation Retreat is not only time but an enormous degree of logistical complexity. It is critical to begin planning for the Solos early and to maintain strong vigilance of detail up to and through the entire Retreat. The following are some areas that we have learned to pay attention to as part of Innovation Retreat planning.

- 1 Select a suitable site. The quality of place is foundational in this work. Selecting the location of a suitable site and planning for participants’ comfort and safety are also essential for this practice. If at all possible, hold the retreat in an area of great natural beauty, ideally remote from human development of any kind. Each Solo site must be out of sight and sound from the other. An indigenous, sacred space is ideal, in which case you will need to remind participants to treat the place with the requisite care, reverence, and deep respect. Decide on the venue six months in advance.
- 2 Do reconnaissance early. If you’ve never used the site before then it’s worth doing a reconnaissance five months before the Solo and then again one month before. The rule of thumb for how long the reconnaissance takes is one day per ten sites. This means that if you have forty participants at least four days of

actual reconnaissance time is needed. This does not include time for any other logistics work. Depending on the size of the group it may need to be split along several different paths originating at Home Base. For example, a group of 20 might be split along four paths of five participants each.

### 3 Provide for logistics and certified guides.

Participants' safety and comfort are paramount. Attend carefully to the assembly of the requisite tents and equipment. We recommend engaging a professional outfitting company for this purpose as we must use guides who are "local" and familiar with the land. Participants usually select clothing for the retreat themselves, but you should provide lists describing the specific clothing needed to accommodate the climate and conditions at the site (available at the end of this section). Use only staff members who are highly experienced, trained, and certified in wilderness events. Ideally, find staff who have personal values and qualities that are consistent with the spirit of the retreat. And make sure that detailed plans are in place to accommodate any injuries or emergencies. *(See the following section for more on these logistics.)*

### 4 Invite "remarkable persons." We recommend retaining for the retreat one or two individuals to introduce the Solo whose professional accomplishment and personal development lends credibility to the experience and helps participants mentally prepare. Generon has called on Brian Arthur in this way on several occasions.

### 5 Provide instructions and pre-reading. Give participants the requisite instructions to prepare them for the retreat. These will include an explanation of the required personal clothing and personal equipment, full explanation of the terrain and climate to be encountered, and reading about the history of the site. Also included should be a recommendation and encouragement to decrease or eliminate the use of alcohol and

nicotine and to begin eating lighter two weeks prior to the Retreat especially if one decides to participate in the fasting. Instruction on Qigong and any other contemplative practices to be used should also be provided (an excellent reference on Qigong is Ken Cohen's *The Way of Qigong: The Art and Science of Chinese Energy Healing*), as well as the *Theory U Book of Readings*, a book of readings (poems, stories, practices, etc.) that get people to be thinking in a more contemplative way before coming to the Retreat.

## Logistical Preparation

Logistics is a major element of preparing for the Retreat. Generon typically takes responsibility for shipping a large amount of material to the venue and setting Solo sites with tents up in advance of the retreat. (See "Materials" at the end of the Presencing section for the full list).

- 1 Assemble the exact list of materials to be shipped. This is a function of the number of participants and to a lesser degree the climate in which the Retreat will be held.
- 2 Check list of required materials against your inventory (when working with Generon, contact Susan Taylor for this list).
- 3 Order any materials required.
- 4 Pack materials into shipping trunks. Ensure material is shipped out at least 10 days before the Retreat is scheduled to start. Ensure that each trunk is clearly labeled with a number and a master inventory list goes with the materials.
- 5 Ask staff at venue to check the number of boxes which arrive with the master inventory list.
- 6 Arrange to have the tents set up by the time of the pre-retreat staff meeting, so that the final setup can be checked. Again, we recommend a professional outfitter for this purpose. Staff should not handle this unless they are very familiar with the local land.

## Pre-Retreat Preparation of Participants

An Orientation Pack including health forms and liability waivers should be sent out to participants at four to six weeks in advance of the Innovation Retreat. The “first flight out” information must be put into the logistics orientation package being sent to all participants with the requirement that participants do not leave prior to that time. Research should be done in advance to determine the start and end times of a Retreat in order that the Retreat schedule match with the flight schedules. Due to the fact that Retreats are done in remote areas and transportation is logistically challenging, we must be very clear about how long it takes to get from an airport to the venue and the flight availability must be mentioned so that participants clearly understand that they cannot leave early and have information about when they can leave. With the Orientation Pack should also be the “Theory U Book of Readings.”

Once participants have received the Orientation Pack they should be contacted by telephone. These calls have several purposes:

- To connect to the participants and build/enrich your relationships with them
- To help them prepare, both in terms of understanding what they have to do in advance of the Solo and in terms of starting to get them thinking about the purpose of the Solo
- To learn about their expectations and any concerns they might have, to allow for adjustment of the design and perhaps some of the Solo logistics

We suggest that you cover the following four topics in each of your interviews:

- Participant hopes for the Innovation Retreat
- Their concerns and fears about the Innovation Retreat
- Any questions they have about the Solo or specifically about preparing for it
- Their experience with camping and specifically with being alone in the wilderness. Try both to find out if there are any issues (medical,

psychological) that the staff should be prepared for, and also to reassure them as to the preparations being made for their comfort and safety.

It is wise to double-check that participants have done the following, as asked by the Orientation Pack:

- *Made* travel arrangements and sent their itinerary to the appropriate person
- *Obtained* the clothing and equipment needed for the Solo Retreat
- *Completed* the Health Questionnaire, waiver and Agreement-note that these must be returned to Generon in advance of the retreat

## Pre-Retreat Staff Meeting

Staff should spend one day on-site preparing for the Retreat. This will include checking in as a group, clarifying any questions around roles and expectations, reviewing the specific modules of the agenda, getting oriented to the physical space and making sure that all the plans for preparation have been enacted at the venue.

“Each man had only one genuine vocation-to find the way to himself... His task was to discover his own destiny-not an arbitrary one-and live it out wholly and resolutely within himself. Everything else was only a would-be existence, an attempt at evasion, a flight back to the ideals of the masses, conformity and fear of one’s own inwardness.”

– Herman Hesse

## Innovation Retreat Process

### Framing the Retreat

It will be helpful to remind Lab Team members where they are in the U-Process. A quick review of the three phases of the U and their purposes is likely to be helpful. For example, one might say something like the following:

- “Co-sensing” involves learning about the current reality of the system. We’ve been going through that process collectively, aiming to develop a shared understanding of the system from different perspectives.
- “Co-Presencing” is about going deeper than sensing, uncovering not only what’s going on in the system but what’s our part in it, and what we have to do. The Innovation Retreat is the key event in this Phase, and the Solo is the core method to enable presencing.
- “Co-Realizing” is about working together to transform the system. The image here is design, building something new. We will identify 4-6 key innovation areas in this Retreat and begin a cycle of rapid prototyping to test and refine them.

It can also be helpful to display the various specific activities of the Lab (Foundation Workshop, Learning Journeys, etc.) along a U diagram as a visual aid to this review.

An early check-in round where each participant’s voice is heard is a standard feature of our retreats, and the Innovation Retreat is no exception. This enables team members to connect with being present at the Retreat and to reconnect with one another. It also provides useful data to the faculty on the level of engagement of Lab Team members and their readiness for the next steps. The facilitator should highlight at this point that the principle of confidentiality is particularly important at this retreat as is the principle that all the initiatives that come out of the process will be owned collectively by the Lab Team.

Participants should be made aware that as the Lab Team moves through the U-Process, the level of ambiguity goes down, and the level of commitment goes up. That is, the outcomes of the Lab become increasingly clear as the Team goes forward. Beginning especially with the Innovation Retreat, though, things will happen only through the commitment and will of members of the Lab Team. Moving into the Co-Realizing phase will require more time, more partners, and more money.

### Introducing Presencing Practices

Although the Solo is the most conspicuous method for Presencing, we find it useful to introduce some additional “Presencing Practices”-QiGong and meditation. These practices can be framed as resources to be drawn upon during the Solo. For many participants the idea of three days and nights of unstructured time with “nothing to do” creates anxiety. Having a set of tools with which to structure some of that time can alleviate the anxiety. In addition, these practices can be recommended as tools which, if performed regularly, can enhance Lab Team members’ physical and mental well being, as well as foster a state of mind that will enhance their work together.

In teaching QiGong and meditation, we emphasize in the pre-reading and in the seminars that these exercises can help participants quiet themselves and align their energies. But most importantly, such exercises help people develop a high degree of coherence between the cognitive and creative sides of their brains. These disciplines also help people tap into the unified learning field set among themselves during the final stages of the retreat (see Presence, Chapter 11, pp. 165-166).

Invite a member of the staff or a participant who is an advanced practitioner of these disciplines to conduct “sunrise seminars” for team members every morning for an hour or so. It is probably best to wait until the second day of the retreat to

begin the practices, as participants may have arrived very late the night before the first day, and also to allow time during the first day to offer a rationale for the practices and make sure they are understood as part of the required agenda.

Another related practice that is useful in maintaining a tone of depth and reflection in the overall Retreat is to invite individual participants to select a reading from the "Theory U Book of Readings." This is a book of readings that get people to be thinking in a more contemplative way before coming to the Retreat. It contains quotes, poems, stories, practices, etc. that really prepare participants and "get them into the space" for the Retreat and the Solo. This Reader is only used for Retreats and not for other meetings or workshops. It must go out with the pre-reading and logistics package a few weeks prior to the date of the Retreat.

It is also a good idea to suggest for people to go on nature walks during the first couple of days of the Innovation Retreat to familiarise themselves with the idea of being 'out there' on their own during the Solo.

### **Debrief of the Learning Journeys**

If this is the first time the Lab Team members are together after having been divided in sub-teams on learning journeys, it is important to bring those individual experiences alive at the Retreat and share them across the learning journey teams. It is also important to reconstitute a sense of the Lab Team as a whole. The various learning journey teams will have had their own particular learning experiences. And significant bonding is likely to have occurred among members-or subgroups-of individual teams. To fully leverage the capacity of the collective to know the system and make wise choices about how to intervene to transform it, Lab Team members must share their knowledge and experience a sense of personal connection with the larger team.

These purposes can be accomplished through an

exercise like the following, which is a good way to spend the better part of the morning of the first day of the Retreat. Divide the Lab Team into small groups with a representative from each LJ group (usually 3-4 people). Instruct each group member to:

- 1) Tell a story of something that really struck you on your learning journey
- 2) Share insights you have gained into the workings of the system
- 3) Discuss with others the implications of your learning for the work of the Lab

Allow 45 minutes to an hour for this discussion. Then repeat the experience with small groups of different membership. The exercise as a whole will take from 1.5 to 2.5 hours.

### **Initial Brainstorming of Possible Innovations**

The idea here is to take a first pass at identifying ideas that could form the seeds of a transformed system. However, it is important to frame the activity as brainstorming only, not decision. The activity serves two purposes. For those participants who are eager to begin doing something tangible, the brainstorming helps scratch that itch. The second purpose is to further deepen Lab Team members' connection with their sense of the current reality of the system as a platform for the Retreat, which will allow reflection on the system in a personal way. A rough analogy would be doing a very preliminary outline of a paper, then taking a break to let things simmer before giving the paper more form.

The brainstorming and reports can serve as the principal activity for the afternoon of the first day of the Retreat. Discussion of the emerging themes can be the central ingredient of the morning and early afternoon of the second day.

It can be helpful to frame the brainstorming with reference to a visual image that displays three "Process Phases": Diverging, emerging, converging. Brainstorming will continue the "diverging" stage. The Retreat will enable

“emerging,” after which the Team will begin “converging” on a set of Innovation Initiatives. A reminder of the ground rules of brainstorming—no criticism—can be helpful.

There are many ways to engage a group in brainstorming but an example may be helpful. At the Sustainable Food Lab retreat, we divided the Team into groups of five and posed two questions:

- What are your current ideas about problem areas/ innovation possibilities that the Food Lab could uniquely address?
- Why?

We asked each group to come back with their answers on a flip chart, allowing about an hour for the discussion. We then invited reports from each group, asking the participants to listen for “points of leverage” as they thought about the ideas. The Lab faculty then took the group reports and organized them into a set of themes.

In this example the faculty identified a dozen themes, displayed on a conference room wall by using paper hexagons of two colors. Twelve blue hexagons portrayed themes. Around each of them was a cluster of yellow hexagons, on each of which was written a specific idea from the brainstorming. The faculty then organized two rounds of discussions (about an hour each), in which participants chose from among six of the themes for each round. Each group was asked to identify and put on a flip chart 3-5 “possible innovation projects of highest leverage.” The reports were presented and discussed after lunch.

### Orientation to the Solo During the Retreat

**Rationale.** The rationale for the Solo needs to be communicated clearly—to create a deeper space, in which insight and commitment can emerge.

The framing questions that we typically use for the Solo are “Who is my Self?” and “What is my Work?” These questions are drawn from the

work of Michael Ray, who asks these questions of students at Stanford when teaching creativity. It can be helpful to discourage participants from trying to consciously resolve any substantive problems, like the choice of innovation initiatives, or even consciously trying to answer the framing questions. Anxiety or an expectation of ‘getting something’ will detract from the presencing experience. Rather, encourage them to just go into the experience with the intention in mind to let go and let come, on the assumption that if you let yourself relax and become aware of your surroundings, stillness will emerge, along with clarity and energy.

It is helpful to have a “remarkable person” at the retreat to help provide the rationale for the Solo. Ideal is someone who combines professional accomplishment with personal development, including extensive experience with Solo retreats. Generon often uses Brian Arthur for this purpose. He has done world class work in creativity, economics, science and business, but is also someone who has dedicated himself to personal development, using solo retreats among other means. Moreover, the U-Process grew partly out of an interview with him, so he has been very integral to the thinking behind the Change Labs. (See <http://www.dialogonleadership.org/interviewArthur.html> for more details.)

When using a “remarkable person” to introduce the retreat, it is worth creating time for an in-depth conversation with them (which we often lead in the form of an interview conducted by a staff member in front of the group). When an Innovation Retreat features Brian, he elaborates on his personal experience with, and studies of, the process of invention and creation, drawing on the “two lives” he has led. One life was “an adventure in science.” At age 37 Brian was an agricultural economist with an endowed chair at Stanford’s Food Research Institute. As part of his theoretical, scientific life, he headed a team at the Santa Fe Institute that included three Nobel prize winners in studies in complexity that changed science and economics (described, for example in the book *Complexity: The Emerging*



*Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos*, by Michael Waldrop). A second thread began when he met a Taoist master. As part of this thread Brian met Jonathan Milton, who leads wilderness retreats as a form of personal development. Brian went on a week-long solo retreat and has since had about 15 such experiences.

In his original interview with Joseph Jaworski and Otto Scharmer, Brian had described the creative process as consisting of three stages: 1) Observe, observe, observe; 2) Retreat to a place from which inner knowing can emerge; 3) Act swiftly with a natural flow. These three phases are essentially the three phases of the U. Brian positions the Solo Retreat as corresponding to the second of his three stages of creativity (and corresponding to the “Presencing” part of the U-Process)-an opportunity to retreat and reflect. It is a space of stillness that aims to create a deeper personal space, into which something new can emerge.

Behavioral guidelines. The behavioral guidelines for the Solo include:

- Silence
- Leave behind all means of distraction (watches, reading materials, cameras, radios, even writing journals)
- Fasting (give the recipe for a fasting drink)
- Don't make any noises that might disturb others
- No fires
- Stay within a 108 pace diameter circle

Sometimes participants may not understand the reasoning behind these rules. It's important not to just present them as rules not to be broken, but to explain the reasoning behind the guidelines in conversation with participants, so that participants buy in to them.

In particular, any orientation to the Solo should include emphasis on the importance of silence. Of all the challenges presented by the wilderness retreat, we find that remaining silent for two or three days can be the most difficult. We ask

participants to refrain from talking or uttering a word from the time they depart the Home Base for the Solo sites until they return and are again one group and the breaking of the silence is officially announced. They are also asked to refrain from reading, or even writing (apart from making brief notes as reminders of insights). Consider providing preparatory readings reflecting observations by thought leaders on the power of silence.

It is extremely important to make sure that participants understand the importance of remaining silent as they return from their Solo sites and start encountering other participants until the point that the debrief begins at home base. Some participants find it so hard not to talk for three days that they immediately want to chat to others when they see a familiar face. But people may be in quite different states coming out of the Solo and one participant can inadvertently break the experience for someone else by breaking the silence. It is also important that the stories and insights get shared for the first time in the circle of all the participants to create the experience of wholeness.

We also recommend fasting. Brian reports that in his experience fasting enables one to go deeper faster. He finds that one will get energy from being in nature that one normally gets through food. However, it is optional - if participants have a health issue, we recommend that they eat normally.

Logistics. Of equal importance to the rationale for the Solo is calling participants' attention to logistics. It usually makes sense to reserve some time for an overview of logistics the afternoon or evening before the Solo, in connection with the discussion of the rationale, allowing time for any questions or concerns. On the morning of the Solo, a more detailed review of logistics will be necessary. Specific issues to review and discuss include:

- Review the site when you arrive; if there is a problem with the site, let the guide know then (for this, silence can be broken)

- Minimizing threats from animals, rodents, insects
- Keep food off the ground as far away from the tent as possible
- Don't eat or keep food in the tent
- Put tooth paste or other scented things in a box
- Hypothermia (explain and provide appropriate alternative preparations for keeping up electrolytes)
- How to use the bathroom when there is no bathroom
- Procedures for emergencies and location of guides at Home Base
- Bring everything out that you brought in

It is a good idea to go through and discuss-and where appropriate physically demonstrate-all the items which participants have been given to take with them, or which they will find at their sites. (See checklist at the end of the Presencing section.)

Support systems. Note that while participants are instructed to leave their two-way radios off except in cases of special need or emergency, all staff and guides should leave theirs on 24/7. While this will constitute an intrusion on their experience of silence, it is important as a means of supporting participants, as it can never be predicted which radios will receive signals from others. Having all staff leave their radios on increases the probability that at least one person will receive a request for help.

This is a good time to introduce the Solo guides, if they have not already been introduced. You may wish to invite them to share experiences and offer advice on specific things to be on the alert for. However, make sure that they are aligned with the spirit of the Retreat.

If it seems necessary, discuss the provision to opt out of the Solo and explain the alternatives. These may include having the Solo near the Home Base. Alternatively, participants could have the Solo in a nearby natural setting during the day and return to the Home Base every evening.

## The Morning of the Solo: At Home Base

Home Base is the site from which participants will walk to their Solo sites. In almost all instances, Home Base will be a trek or jeep ride from the venue at which participants will spend the first two days and the last two days of the Innovation Retreat. Ensure that you factor in travel time from the venue to Home Base. Once the group is assembled at Home Base they may at the discretion of the facilitator be taken through a ritual reinforcing the basic spirit of the retreat, which it is wise to offer as an explicit injunction to participants: "Give deepest appreciation to nature, and you will be amazed at what she will teach you." For example, Brian Arthur borrows a ritual from Native American traditions which is briefly described pp. 59-60 in the book Presence.

Participants should be given the following written instruction (if they have not been handed out before):

- QiGong instructions (see Tools Section)
- Fasting instructions (see Tools Section)
- Safety sheet

Participants should be reminded of how they will be led to their Solo site and how and when they will be picked up on the return. Participants who are farthest away from Home Base will be picked up first and will need to be told in advance that they should be packed very early in the morning. If the first participants to be picked up are not ready this could add significant time to the re-grouping.

An optional final group exercise immediately before departing would be the following: Ask the group to stand in a circle, after a moment in silence ask them to close their eyes and hold hands with the person standing next to them. Ask them to visualize the face of each person in the group-"in order to carry each other with you."

The group will be divided into sub-groups corresponding to the number of paths. Each

group will walk slowly and in silence to their Solo site with a staff person leading the group and a staff person closing up the rear. The staff person who mans home base during the solos will also guide the A-line which is the line closest to home base. This is a benefit to both the participants and to the on-site medic. It is imperative for the medic and the person manning home base to have knowledge about how to locate the people on the A-line so that they can go to them in times of need.

Local guides will need to be instructed of the walking pace at least twice, once during the reconnaissance and once just before the group leaves. Some guides may push back at this process, arguing that it's dangerous to walk without making a sound or for other reasons. Most guides will in all likelihood be trained in 'Outward Bound' or similar practices and not indigenous. It's important to explain the "why" of the process to guides and stick to it.

It will take at least three times as long to get participants to their Solo sites walking at this pace than it would at a normal pace. Be sure to factor in this time. Coming back, anticipate that two to three hours of time may be needed to re-assemble the group back at Home Base. If the group is spread along multiple paths then it will be necessary to have one guide as well as one Generon person per path.

### **Returning from the Solo**

Note that the return to Home Base will be in silence and at the same "tracking" pace that the group walked when going to their Solo sites. Each guide will have gone to the end of their path. The next-to-last person on the end of the path should be a Generon staff person. On the walk back, the guide will take the lead and the Generon staff person will take the rear. This is to ensure that none of the participants take a different route back to the camp. It is critical that the Generon staff person keeps track of the participants in front of them to ensure that they do not stray from the group. At worst this could

be dangerous, and at best it will add extra, unplanned-for time to the re-grouping process.

Some sub-groups might arrive early and find that they have an hour or two of waiting time before the entire group is assembled. Ensure that participants spend time on their own and remain silent. It is a good idea for staff to set up some sort of shade tarp for the debrief circle as the mid-day sun can be quite hot and potentially dangerous. The tarp must be set up before participants arrive back at Home Base.

### **Debriefing of Solo at Home Base**

- 1 The debrief should be done as a single group, not in sub-groups.
- 2 Once the entire group is re-assembled, signal to them to form a circle, using their camping chair if necessary or sitting on the ground.
- 3 The lead facilitator then breaks the silence by welcoming everyone back. One option at this point is to conduct a brief concluding ceremony (parallel to the optional introductory ceremony discussed above). The facilitator then places a talking piece at the centre of the circle and invites whomever is called to speak to pick up the piece and "share what their experience was or what was present for them during the Solo." Much of what is shared may be in the realm of self-discovery or deeper realizations, while others may relate their insights directly to the Change Lab-both types of debrief should be equally welcome. The facilitator should ask the group to be sensitive towards others who might want to speak and also request that there be some silence between people speaking. Participants should be aware that there will be more time for debriefing upon returning to the retreat venue.
- 4 Once the debrief has started, the facilitator will generally find that it is very hard to interrupt someone while sharing in the circle, so it's important to make people aware of time up front. If someone is really talking for too long, the facilitator or a designated time-keeper

should hold up two fingers to signal time is up, rather than ringing a bell or interrupting. This debrief should take around two hours, but it can be unpredictable, so it is good to make sure the schedule is flexible at this point.

Breaks may be needed during the debrief, so it is important to have bells or chimes at Home Base in order to call people back into the circle.

5 With respect to food and breaking the fast, the key advice here is for participants not to be eating in the debriefing circle, but also not to be sitting in the debrief thinking about food. At the same time, you don't want to bring people back from solo, break silence and then eat prior to the debrief circle. Our suggestion is to have food (coffee, tea, fruit, cheese, bread and juice) arrive just before the time of the arrival of the first group back from Solo, so that you don't have issues with jeeps or horses creating noise thereby distracting participants in the debrief circle. However, you only start serving it in the first break of the debrief circle, after the silence has been broken and the sharing has started. Water is definitely allowed in the debrief circle-food is not.

### Selection of Innovation Initiatives

Although the selection of Innovation Initiatives could be left to the last day of the Retreat, leaving more time for an in-depth personal debrief of the Solo, it is also important to allow the creative space the participants are in coming out of Solo to be directed towards idea-generation. It is a balance and it is important to recognize the powerful personal experiences people have had and to allow those to settle. Still, we recommend an initial round of identification of initiatives after returning to the venue from Home Base (and after a couple of hours of break time for showers, etc.).

It will be useful to create a bridge between the Solo and the next steps in various ways, e.g. by observing that Solos can have impact on very different levels, and there needn't be a tight relationship between the Solo and the rest of the meeting at a content level. Brian Arthur usually

reiterates that what happens in a Solo brings you into a deeper part of yourself and that it continues in the weeks and even months after the retreat. He also invites participants to watch their dreams during the next few months to see what might have been unlocked. Assuming that there has been a palpable shift in the energy in the group, it will make sense to call attention to that. The facilitator might also choose to comment on themes in the reports of personal experiences in the Solo. For example, in one retreat two participants reported having dreams of being a mid-wife for a birth, suggesting group energy around giving birth to the new.

Ideally, if participants have managed to go into the capacities of letting go and letting come, and if the facilitation is skilled, the shift into crystallizing innovation initiatives shouldn't feel abrupt and disconnected from the Solo. Participants will be aware that they are in a creative process, and will be less attached to their own ideas, interests and agendas than they were at the outset of the Change Lab (or not attached at all). This can enable a fresh energy for idea generating, and a free ability to assess and set aside the ideas that don't work for the group (letting go). Create first, and reflect and assess afterwards. The ideas that come out at this stage are potentially rooted in a contextual awareness from the Sensing Phase combined with an inner knowing, creativity, wholeness and compassion coming from the presencing experience.

#### *Identification of Innovations that Individual Participants "Have Energy For."*

Presencing is largely about accessing *will*, and so the starting place for identifying Innovation Initiatives is to explore answers to the question: "What do I have energy for?" This contrasts with the activity on Day 1, in which participants identified possible initiatives that would make sense, but without asking themselves whether they personally had passion for undertaking them. By way of explaining the question, it's worth observing that nothing in the Lab from this point on will happen unless participants have energy for it. In our experience, the quiet

place of the Solo will allow people to more clearly discern where their passion lies. Specifically, participants are being asked to think about what initiatives:

- I have the most energy for
- need me the most
- connect me to my Work

An effective means of building on this initial generation of ideas is to use an open space design for identifying and discussing answers to that question. Group members are free to talk with anyone they want to, or nobody, and are encouraged to “vote with their feet,” going where their interest draws them. The facilitator asks them to come back with their candidate ideas described on one flip chart page with:

- Title/description
- Impact on the systems by when
- Who is needed? Partners, stakeholders, investors...

After 20-30 minutes, the group reconvenes to hear an initial presentation of ideas- “advertisements”-so that all can see who is working on what and pursue opportunities to work together if that seems attractive. It can then work well to continue the open space, allowing participants to work with whomever they wish to combine or refine the ideas. Allow another hour to an hour and a half, by which time participants post the surviving ideas for a “Gallery Walk.”

Once Lab Team members have posted descriptions of candidate initiatives on the wall, the facilitator might ask: “Which of these initiatives have the potential to shift the system? Choose five.” The facilitator may then invite participants to talk to one another about the array of possibilities over dinner and into the evening of the sixth day.

**Final Selection of Innovation Initiatives.** Following the format described above leaves the better part of a day for discussion and final selection of a set of 4-6 innovation initiatives.

As a foundation for discussion of the initial candidates, it will make sense to introduce-or-reintroduce-criteria for their selection. In groups with an unusual degree of divergence of views, it may be wise to convene an ad hoc “criteria committee” to give concentrated thought to this question and make specific proposals. A sample set of criteria would be:

Output: a transformed system

- impact
- leverage
- learning
- synergy

Input: partnerships

- Attractive
- Cross-boundary: tri-sector (government, business, civil society); and (preferably) cross-continental

It makes little sense to impose rigid guidelines for how to make a final selection from among the proposed initiatives. The facilitators will need to rely on their own experience and judgment about how to support the Lab Team in narrowing down the possibilities to a manageable set of initiatives that have promise to serve as seeds for transformation of the system and which attract committed support. It often makes sense at the beginning of the final day to invite advocates of each of the surviving proposals to give a brief presentation on the core idea. The facilitator can then invite participants to indicate their level of interest in the candidate innovations (e.g., by putting dots of one color on the ideas that they would be willing to help lead and dots of another color on the ones they would be willing to support.)

The challenge at that point is to lead a discussion of the relationship among the ideas and suggestions for how to consolidate them, allowing additional open space time if it seems useful. Leaders of proposed initiatives may be encouraged to continue the discussion over lunch. At a time the facilitator deems appropriate, potential project leaders can give an update on the status of the candidate ideas

based on their discussions, resulting in a final menu of options. The facilitator then moves toward final selection, ideally by facilitating a large-group discussion that leads to a consensus decision. However, further voting (by using dots, etc.) is always an option.

It is wise to keep track of ideas that do not make the final cut either because there is more interest in other areas or because they do not yet seem adequately developed. Sometimes the time just isn't right yet, but they may turn out to be groundbreaking ideas later. Keep in mind that some of the Innovation Initiatives are likely to fail and it will be useful to have other ideas to fall back on. In the Sustainable Food Lab mentioned above, the Lab Team came up with five "Core Innovation Initiatives," and two "Emerging Initiatives." In addition, the Team identified three themes that had originally been proposed as initiatives but which the Team decided to view as cross-cutting ideas needing to permeate and be integrated into all the initiatives.

## Tools for Co-Presencing

**Sample Innovation Retreat Agenda** (see below)

### Sample Meditation Orientation

Sit straight on your chair, feet firmly planted. Not too close to anyone. Calm your mind a little, switch off the radio. Sitting up right, imagine a string on top of your head. Your spine is straight. Make sure your shoulders are down, everything is relaxed. Your eyes are looking down, closed if you wish, or open wide, somewhere in between also works. Breathe deeply, hands on knees, shoulders relaxed. Gently start to follow the breath as it goes in and out of the tip of the nostrils. Breathe fairly deeply, aware of the breath as it flows in and out of the nostrils. If thoughts come up, notice that you are having them, let them dissipate like a cloud, like an old friend passing in the street. Let your mind come back to your breathing. You may find that your breathing becomes more shallow, like a baby's breath, that's fine. Notice your thoughts, let them go. Feel the weight of your body pressing on the seat, everything relaxed.

Day 0 Sat	Day 1 Sun	Day 2 Mon	Day 3 Tues	Day 4 Wed	Day 5 Thur	Day 6 Fri	Day 7 Sat	Day 8 Sun
All day staff meeting	Debrief of learning journeys	Presencing Practices  Discussion of themes, leverage points for initiatives	Presencing Practices  Solo briefing at venue  Depart for Base Camp	Full day solo	Full day solo	Return to Base Camp  Debrief of learning journeys	Presencing Practices  Discussion/ Selection of initiatives	All day staff debrief
Visit Base Camp  Participants start arriving	Brainstorming of initiatives	Discussion continued  Orientation to Solos	Briefing at Base Camp and depart for Solo Sites			Return to Venue  Identify initiatives	Final selection of initiatives  Prototype team planning	
		Conversation with 'Remarkable Person'	1st night of Solo	2nd night of Solo	3rd night of Solo		Participants depart	

[10 minutes of meditation]

Slowly open your eyes, come out, breathe normally. You can do this in your tent if it's cold. Put your sleeping bag around your shoulders. Make a seat out of your back pack. If you're doing it outside, choose a rock or plant or cactus, breathe in nature. It deepens the experience of nature, breathe in nature, breathe out appreciation. Vary this, make your own discoveries. Try this once a day, even if you are the kind of person who thinks this is hard work. It is hard work. 3-4 times a day is good. The effect is that it will connect you deeply to what you are doing outside, intensifying the process.

Sample Supplemental Meditation Instruction.

Brian Arthur offered the following supplement to the morning meditation on the second day of one of the Labs.

"I want to show you something slightly different. It's a Tai Chi opening move. The brain goes into alpha waves when you meditate. It's a more creative space. If you do this consistently, it will calm you. I want to offer you an experience of how theta waves are generated.

Stand up, make a space, get in the QiGong position shown: feet parallel, feet apart. Feel as if your energy is going 10 feet into the earth. Shoulders down. Create a "sinker" energy. Relax totally. Put your eyes into whatever position is comfortable. Make sure your spine is straight, but not out or forward. Now imagine a funnel at the top of your head, pouring energy, natural energy from the sky, chi, down into your head like golden honey, down your spine, into the area just below the navel. As it comes in, goes further, down your legs, visualize it as a bright amber color. It goes down to the toes, starts to fill your lower body, legs, thighs, up to your waist. Your whole lower body is full of energy. Now that energy starts to come up, into the upper part of your body, chest, up your spine, pours out over your shoulders, which are relaxed, down your arms, into your hands. Your palms are facing backwards, fingers relaxed, all

that energy starts to accumulate in your wrists. Imagine your wrists have jet burners on them. Those burners will cause your wrists and arms slowly to raise. You are not "causing" anything. The energy is causing your arms to move forward and upward, very slowly. I was trained to let this happen over half an hour. Jets of energy push your wrists forward, all the time breathing into your lower belly.

Huge jets of energy are pushing your arms out and up. If the energy gives out and won't push any further, just wait, let it accumulate. It's ok to bend your elbows a little. When your hands are about chest high, straighten your fingers, shoot the energy out to the horizon. Now press down as if there's an enormous beach ball beneath your palms that is resisting your pressing down. It's letting out air and you are pressing down. Make sure your hands and arms are relaxed. There is the paradox of doing something active but totally relaxed. When your arms get down to bottom, you are in the same QiGong position shown earlier. Shake it out a bit.

If you want to get into a deep place before you meditate, do this exercise. You'll find you are in Theta, deeper than Alpha. The important thing is not to move your arms. Your body is moved by the energy. That's the first move in Tai Chi. There are 107 other moves."

### **Four Directions Ceremony**

Turn and face the East and give your appreciation. The East is the place of dawn, where the sun rises each day. New beginnings, renewed hope, awakening and illumination are the gifts and powers of the East. The element of the East is Air. Air brings the gifts of intellect, clarity of communication, freedom and understanding. The Eagle and other birds are the animals associated with the East. Give your appreciation to the East.

Turn and face the South and give your appreciation. The South is the place of midday, aglow with the light of the Sun. Energy, warmth, generosity, truth and inspiration reside in the

South. The element of the South is Fire. Fire brings the gifts of creativity, love, passion and courage. The Lion and Coyote are the animals associated with the South. Give your appreciation to the South.

Turn and face the West and give your appreciation. The West is the place of sunsets and the harvest season of autumn. Completion, endings, realization, peace and serenity are the gifts and powers of the West. The element of the West is Water. Water brings the gifts of purification, cleansing, forgiveness, emotional balance, compassion and open-hearted acceptance of our feelings. The Dolphin and other sea beings are the animals associated with the West. Give your appreciation to the West.

Turn and face the North and give your appreciation. The North is associated with the season of winter and the time of midnight. As the place where the sun never passes, North is considered a place of great mystery. Enchantment, appreciation of mystery, attentive listening to others and ourselves and the ability to keep our own counsel are the wisdom, teachings and gifts of the North. The element of the North is Earth. Earth brings the gifts of stability, vitality, grounded-ness, patience, and appreciation of our bodies. The Buffalo, Polar Bear and other polar animals are associated with North. Give your appreciation to the North.

### **Qi Tonic Recipe (for Fasting)**

10 ounces water

2 tablespoons of pure lemon juice (1/4 of a lemon)

2 tablespoons of pure maple syrup

1/8 teaspoon (pinch) cayenne pepper

Put above ingredients into your water bottle and shake well.

Drink slowly 5-8 sips at a time, 5-10 times each day plus 8-10 glasses of water each day

## **General Checklist**

### **Participants**

- Full list of people involved
- What outdoor/retreat experience do the participants have?
- Each participant should be interviewed prior to the retreat
- Are partner organizations bringing extra people?

### **Location**

- Topographic maps of the area (Trail and USGS)
- Exact address and location of the property
- Map from airport to property

### **Transport**

- Flight schedules?
- Suitable number of vehicles for moving people around on the property. Will the participants bring 4x4s?
- Will people walk from the venue to the solo sites?
- How will we move equipment?
- Is severe weather likely to affect transport?
- How long does it take to drive from the other houses on the property if they are needed?

### **Accommodation**

- Will there be enough room in the main house for all the people?

### **Environmental Hazards**

- Can we have fires outside-is there a risk of bush fires?
- What are the dangerous animals in the area?
- What are the dangerous plants in the region?
- Is there risk of severe weather, floods, wind etc.?
- Does the river risk flooding?

### **Communication**

- Will we need to have radio communication equipment?
- Will we need a satellite phone?
- Is there cell phone coverage?

### **The Wilderness Solo**

- How many of the participants have been camping before?



- How many of the participant will not want to do a camping solo?
- Are there other places that people could be on retreat without camping?
- Is everyone physically fit?
- Will the Generon staff be in solo sites? (The prime sites must go to the participants)
- How much camping equipment do we need- Generon team to supply their own?
- Bring a talking stick and a Tibetan bell for the Solo debrief.

### Safety & Health

- Do any participants have a serious medical condition?
- How many medics will we need?
- Are the guides trained in first aid?

### Food and Catering

- Are we planning the food or is this done by the local host?
- Will they bring the ingredients for Chi tonic?
- Where is the nearest place to buy food and water?
- We will need approximately 12 litres (3 gallons) of bottled water per person for the solo + 3 times that amount at Home Base

### Workshop Admin

- What workshop materials do we need?
- What documentation is required- photography?

### Camping Equipment

- How will we ship equipment?

### Materials

Equipment to be provided to participants by Generon:

- Tent (Single person; North Face or equivalent)
- Sleeping Bag (able to withstand freezing temperatures; North Face or equivalent)
- Sleeping Bag Liner
- Mattress Pad (Thermarest)
- Headlamps (with additional battery)
- Camping Chair (Crazy Horse)
- Whistle
- Two way radio (minimum 6 mile radius)

- Toilet Paper
- Potty Shovel
- Small Trash Bag
- Insect Repellent
- First Aid Kit and Blister Kit
- Bear Bags
- Drinking Water
- Food for 3-night solo (fruit, Cliff bars, energy bars, nuts, seeds, fasting options, etc.)
- Journal

### Suggested Packing List

*The suggested packing list reads as follows:*

As you have been informed, the retreat will include a 3-night solo. The following recommendations are focused toward giving you that opportunity and will assist in making your experience unfold more smoothly. Please be assured that we are taking all necessary steps to ensure your comfort and safety.

Pack loose, comfortable clothing. Some purchases may be required as our recommendations are crucial for your safety and comfort. [Describe weather conditions]. Please pack a small variety of clothing items.

### Suggested Packing List

- 1-2 pairs shorts/pants (long pants for nighttime; light long pants for hiking in and out of the solo sites)
- First Layer Under Shirt (light weight polypropylene; Capaline by Patagonia or equivalent)
- Second Layer Under Shirt (medium weight polypropylene; Capaline by Patagonia or equivalent)
- 3 comfortable shirts-loose fitting & comfortable; 2 long sleeved shirts (1 light long sleeved shirt to be used for daytime use during the solo) and 1 short sleeved shirt
- Fleece Layer (to wear under windbreaker or shell); this can be a vest or long sleeved vest with zip front (Synchilla by Patagonia or equivalent)

- Light Windbreaker/Shell (preferably Gortex which is waterproof & breathable; suggested brand-Patagonia, EMS, REI, LL Bean); to be used in the rain so be sure it is waterproof
- Rain pants (same specifications as above)
- Long Underwear (Capaline by Patagonia or equivalent)
- 1 cap (for cool weather; should be wool and cover the ears-no synthetic material)
- Warm Gloves (natural material like leather with fur lining for morning energy practice)
- Warm Gloves (Polartec) for rain/windy weather (North Face or equivalent)
- 1 pair good medium weight hiking shoes (to be broken in before departure)
- 2 pairs of light hiking or medium weight socks (at least 50% wool such as Smart Wool, LL Bean, REI or EMS)
- Footwear for Qigong Energy Practice (such as Mephisto shoes made from natural rubber from The Walking Company; or moccasins made from natural animal hide from the Gokey-Division of Orvis; or black cotton slip-on's from a Chinese martial arts store)
- 1 broad-brimmed sun hat which should cover ears and forehead (not a baseball cap)
- 1 compass
- High UV blocking sunscreen (minimum 30 SPF; 50 SPF for nose & ears)
- 1 pair sunglasses (full spectrum, ultra-violet blocking-Ray Ban or equivalent)
- Small note pad and ball point pen
- Large backpack to carry personal items out to solo site
- Flashlight (with additional batteries)
- 2 Quart Sized Nalgene Water Bottles
- Small Towel
- Portable CD Player and headphones (preferably canceling headphones) and appropriate batteries (If you cannot obtain the CD or headphones, please let Susan Taylor know right away and she will secure them for you at cost)

If you cannot provide or locate some of the packing or equipment recommendations above, please contact Susan Taylor and she will assist you.

“If you want to build a ship, don’t divide the work and give orders; teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.”

– Antione **De Saint-Expuréy**

## Phase IV

# Co-Realizing - Enact New Reality

### Introduction and Purpose

“Eighty percent of a product, service or system’s environmental impact is determined at the design stage.” -John Thackara, *In The Bubble*

The final phase of the U-Process, Realizing, is simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar to many of us. Here, everything we have learned in the first two phases takes on distinct forms. Acts of co-creation result in prototype solutions that are the beginning of a new reality-changing the system from what it was to what it will be. These prototypes serve to demonstrate the viability of what the team knows and has learned, explicitly and tacitly, both as individuals and as a collective.

We’re familiar with some of the activities of this phase because they are typically what we do in our working lives—we create projects, products and services. However many organizational contexts use relatively mechanistic and habitual methods in approaching the activity of creating something new, be it a new product or a new service. This lack of innovative and grounded design is critical because, as John Thackara reminds us, a large part of the sustainability of a product or service is determined at the design phase.

In entering the Realizing Phase, it should be clear that the route the Change Lab team has taken to realizing is atypical. The nature of the work throughout the Lab differs radically from “business as usual”. This is because all outputs are the ‘realization’ of a particular process, the U-Process, which aspires towards a systemic vision and a holistic understanding based on the fact that all things are interconnected. While our

habitual ways of executing project work usually take an expert driven, piecemeal and fragmented approach (which undoubtedly produces results of a certain kind), the U-Process aspires towards a stakeholder driven, whole system and sustainable innovation process. If the Sensing Phase has been done well, the Lab Team members will be intimately familiar with the system, both well-informed intellectually and with an intuitive sense of the whole, which will influence the nature of the initiatives they design.

The work in this phase involves crystallizing and agreeing on a number of innovation domains, clearly defining and re-framing the problem within each domain and then moving to the hands-on, rapid-cycle creation, evaluation, iteration, and implementation of multiple alternative solutions to the problem at hand. We are building here upon processes inspired by the design industry as well as from the growing field of sustainability. This work can then be thought of as working with processes focused on sustainable design, which is an increasingly important field of practice in addressing complex organizational and societal problems.

In the realizing phase sub-teams of the Lab Team go through a process which results in the quick creation of a number of prototypes. These are the seeds of *pilot projects* which are breakthrough solutions that are designed in alignment with what the Lab Team has learned about the system (and themselves) from the first two phases of the U. They are systemic breakthroughs which, once scaled up, have the possibility of breaking the deadlock within which the system was previously stuck. It is important that the sub-teams working on

the different prototypes continuously communicate their ideas and activities to each other through this phase, partly in order to coach each other and give feedback to improve on each prototype, but also to establish links between the prototypes in order to ensure a systemic solution. (If the groups start working in “silos” the purpose of the Change Lab is defeated.) The sub-teams then translate the prototypes into plans for pilot projects and begin testing these in the actual world of stakeholders. The action-learning aspect of the Change Lab intensifies as the pilots are being implemented and lessons are being learned and shared with the Lab Team overall on an ongoing basis. These pilot projects are intended to be the “seeds” or living examples that can be learned from, reproduced, and grown. They are not just an idea or a policy recommendation to be implemented at a later date but proven, functioning prototypes, that are ready to be scaled up and institutionalized. Ultimately these projects stand as something new on the ground, something living and breathing, that clearly signals the end of the old reality and the beginning of the new.

## Prototyping

### Introduction and Purpose

Prototypes are essentially ‘mock-ups’, models, or simulations, which help to make an emerging concept visible and tangible at an early stage. This allows for generating feedback from key stakeholders and experts, which can then be used for iterating the idea in a fast learning cycle. Through representing a system that behaves similarly to potential real world conditions, participants gain a thorough understanding of how their ideas might manifest in the real world. The prototypes start as very quick and rough models and become increasingly sophisticated through the process of assessment and iteration. The innovation consultancy The Idea Factory, which focuses much of its work on innovation in the public sector, describes a variety of reasons for prototyping, including<sup>2</sup>:

- To make embryonic ideas visual and tangible.
- To enact the preferred future in the given present.
- To rapidly iterate multiple alternatives, do divergent exploration, explore “crazy” directions, fail constructively, and uncover obstacles as early as possible when investment is still minimal.
- To stimulate and give direction to the next step of idea development.
- To serve as a shared medium of information exchange and the common currency of innovation within an expert community of practice as well as in the larger organization and the larger world.
- To provide the context for end users and other constituencies to participate in the co-development of ideas.
- To provide informal and formal test and assessment feedback for the next phase of development.
- To act as a tangible currency of exchange in an organization’s marketplace of ideas.
- To help “sell” ideas upward, outward, and downward

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<sup>2</sup> The prototyping section of this Fieldbook is largely based on the work of Idea Factory, Inc

In general, a prototyping process has several phases:

**Problem definition:** What is the need we are trying to address? Clear analysis of the type of problem will determine the scope and sequence of the next phases of work. There are two different types of problem, each requiring different approaches to prototyping: ill-defined and well-defined problems. A problem that has clear performance expectations, established specifications, known technology or a predetermined target market can be described as *well-defined*.

*Ill-defined* problems are entirely different. They require that you explore for opportunities, but you cannot know at the outset where the solutions lie. The process of dealing with ill-defined problems is much less focused in the beginning. All you have is a general goal. The boundaries of an ill-defined problem are unclear and can only be discovered by “diving into the problem anywhere and working your way out”. The complex problems which the Change Labs set out to address are ill-defined problems.

**Alpha phase:** The most preliminary sketch or model of the idea/ product/ service/ program is created and tested with a closely held group of people who know enough about the subject to provide useful input at this early stage. This stage requires clear criteria for evaluation so that the learning is very focused, and any data collected is useful. Flaws at this stage are likely to be very obvious and would be very damaging if they were not addressed at this stage and the project were to scale up with these flaws in place. The principle is “fail early and fail often” at this stage, as it is the cheapest and best place to make mistakes.

**Beta phase:** A much more developed version of the idea/ product/ service/ program (taking into account the input, revisions etc. necessitated by the alpha phase) is tested with a wider audience, most of whom have not been privy to the development so far and have no preconceptions about the concept they’re testing. Flaws

uncovered at this stage should be less wide-ranging than they were at the alpha stage, although the design team may be surprised to see new flaws from a new perspective coming from testing the idea on this wider group.

**Pilot phase:** By this time, we believe we have worked out the main flaws or barriers to implementation, and the pilot is actually implementation on a controlled scale. If we discover flaws at this stage, they should be minimal (though it is very normal for flaws to still be identified here which were not visible at the design stage).

**Implementation:** The product/ service/ program or idea is rolled out to all populations.

## Laying the Groundwork

In order to successfully start and complete the prototyping process for the Change Lab, specific information and content must be brought into the process. Meeting these informational needs is an essential part of creating the conditions for successful prototyping.

### Domain Research

Once participants have decided on the innovation domains they want to work on (coming out of the Solo Retreat as described in the Presencing Section), a certain amount of focused research needs to be done in order to make clearer what is happening within that domain. So, for example, if a team forms around the idea of sustainable fisheries (as was the case of one of the sub-teams in the Sustainable Food Lab) then the group needs to map out the existing initiatives already being implemented by other players in the field, including but beyond the Lab Team members. Of course, a certain amount of information will exist in the form of knowledge held by the group. This knowledge, however, needs to be bolstered by systematic research that needs to provide the project group with a shared fact base. This information needs to be disseminated formally to the group before the in-person workshops.

While this research can take the form of desk research it should also be clear that the work should draw on the lessons and capacities from the Sensing Phase. John le Carre, as quoted earlier in this book, said, “the desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world.” It’s also important that this domain research takes into account projects that the teams members might have visiting during the sensing phase and information that is held by other Lab Team members and Champions.

See <http://www.collectiveintelligence.net/maps.php> for examples of domain maps.

### **Personas : Bringing Stakeholders Into the Room**

In the Sensing section, we described how ethnographic study can provide important primary data that can lead to the development of personas. If participants haven’t explicitly turned their observations from the learning journeys into personas yet, it is a good idea to do this as part of laying the groundwork for prototyping as these personas become useful in providing a shared basis for communication and in screening the prototypes and testing them for their relevance to various stakeholders.

Through the learning journeys, participants will have gathered the raw material on understanding stakeholder requirements which can now be translated into the development of personas-hypothetical but believable characters who are usually a composite of characteristics drawn from real stakeholders. The personas are developed with names, values, goals, and life-narratives, sometimes even with photos or illustrations of the character and their life, and associated quotes. These details of the hypothetical persona enable us to tell stories of how they will interact with and experience the prototype intervention. We take an imaginative leap into the future, grounded in real-life understanding of stakeholders’ tacit as well as explicit unmet needs and wants.

It is important to recognize here that ideally the

Lab Team is also a living microcosm of the system, and thus many of the stakeholders values and needs will be reflected in the personalities of the Lab Team members. This microcosm is an essential living testing ground for the prototypes. If some stakeholders are missing once sub-teams are formed, additional members can be invited in to the sub-teams to form sub-team microcosms, and prototypes can also be tested across sub-teams. Note however, that there is a risk of the sub-teams growing so large so fast that the original members are in the minority-this happened in the Sustainable Food Lab. It is a better idea to add team members incrementally, or to take new members through a mini-lab process so that the power of the collective intelligence and commitment that has been built by going through the U-Process doesn’t dissipate.

### **Process**

The first step after innovation domains have been crystallised and agreed upon returning from the Solo (this process is covered in the Presencing Section) is to convene “Problem Definition Workshops” for each innovation domain, where sub-teams, develop their joint problem definition, work on their theory of change, and develop screening criteria for their theme.

This process is usually followed by an “Innovation Workshop”, which the entire Lab Team attends though much of the work is done in sub-teams. The purpose of this workshop is to lay down the foundations for the work of prototyping by creating a large, fruitful search space for solutions and brainstorming, then narrowing down to the select ideas that the team wishes to move forward with. This foundational work is critical because it’s also a process for ensuring clarity of purpose within the team and ensures that the team buys into the focus that the innovations will take. Following the Innovation Workshop, the Lab Team moves into a “Design Studio”, where the actual modeling of prototypes and the iterative process of screening them and improving on them in rapid cycles occurs.

## **Problem Definition Workshops**

The sub-teams work in the Problem Definition Workshop on honing in on and reframing the problem as it pertains to their specific innovation domain. They deepen and clarify their vision of what success looks like. Here the sub-teams may also work with developing the “screens” their projects must pass through in order to meet the needs of their stakeholders, and to work on a “theory of change”-an assessment of what the key drivers are that will generate large-scale change in the particular domain.

## **Innovation Workshop**

### **Review Whole System Map**

If participants have not already created a whole system map in the Sensing Phase, they do so now. If they have, they come back to the map and review it and add to it. The map is based on all the sensing and domain research done to date, and reflects the whole system as the participants currently understand it. The purpose of this map is to ensure that participants all have a shared picture of the problem they are seeking to address, and that the work of the sub-teams will be connected to the Lab Teams understanding of the whole system.

### **Brainstorm Innovations**

Participants go into a brainstorm in order to generate as many ideas as possible around the domain they wish to innovate within. The design consultancy IDEO claim that most people think they know what it means to brainstorm but few people actually do it well. Brainstorming is often highly underrated. A brainstorm is an intense, idea-generating session analyzing data gathered by observing people. Each brainstorm usually lasts no more than an hour.

### **Developing Overall Screening Criteria**

In addition to screening prototypes against personas and stakeholder needs, the Lab Team as a whole may together formulate a set of

principles which they feel reflect the “DNA” that defines the new system, and which should apply across sub-teams. These principles may be inspired by questions around social, economic, and environmental sustainability. They are what the Lab Team feel are the non-negotiable characteristics that will define ventures in this Lab. The screening criteria in a sense are the needs as seen from the macro- or metalevel of the whole, while the persona and stakeholder needs are the micro-level. Being able to assess prototypes with both of these perspectives in mind is part of what makes the iteration process powerful.

## **Voting**

Once the team has come up with a number of ideas, they go through a simple voting exercise, for example using red dots to indicate the ideas that have the highest energy for them, keeping the screening criteria in mind. Different colors of dots can be used for different criteria-for example, a red dot for importance, a blue dot for how many resources a project will take, a green dot for how realistic/practical a project may be, etc.

It may be an idea here to involve the hypothetical personas in the voting exercise as well-what would these composite characters think are the most important ideas? The team needs to make a decision as to how many ideas they wish to take into the prototyping phase, each representing a potential solution path. It is important for the group to take multiple, divergent paths.

One of the pitfalls in this process is the risk that the selected ideas and the resultant sub-teams form around sectors. It’s important to remind Lab Team members that the cross-sector collaboration is key to the idea of the Change Lab.

## **Design Studio**

### **Modeling**

The key now is to be able to make the prototype ideas visible and understandable in context so that stakeholders and Champions are able to



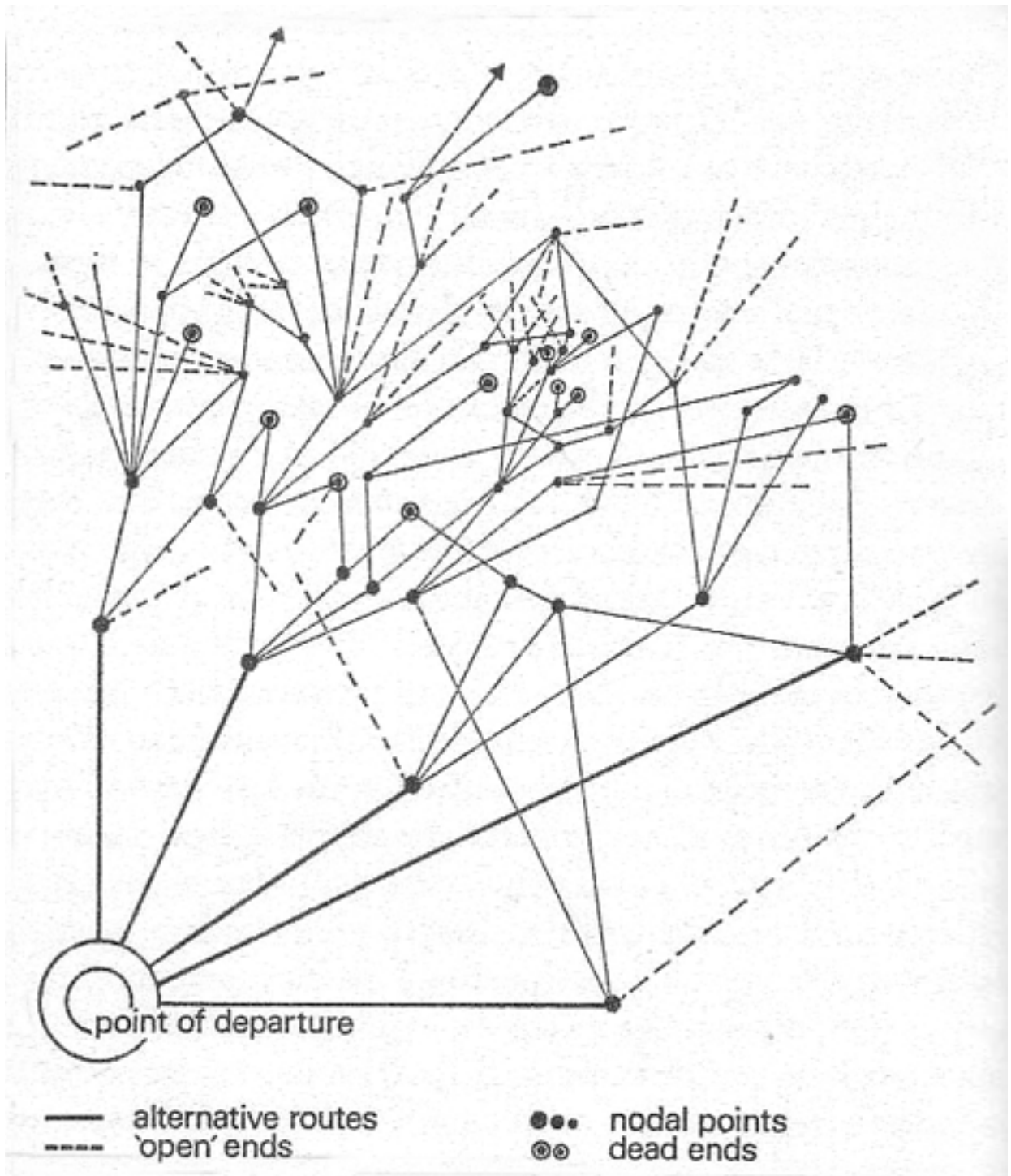


Figure 4. The maze (serial structure) of a creative search. The creative thinker has to advance on a broad front keeping open many options. He must gain a comprehensive view of the entire structure of the way ahead without being able to focus on any single possibility.

The "Creative Maze" from "Hidden Order of Art" by Anton Ehrenzweig

assess the ideas, and screen them, giving feedback that can usefully be incorporated into further iterations. At Generon, we usually use a 3D modeling process for this step. We provide sub-teams with materials including foam paper and shapes, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, beads, ribbon, feathers, modeling clay, etc. and challenge them to create a model of their prototype. This makes the prototype tangible to participants in the most literal sense, and it allows the team to communicate to stakeholders what the experience of interacting and engaging with the initiative will be like in reality.

This process is extremely effective because somehow working with our hands can release ideas that are stuck in our brains, and working with materials that can represent many different things enables participants to make new connections and generate new ideas for the prototype. It also pushes participants to make their ideas tangible and to understand the contextual and holistic aspects of the prototype. When concepts are 'built' they tend to be elaborated in greater detail and more easy to communicate.

*See <http://www.seriousplay.com> for a useful modeling tool by Lego and reflections on the power of working with our hands.*

## **Iterating**

The process of iteration now kicks in, as participants work through a process of going back and forth-getting feedback from stakeholders and Champions, testing the prototypes against the screens and the personas, and returning to the drawing board. Each new iteration of the prototype is a more consciously designed, more appropriate intervention.

The Alpha Phase prototypes are the most preliminary versions which will be tested within the sub-teams and then with the Lab Team overall. The Beta Phase prototypes which are the more developed versions where the obvious flaws have been corrected, are tested with Lab Champions and ideally with a wider group of stakeholders.

When the sub-teams complete their prototyping process, they are now ready to take these initiatives into the real world as pilot projects. The difference between a prototype and a pilot is that a prototype is a representation of a concept in order to generate feedback, while a pilot is an actual intervention in the system, which has the potential to be scaled up and institutionalised. The pilot is still a controlled and monitored process though where flaws will continue to be discovered and learnings will be incorporated into the project before going to scale.

# Piloting and Institutionalizing

“Never doubt that a small group of people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead

## Piloting

The prototyping phase will have generated projects which are nothing less than systemic breakthroughs, and which are now ready to be piloted. These pilot projects will tend to be implemented through the organizations of the Lab Team members in partnership across sectors. The power of the microcosm comes into play again as Lab Team members bring their spheres of influence and their resource bases to the implementation of the pilots.

The piloting process takes the Lab Team into a new level of action learning. The fact that Lab Team members meet again even after piloting has started is part of what makes a Change Lab unique from other facilitated change interventions which often end when the bright ideas have been defined, leaving the participants to keep up the momentum and garner the resources for implementation.

This action learning depends on an acute awareness that the pilots are still being refined in the spirit of catching potential flaws in the projects early and sensing new opportunities by paying attention to how stakeholders are responding. Artist and facilitator Jeff Barnum points out, “If I am a sculptor, I may visualize a figure within a stone. But in reality, the stone may be unable to support the form I envision, for example, due to an internal fissure I cannot behold on its surface. In a creative process the solution to a problem must emerge through a dialogue between the creative idea and the idiosyncrasies of the medium or context.” The piloting process should be seen as such process of continuous and attentive dialogue between the Lab Team members implementing the pilots and the responses of the context in which the

pilots are being implemented.

When the Lab Team starts to pilot the actual projects, a whole new set of requirements become relevant in the form of project management needs. Implementing a project is very different from simply conceptualising a useful intervention. The sub-teams need to define their project management plans, budgets need to be in place, etc. Some sub-teams have hired full-time or part-time staff to coordinate the projects. In some cases, the convening organizations become the organizational homes of the initiatives.

## Institutionalizing

At the end of the piloting phase, the initiatives and associated business plans are put before a “Venture Committee” to decide which initiatives will actually be invested in for mainstreaming/ institutionalizing.

When the project moves into institutionalization, the Lab Team is challenged to apply its greater theory of change- its understanding of how large-scale change happens. What is it that causes some ideas to reach a “tipping point” where they become mainstream while other ideas remain on the fringe? Who are the people with the power to connect the initiatives to opportunities for scaling up, and who are the potential “early adopters” who are most likely to inspire great numbers of people to adopt the new approaches? What is the role of media and government in institutionalizing the particular initiative-who are the “scalers” that need to be involved?

Generon works with Lab Team members to strategize for the institutionalizing phase. This phase-when Lab Team members’ organizations are ready to institutionalize the initiatives and garner resources behind them-is the conclusion of Generon’s direct involvement with a Change Lab.

# Tools for Realizing

## Brainstorming

### Seven Secrets for Better Brainstorming

IDEO make several recommendations as to how to have better brainstorming sessions. The following ideas are excerpted and adapted from "The Art of Innovation" by IDEO's Tom Kelly.

#### 1. Sharpen the focus

Good brainstorming sessions start with a well-honed statement of the problem. This can be thought of as the "design brief" and will be centered around the domain that participants have decided to work on. The "design brief" can be as simple as a question. Edgy is better than fuzzy. The session will get off to a better start and you can bring people back to the main topic more easily if you have a well-articulated description of the problem at just the right level of specificity. A brainstormer without a clear problem statement is like a company without a clear strategy: You'll wander aimlessly and need a lot of extra luck or talent to succeed. "How can we...?" statements are often a good formulation.

#### 2. Playful rules.

Rules of brainstorming are strict and are stenciled on the walls:

*Defer judgment* Don't dismiss any ideas.

*Build on the ideas of others* No "buts," only "ands."

*Encourage wild ideas* Embrace the most out-of-the-box notions because they can be the key to solutions.

*Go for quantity* Aim for as many new ideas as possible. In a good session, up to 100 ideas are generated in 60 minutes.

*Be visual* Use yellow, red, and blue markers to write on huge 30-inch by 25-inch Post-its that are put on a wall.

*Stay focused on the topic* Always keep the discussion on target.

*One conversation at a time* No interrupting, no dismissing, no disrespect, no rudeness.

#### 3. Number your ideas.

Numbering each idea sounds pretty obvious, right? So obvious that it took us almost ten years to figure it out. Numbering the ideas that bubble up during a brainstorm helps in two ways. First, it's a tool to motivate the participants before and during the session ("Let's try and get a hundred ideas before we leave the room") or to gauge the fluency of a completed brainstorm. Second it's a great way to jump back and forth from idea to idea without losing track of where you are. We've usually found that a hundred ideas per hour usually indicates a good, fluid brainstorming session.

#### 4. Build and jump.

Watch for chances to "build" and "jump". High-energy brainstorming sessions tend to follow a series of steep "power" curves, in which the momentum builds slowly, then intensely, then starts to plateau. The best facilitators can nurture an emerging conversation with a light touch in the first phase and know enough to let ideas flow during the steep part of the ideation (ed. Brainstorming) curve. It's when energy fades on a line of discussion that the facilitator really earns his or her keep.

#### 5. The space remembers.

Great brainstorming leaders understand the power of spatial memory. Write the flow of ideas down in a medium visible to the whole group...Brainstorming is an intensely group-orientated process, and the facilitator's rapid scribbling is one of the focal points that holds a group together. We're not talking about taking personal meeting notes here, but capturing ideas so that the group can see their progression and return to those that seem worthy of more attention.

#### 6. Stretch your mental muscles.

People are busy. Time is short. Is it worthwhile to "burn" some time at the beginning of a brainstorm doing some form of group warm-up?

Maybe. But that “maybe” rapidly becomes a “yes” in certain circumstances:

- When the group has not worked together before
- When most of the group doesn’t brainstorm frequently
- When the group seems distracted by pressing but unrelated issues

One type of warm-up exercise we practice is a fast-paced word game simply to clear the mind (Zen practitioners call it “beginner’s mind”) and to get the team in a more outgoing mode.

#### 7. Get physical

Good brainstorms are extremely visual. They include sketching, mind-mapping, diagrams, and stick figures. You don’t have to be an artist to get your point across with a sketch or diagram. Leave your performance anxieties at the door and jump in with whatever visual tools you have available.

#### Six Ways to Kill a Brainstorm

1. The boss gets to speak first.
2. Everybody gets a turn.
3. Experts only please.
4. Do it off-site.
5. No silly stuff.
6. Write everything down.

#### Tool: “Backcasting” – Visualize Success Scenarios

A technique developed by The Natural Step, backcasting means “placing ourselves in the future and imagining that we have achieved success. Then we look back and ask the question ‘how did we achieve this?’”

The point of using backcasting here is to gain some understanding as to what the conditions for success are. These conditions for success will help us define a series of principles that we use as criteria that our prototypes will have to meet.

“Backcasting sometimes works best, for an organization, when people can be encouraged to really let go of all the problems and constraints they are normally working with. Groups do it best when encouraged to be imaginative together: what would this company, this local authority, this community, look like in a sustainable world? What would we be doing, how would we be dealing with materials, energy, transport, location and relationships? The details come surprisingly easily when we think about being in a state of success and being part of a sustainable society. You can use any timeline so long as it is far enough away to stop people thinking about today-25 or 50 years work equally well.”<sup>3</sup>

“When that vision is constructed then it can start to energise the crucial step of action planning. If we were successful, what were the obstacles that we managed to overcome? What were the video, the press release, the breakthrough investments, and the milestones that told the history of our organization’s journey into sustainability? What were the crucial elements in the wider society that had to change in order for us to make it through the funnel? [Ed. Of sustainability] It is particularly important to identify external factors, no matter how intractable to change they may seem. It is often the case that organizations do not rate their capacity very highly to get involved in promoting change in wider society. Often they will say that new laws or regulations, more cooperation or better informed customers, are necessary for them to make any progress, as if that is an excuse for doing nothing. When backcasting is done well it gets people to see that there is always more they can do, and that their contribution can make a real difference.”

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3 “The Natural Step: Towards a Sustainable Society” - David Cook (Schumacher Briefings, 2004)

## **Tool: The Hanover Principles on Sustainability**

**1 Insist on the right of humanity and nature to co-exist** in a healthy, supportive, diverse and sustainable condition.

**2 Recognize interdependence.** The elements of human design interact with and depend upon the natural world, with broad and diverse implications at every scale. Expand design considerations to recognizing even distant effects.

**3 Respect relationships between spirit and matter.** Consider all aspects of human settlement including community, dwelling, industry and trade in terms of existing and evolving connections between spiritual and material consciousness.

**4 Accept responsibility for the consequences of design decisions** upon human well-being, the viability of natural systems, and their right to co-exist.

**5 Create safe objects of long-term value.** Do not burden future generations with requirements for maintenance of vigilant administration of potential danger due to the careless creation of products, processes or standards.

**6 Eliminate the concept of waste.** Evaluate and optimize the full life-cycle of products and processes, to approach the state of natural systems, in which there is no waste.

**7 Rely on natural energy flows.** Human designs should, like the living world, derive their creative force from perpetual solar income. Incorporate the energy efficiently and safely for responsible use.

**8 Understand the limitations of design.** No human creation lasts forever and design does not solve all problems. Those who create and plan should practice humility in the face of nature. Treat nature as a model and mentor, not an inconvenience to be evaded or controlled.

**9 Seek constant improvement by the sharing of knowledge.** Encourage direct and open communication between colleagues, patrons, manufacturers and users to link long term sustainable consideration with ethical responsibility, and re-establish the integral relationship between natural processes and human activity.

“I am frequently criticised for being over-optimistic. Yet it was our refusal to get real that gave us a country, it was the fact that we lived in advance, in our imaginations and our daily practices, the reality we wished to achieve one day in constitutional form.”

– **Albie Sachs**

# The Mini Lab

## Introduction and purpose

The “Mini-Lab” is a special instance of a Change Lab, designed to introduce the U-Process to a team of people in a short amount of time. As its name implies, it is essentially a miniature version of the Change Lab. The programme usually takes place over a 72-hour period.

Mini-Labs can be useful in a number of situations: as part of the Convening Phase to introduce potential Lab Team members to the process and assess its appropriateness; as an introductory process to a group of potential conveners in a situation where a Lab is being considered; or as a stand alone mini-process with the similar objectives to a Change Lab, but at a much reduced scale. The mini-Lab does not have to be in relation to a larger Change Lab process-it can have an impact in and of itself in enabling participants to see new aspects of a problem or system, take time to listen to their intuition and inner knowing about what needs to happen and develop creative ideas for moving forward.

When originally conceived, it was thought that the Mini-Lab would primarily serve to reinforce an intact team’s convergence around an already understood intervention or strategy. As Adam Kahane put it, “A Mini-Lab was generally good for teambuilding where people came to warm alignment around the familiar. It was not for creating the new.” However, we discovered that by carefully crafting the structure of the lab to follow the U-Process through the various capacities, the Mini-Lab can indeed engage people in a way that breakthrough ideas can be brought forth.

## Capacities

The Mini-Lab addresses five of the seven capacities:

- Suspending
- Redirecting
- Letting go
- Letting come
- Crystallizing

It is unable to cover prototyping and piloting and institutionalizing. By the end of the lab, though, the participants should be ready to move forward with those capacities within their systems.

An important design consideration for the Mini-Lab is to be sure that head, heart, and hands are all engaged. In order to move forward as quickly as we need to within the time allotted, constant attention must be paid to these three components. For this reason, presencing practices are consciously used every morning and incorporated into the schedule of the lab itself (not as an optional “nice-to-have”).

## Process

There are many types of facilitation tools, methods, and activities that can be used in a Mini-Lab. Which ones are most appropriate is best determined by the kind of issue the lab is addressing. The U-Process provides the basic framework.

One of the first needs in the U-Process is to understand the current reality and what is shaping it (Sensing). Participants need to know how they all arrived in the room. A variety of



methods may be used separately or in combination, such as asking people to bring an object that represents their own best experience of their work relating to the issue at hand, or having each person set out and share in a short presentation any preconceived notions that they have about the issue. Through these activities, we begin to establish a shared baseline of where we are. This last activity provides added value in that we can ultimately compare where we started with where we end up at the end of the lab.

It has become clear that allowing time for each person to share their thinking with the rest of the group gives us a way to start the process of suspending. By making their thinking visible (on newsprint, in a model, however it is done) and then posting (literally hanging/suspending) or displaying it there is a physical reminder of that suspension.

Storytelling activities also became important as ways to get people quickly out of their normal routine. Whether telling a story to introduce themselves to the group, or telling the story of how they personally see the current reality or the potential future of the organization, this medium encourages participants to open their heart and thinking in a different way.

While participants are actively experiencing the U-Process, there needs to be a time to explain the U-Process, its principles, the capacities, how and why it works, etc. This is a bit difficult to program in-energy around the organizational issue is generally high throughout the lab. A basic overview fairly early in the lab (morning of Day 1) is helpful in creating the context for the entire event. Then, referring back to the U and linking the activities taking place with the capacities is a good reminder.

It rapidly becomes apparent that because of the iterative nature of the U-Process, the Mini-Lab must become an iterative experience as well. At various stages in the Lab, we begin to converge around outcomes or solutions and then we must consciously diverge. We are not looking to make the best choice from a list of pre-prepared

options. We are not looking for immediate consensus. We want to create something new. It's so easy to fall victim to the power of the old ways. We start along the U-Process path with what may appear to be convergence around what the lab is to explore. We must force divergence. A bit later, it may feel like some sort of convergence is taking place, and we must bust it open again. At about that point-we have arrived at the Solo which aptly calls to us to sense what emerges. Once that happens, we will begin to converge again. It is possible that after the Solo, there may need to be more iterations of convergence and divergence. After all, we are trying to build the capacity to go deeper and deeper. We want to change and innovate the system, rather than just modify what is being done.

This iterative process also helps different team members become comfortable with the overall lab. It feels "real" to those who need it to-we're dealing with the current reality to begin with and questioning it; it feels expansive to those who want to really crack things open.

## **Logistics**

The physical location of the Mini-Lab is critical. It needs to be a site that allows for total immersion in the process. It is helpful to be the only group at the property and be embraced by nature. We recommend no email/internet access at the venue itself, though some sort of connection with the "outside world" is important, so participants could take care of pressing matters. Being too connected and being too disconnected from the rest of the world can both be factors that make it difficult for participants to be truly present to the process.

As with the Change Lab overall, it is critical too for the logistical staff and the facilitation staff to be aligned with one another. The logistics need to flow seamlessly so that the process is fully supported and doesn't get bound up in how something is to happen. Both the logistics for the Solo and the general logistics need to be part of the pre-planning and communications.

As the Solo is relatively short (a few hours), preparation for it may be taken for granted by the participants. Some people may not bring adequate equipment/clothing. We recommend that initial phone calls be made to all participants which briefly describes the solo and walks them through the equipment needed. The same calls can be used as an opportunity to ask about highest expectations, hopes for outcomes, hesitations or concerns, etc. of the lab.

Because there is a wealth of information that people need about the Solo, we suggest that it is done in pieces throughout the Lab rather than in one giant brain dump. There is just too much to be done at one time. It is especially good to present the solo philosophy repeatedly in different ways at different times.

### **Illustrative Process**

At right is an illustrative process for a Mini-Lab. Again, because it is an iterative process, each phase of the U shows up in more than one place.

Day 0	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
	Presencing Practices	Presencing Practices	Presencing Practices
	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
	AM Session: [Sensing/Suspending/ Redirecting] What is the current reality? What is the U-Process?	AM Session [Letting Go]  What is our purpose?  Model the System  Divergence/ Emergence	AM Session [Realizing/Crystallizing]  Debrief and Check-Out
	Lunch Paired dialogue walk	Lunch Solo preparation	Lunch
	PM Session Presencing Practices [Sensing/Redirecting/ Letting Go] Divergence-What questions should we be asking that we aren't?  What ideas do you think are now the highest leverage way to shift the system? Convergence	[Presencing/Letting Come]  Presencing Practices  Emergence Solo (minimum 4 hours at solo sites)	Small group synthesis** Beginnings of prototyping
Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	
Welcome/Intro [Sensing] All Voices Heard- Storytelling Very brief intro of the U- Process	Fireside Chat w/remarkable person  How does innovation happen?	Solo debrief and informal campfire (if possible) Emergence	

U-Pro

co-sensing

co-pre

process



co-realising

essencing

# Creating the Conditions

## Funding

Funding the Change Lab is often seen as one of the most daunting aspects of putting a Lab together. This is partly because at the start of the project there are more questions than answers. This section aims to provide some understanding of what it means to raise funding for as unique a project as a Change Lab.

The “good news” is that all the funding doesn’t need to be raised in one lump but can rather be broken up into three distinct phases.

### First Tranche

The first tranche of funding is for the initial development of the project, the phases of convening, sensing, and presencing. A minority of funders understand the need for this but most will not. It’s probably fair to say that most funders and participants are interested in the “action” phase where the specific pilot projects have been identified and the deliverables are becoming clearer.

### Second Tranche

The second tranche of funding is for the right hand side of the U-the Realizing Phase. At this stage the domains for the pilots have been identified and it’s possible to tap into funding sources that are more specifically tied down. So for example if a pilot project is around fishing in Africa then it’s possible to access institutional funding that has been ear-marked for development in Africa, or for fishing and so on.

### Third Tranche

The third and final tranche of funding is what’s needed after the Venture Committee meeting. This is when the pilots have been implemented and demonstrate the seeds of the new reality. Money is needed at this stage to scale up and institutionalise these pilots. This stage may be 2-3 years after the start of the Lab.

### Estimating Costs: “Wind-Shield Estimates”

It’s probably useful to take a close look at the funding models of the Food Lab and the Partnership for Child Nutrition (PCN) in order to gain a detailed understanding of how the cost of a Lab breaks down. The second and third tranches of funding are highly contextual and depend on the domain of the problem. The costs of pilot projects and of scaling up will depend to a large degree on the domain within which the problem is located. A project around rural regeneration in a single US State will have a different scale of funding in comparison to a project that aims at eliminating global malnutrition.

It’s also worth bearing in mind that the Change Lab budget may well be one that pushes the limits of what acceptable project funding is. So for example a US\$5 million project is a vast amount of money for Aboriginal community work in Canada-whereas the Gates Foundation has ear-marked US\$1 billion to fight the global AIDS pandemic. These figures give us a sense of how different projects have different scales.

### Attitude & Stance

For those who are not professional fundraisers

the notion of having to raise a lot of money for a Change Lab can seem like an insurmountable barrier. In such instances a shift of position and attitude is necessary prior to doing the work of fund-raising.

Broadly speaking, there is plenty of money available for transformation work. The business of development routinely deals in scales of millions and billions of dollars. Development agencies, bi-lateral aid agencies and foundations all have vast budgets dedicated to creating change. Even corporations, which on first sight do not fund transformation, have access to capital which could be applied to this work. For example the Convening Phase of the Partnership for Child Nutrition (PCN) was provided by Unilever. The funding logic behind Unilever's decision was that PCN holds the potential to allow Unilever access to vast untapped markets (see "The Fortune at the Base of the Pyramid" by CK Prahalad) as well as sources of capital which they previously had no hope of accessing (development capital) in order to fund their market expansion. In addition to this market logic, PCN aligned deeply with a need for Unilever to be doing meaningful work in the world.

This final rationale can be and often is regarded cynically but that would be a mistake. People everywhere have a desire to do meaningful and positive work. Often the desire to have an impact in a particular domain comes from an aspect of an individual's personal, non-professional background. For example, one of the participants in the Sustainable Food Lab who's a banker actually comes from a farming family and is deeply concerned about the extinction of family farming. Such personal motivations are extremely powerful. Tapping into such energy is a key aspect of bringing together a Change Lab. Not believing that such desires exist within corporations or anywhere else is a liability. The Change Lab is all about recognising allies, even in the most unexpected of places, and forging an alliance of common desires and interests.

In the case of PCN it was understood early on

that the logic that moved Unilever to strongly support the project was not necessarily the same logic that would encourage other sectors, such as civil society and government, to also support the project. A lot of energy was thus put into creating a mutually acceptable and authentic story and logic. This necessitated shifts in thinking and framing. Ultimately a logic was arrived at that would appeal to all three sectors. This work was necessary in order to move ahead with convening PCN and raising the funds to realise it.

It helps to think of most transformation capital as being tied to particular theories of change. For example, the World Bank has a particular theory of change. Projects that are aligned to this theory will be optimally placed for funding. A project that seems to negate or contradict an institutional theory of change will not receive funding.

In looking for funding for the Change Lab, a fundraiser must operate from a basis of understanding that there is plenty of capital available-it's simply a matter of matching the logic of the Lab to the logic of the funding body, in other words to their theory of change. Projects which promise to spectacularly verify and consolidate an organization's theory of change will attract capital.

It is of course rare to find a perfect match between the stated goals of a project and an institutional theory of change. While it's possible and has happened several times, for example during the course of the Sustainable Food Lab, it's much more usual that the fundraiser has to take on the task of educating and demonstrating to potential donors how their project is actually in close alignment with their theory of change.

It should be fairly obvious that there is a tension in holding on to the vision of a Lab and not simply adapting the project in alignment with what donors want.

In addition to possessing an "abundance mindset" around capital it's essential that the fundraiser deeply believes in the need for the Change Lab. This includes a deep belief that the

problem the Lab is seeking to address is urgent, as well as a deep belief in the basic approach of the Change Lab—at its core that something different and radical is needed in the problem domain. It is extremely challenging to fundraise for a Change Lab if either of these beliefs is missing.

Our challenge is to ensure that any fundraisers we work with are clear on the logic of the Change Lab process and the “why” of each phase. They must be as convinced as possible that this methodology and process offers something unique to the situation.

### **Funder Characteristics**

What type of funders will invest in Change Labs?

Funders, especially institutional funders, do not normally like putting money into projects where the deliverables are not clearly defined at the onset. For this reason, the first tranche of funding for the Lab needs to come from those funders who have a higher than average tolerance for innovation and risk. In our experience the initial funding for the Convening Phase and the development of the Change Lab as a project will come from individuals who have a deep and intuitive understanding of the vision of the Change Lab. Such individuals might invest their personal money or they might have access to discretionary organizational capital which they can re-direct to the development of a Lab.

The second and third tranches of funding can come from sources that are more traditional and conservative. Each stage of the Change Lab process is a process in which the viability and indeed inevitability of a new reality becomes more clear and more certain.

The second and third tranches of funding can also be sourced earlier in the process and made conditional upon the project reaching certain milestones. It’s very important, however, that participants are invited to commit to the whole journey and ideally not make their participation conditional.

## **General workshop requirements**

### **The Orientation Pack & Letter**

It is critical to send all workshop participants an Orientation Pack or Letter prior to any workshops.

The purpose of the Orientation Pack is to provide people with basic logistical information, such as where the meeting is, when to arrive, what to wear, to provide them with information on the agenda and process (recommended) and finally to provide them with participant biographies.

Sending participant biographies out in advance is extremely important and should not be underestimated. In our experience if it is not provided then participants spend most of a workshop simply trying to figure out who else is present. This can be crippling.

### **General Workshop Requirements**

Our objective is to create an environment that helps people shift out of their usual harried and reactive mode into a more relaxed and reflective one. The workshop environment is critical to meeting this objective and enabling them to broaden their perspectives through an open and innovative process. The atmosphere in the room therefore must be informal and non-business; it should feel like being a comfortable living room, with chairs, music, flowers and house plants. In a typical conference center this takes some ingenuity and persistence.

The ideal venue is a small, unpretentious hotel (which we can take over completely), located several hours away from the city, in an inspiring natural setting. Confirm with the venue that no other events have been scheduled nearby that will disrupt our workshop, e.g. a wedding, disco, construction, or a fire alarm test.

### **Facility requirements**

- One large airy room, flat floor, with lots of wall



space to hang flip charts (guidelines as to size: 5 participants, 500 square feet; 50 participants, 2500 square feet; 200 participants, 5000 square feet). Windows and natural light. One half of the room will be used for plenary sessions (no tables) and the other half for small group work (small round tables). No break-out rooms are needed for the Foundation Workshop, but for other workshops break-out rooms may be needed for each small group, eg. initiative groups.

- An assortment of comfortable chairs: sofas, armchairs, patio furniture, bar stools, executive chairs, straight chairs, etc. (These chairs *do not* have to be all of the same type). The straight-backed conference chairs usually provided by hotels are too uncomfortable and are not satisfactory (we can use some of these but not only these).
- Small round tables (cocktail rounds, not large dinner tables), each seating four participants. A few high (bar) tables. Straight-backed chairs are fine around these small tables.
- A small table for materials at the front of the room, and a table for the secretary (if applicable). A long table at side of the room on which participants can place their coats, briefcases, etc.
- Some floor lamps with traditional down lighting shades.
- Large wastepaper basket.
- Some plants and flowers.
- Overhead projector and screen.
- CD music player.
- No ashtrays or phones in the room.

### **Food and drink**

All breaks (coffees, lunches, dinners) should be taken outside of the room.

Tea, coffee, water, soft drinks, etc. should be available in the room throughout the day.

Times for breaks and meals will be advised in advance but need to be slightly flexible so as not to break the work at an inconvenient time.

Lunches should be light (buffet is good).

Dinners should be held in a private dining room (including if off-site).

### **Secretarial support (when applicable)**

- Staff to transcribe selected flip charts onto A4/81/2X11 paper and to make photocopies of all material produced, so that the participants can take it away with them at the end of the workshop.
- Computer with word processing package.
- Laser printer.
- Easily-accessible, high-volume photocopier.

### **Materials for each workshop**

- Pads of 100 Post-Its (75mm x 130mm, 1 pad per 6 participants)
- Rolls of masking tape to tape flipchart paper to the walls (1 wide roll [2"], plus 1 narrow roll [3/4"] per 6 participants)
- Flip chart easels (1 easel per 6 participants) with flip chart paper, plus extra pads of flip chart paper
- CDs with workshop music
- Journal/notebooks to write in (hard backed or school-type-not simply a notepad) and pens (1 per participant)
- Butcher paper (1 large roll)
- Flip chart pens (broad tip, non bleed, dark colors only, 1 per participant, e.g. Sanford or Mr. Sketch-not whiteboard pens)
- T-pins, clothes pegs, string
- Name tags for all participants (42 point size minimum, first and last names only)
- Pack of small sticky coloured paper dots (at least two colours, 10 dots per participant)
- Polaroid camera and film, or digital camera plus printer
- Material to make collages: assorted old magazines, glue sticks, scissors, crayons, coloured paper, etc.
- Large (8.5") self-adhesive paper hexagons (200 yellow, 200 blue), available from [www.vis-it.com](http://www.vis-it.com)

### **Specific wall space needs for graphic recording (when applicable)**

We use large sheets of white paper that are 4 feet wide and cut to 6 or 8 foot lengths. These sheets of paper are mounted on a smooth wall.

When using large charts, the optimum working wall space for a large group situation is 24 feet of flat wall surface, unobstructed by molding, chair rails, switchplates, windows, framed pictures, doorways, etc. The best wall surface is one that is free of texture, i.e., a smooth, painted or wall-papered surface. (Note: We use a special artist's white tape that does not harm paint or wallpaper, wood-paneled or stuccoed surfaces.) There are very few sites that meet this requirement, so here are options we frequently employ:

16 feet of unencumbered, smooth-surfaced wall space is the next best thing. 16 feet is also the favored minimal amount of space needed whether it is actual wall space or one of the alternatives below. Note: We can go to 8 feet of space, but this requires a bit more coordination between the facilitator and the recorder. As an 8 foot section of paper is filled, it will need to be rolled quickly and moved to another section of the room. The facilitator/presenter and recorder need to stay in tune with each other so that this "paper management" is as non-disruptive to the group process as possible.

We can work on a variety of surfaces, though smooth is best. The types of wall surface we can work on include fabric wall papers that are not heavily textured; stuccoed walls that are not heavily textured; ballroom dividers that are made out of cushioned fabric or of hard surfaced materials.

When the above is not available, we use the following alternatives in order of preference:

a) Lightweight room dividers: these are the "old-fashioned" kind that offices first used when they began to form cubicles. The dividers are simple 5' X 6' "walls" standing on two flat feet. Rental companies that outfit conventions and meetings usually have these available. b) Portable whiteboards (or chalkboards): these are the kind that roll around and the dimension of

the actual board space is usually 5' X 6'. c) Foam core boards: Lightweight foam core boards (4' X 8') can be used in a variety of ways. For example, we can tape them up on walls that are too rough, or we can rest them on several sets of flipchart easels. Mounting them on the wall is more stable and easier to work with. The tape we use to do this does not damage the walls.

Special note about moldings and/or chair rails: Frequently, hotels have a strip of molding (also known as a chair rail) that runs along the wall at about 3 feet above the floor. Unfortunately, this decorative item is right in the middle of the working surface for a graphic recorder. If the wall space is suitable, other than this molding, we usually have the hotel bring in a set of risers or stages and set them up against the wall, running the length of space (24' or 16') that we need. The riser is usually about 12-18 inches off the ground, lifting the graphic recorder up just enough above the molding to be able to work. As an added benefit, in large group situations, using risers also helps the audience see the output of the graphic recording process much more easily. For this reason, risers are also helpful when using the lightweight room dividers described above.

“A single event can have infinitely many interpretations.”

– Jenny **Holzer**

# Codification - The Workshop Report

## Introduction & Purpose

The purpose of the Workshop Report is to capture the proceedings of a workshop for use as a practical record.

The primary audience for the workshop report are the participants of the workshop and Lab Champions (some of whom might not be present at workshops). Due to the fact that the Change Lab is an ongoing process, the workshop report is a critical tool to ensure that participants are able to continue their work outside of workshops.

It's important to note that *usually* the workshop report is a confidential document not intended for wide circulation outside of the participants. It's a private record of the workshop. Having said that, participants are often required, in confidence, to report back to their boss and their colleagues on the Lab process.

There may be projects in which the Lab Team might decide that the workshop report is a matter of public record.

The workshop report is distinct from the Learning History of the project in two areas. Firstly it covers the proceedings of a workshop in depth, which the Learning History does not necessarily do. Secondly it is produced within one week of the end of the workshop while the Learning History may be produced several months after the event. For participants the Learning History coupled with the workshop report represent key documentation of the Change Lab.

It is also worth noting that the workshop report,

as it currently stands, is a report and not a form of graphic recording.

## Preparation

### Before the Workshop

- Review previous workshop reports in order to familiarise yourself with format and design.
- Review the agenda and the facilitators process guide of the meeting and ensure that you're familiar with the intended format, objectives of sessions and the set-up of space beforehand.
- The Report Editor should ensure that the Secondary Editor has scheduled time to review and edit the workshop report. (see roles below for more information.)

### At the Workshop

Confidentiality. The issue of confidentiality must be addressed up front as part of the groundrules of the workshop. Most Generon workshops use "Chatham House" rules where a participant may report who was there and what was said but may not say who said what. That is, statements cannot be attributed specifically to an individual. It's therefore standard practice not to ascribe any statements to individuals in the workshop report, except perhaps for extended contributions from invited experts or resource persons (if they agree to being quoted).

If you're producing the first workshop report of a Change Lab process or there are new participants present at the workshop then it's necessary to repeat the ground-rules around confidentiality and re-assure participants that

they can speak freely without worrying that statements they make will become public. If the workshop is being taped then this is vital as otherwise it may impair free and open dialogue.

## Roles

### Report Editor & Producer

There is normally a single Workshop Report Producer & Editor who is ultimately responsible for capturing the proceedings of a workshop, editing the material and producing the final workshop report.

Through experimenting with the process of workshop codification we have arrived at a clear process and format for producing workshop reports that is best suited to a single individual practitioner responsible for workshop codification.

If needed the Report Editor can audio tape sessions as a means of backing-up their note taking.

### Secondary Editor

Due to the fact that it's impossible for an individual to guarantee that a critical point hasn't been missed, it's recommended that a secondary editor be available. The secondary editor is normally the Learning Historian as they will be familiar with the contents of the report and the process. The task of this editor will be to review the final workshop report which they should do in both soft and hard copies. (That is, they should also proof the final print version of the report before it's sent to participants.)

Note that the issue of having notes for sessions is a weakness with a single practitioner approach. If the secondary editor does not have comprehensive notes of their own for each of the sessions, as is entirely possible, then the best they can do is to point out any gaps and edit the material for errors.

## Process

### Contents of the Workshop Report

The workshop report can include the following elements:

- **Context & connecting text**-Sessions should be put into context and ensure flow and that the overall report is not disjointed.
- **Process descriptions** - A short process description, typically no more than a paragraph, should be provided for each session.
- **Flipcharts** - Inclusion of flipcharts from plenary (but not necessarily small group) sessions are critical to the report and there should be comprehensive coverage. While in some cases it will make more sense to type up flipcharts, it's also critical to ensure that digital photos of flip-charts are included in the reports. These serve as much as memory aides as well as to communicate content.
- **Decisions & outcomes** - If certain decisions were made during a session then they must be captured. If a session has a particular outcome, such as a map, a typology or a key learning, then these too must be included in the workshop report.
- **Photographs** - Photographs serve to remind people of the context of the meeting and for non-verbally oriented participants they serve as a critical communication.
- **Quotes** - Direct verbatim quotes that capture the language of the participants are important. As many distinct voices as possible should be present in the report.
- **Verbatim reporting** - In the past, we have tried to capture verbatim, as much of what happens within a session as possible. While this is of benefit and greatly improves the quality of the workshop report, it is not essential.

## Producing the Workshop Report: Timing

### During the Workshop

The workshop report should be sent to participants one week after the end of the workshop.

The report editor should ensure that they keep comprehensive notes throughout the duration of the workshop.

Flipcharts should be captured throughout the duration of the workshop, ideally at the end of every day.

On the last day of the workshop, or the day after, the Report Editor should ensure that ALL flipcharts have been captured. They need to build time into the schedule, between the end of the workshop and the team debrief to do this.

### The Week After the Workshop

The Report Editor should send the final workshop report to the Secondary Editor at least two days before the report is due to be printed.

Final, hard copy reports should be sent to the participants one week (7 days) after the end of the workshop.

## Limitations & Pitfalls

### Confidentiality-Accidentally ascribing statements through context.

It is especially critical to have some sensitivity towards the fact that in some cases individuals can be identified through the context of a statement. While it isn't critical to eliminate all contextual identification, it's important to ensure that confidentiality is not betrayed, unknowingly, by context, particularly if a contentious or potentially damaging statement has been made.

The myth of the complete and objective report. It's not uncommon for at least one person in the group to claim that the most important of points

has not been captured. It's practically impossible to ensure that every single point that every single member of a group considers critical is present in such a report.

*Do NOT tell participants there is no need for them to take notes.*

Rather, the practitioners stance should be that the workshop report is simply one, subjective, story of the workshop, within which the practitioner does their best to ensure that critical points are covered. The workshop report is, by its nature, an incomplete record.

If, once the report has been published, a participant feels strongly that a particular point must enter the record then ask them to get in touch with the project's Learning Historian, who will ensure this happens.

## Comprehensive Coverage

If the practitioner cannot be at a session then it's critical to ensure that an alternative person has been briefed. This person must be made aware that they are taking on the role of principle for that session. Ensure that they have read these fieldbook notes as part of their briefing.

If a number of people are sharing the responsibility of photographing flip-charts ensure that all flip-charts are covered and that each of the images is legible. If a flipchart has not been captured and has been thrown away it's impossible to correct later.

*Ensure that cleaners do not throw flipcharts away when cleaning up in the mornings!*

## Debriefing while traveling

Time constraints during a workshop might push the facilitators to ask participants to debrief a session on a bus. This is generally not a good idea and it becomes very hard, if not impossible, to capture sessions. Where possible, debriefing on the road should be avoided.

Birds make great sky circles for their freedom.  
How do they learn it?  
They fall, and falling,  
They're given wings.

– Rumi

# Codification - Contributing to the Fieldbook

## Introduction & Purpose

As we embark upon more and more projects, the need for ensuring that we capture our learning grows. The purpose of codification is to ensure that we, as a community of practitioners, are not re-inventing the wheel on each project, but rather being disciplined about writing down what worked and what didn't so that cross-project learning can occur.

When this work is not done, the quality of projects becomes irregular and dependent on the team or practitioner's ability to recall from memory or random notes what they did on previous projects. The work of codification is concerned with systematically building institutional memory that can be accessed and used practically.

This fieldbook is an example of codification in practice.

In order for codification to work, the discipline and responsibility for the task needs to be shared (as opposed to being owned by any one individual). This work really needs to be collective. Contributions are not just actively encouraged but are absolutely essential for the success of this work.

## Process

This fieldbook will be updated and re-released on a regular basis. All contributions should be sent in electronic format to Zaid Hassan ([hassan@generonconsulting.com](mailto:hassan@generonconsulting.com)) and Mille Bojer ([bojer@generonconsulting.com](mailto:bojer@generonconsulting.com))

In addition to general or specific feedback you

may wish to send us, for Version 3.0 we are particularly interested in receiving:

- Notes from the Field from any phase of the Change Lab
- Tools to enable participants to formulate their theories of change
- Ideas on good ways to transition between Presenting and Realizing
- Considerations on adapting the Change Lab process in different cultures, and stories of this being done
- Advice on how to better structure the Fieldbook to make it more easily adaptable as a living document

If help is needed in the codification processes, it may be more convenient for the practitioner to be interviewed. In these cases, please contact Zaid with a brief outline of what you think is needed.

The current intention is to regularly schedule codification workshops to discuss the process and to actually do some of the work face-to-face as a group of practitioners.



“Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. And one of the great problems of history is that the concepts of love and power have usually been contrasted as opposites-polar opposites-so that love is identified with the resignation of power, and power with the denial of love. We’ve got to get this thing right. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anaemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love. It is precisely this collision of immoral power with powerless morality which constitutes the major crisis of our time.”

– Martin **Luther King Jr.**

# Reading List

This Reading List includes just the texts cited in this book. For more detailed reading suggestions, Generon has a 37-page annotated bibliography available entitled: *Underpinnings and Elaborations of the U-Process: An Annotated Bibliography*

## General

Hassan, Zaid. *Connecting to Source* (Available at the Generon Website — [www.generonconsulting.com](http://www.generonconsulting.com).)

Hassan, Zaid.  
*Six or Seven Axioms of Mass Social Change*

Heron, John.  
*The Complete Facilitators Handbook*

Jaworski, Joseph et al.  
*Setting the Field: Creating the Conditions for Profound Institutional Change* May 6, 1998.  
Available at the Generon Website:  
[www.generonconsulting.com](http://www.generonconsulting.com)

Jaworski, Joseph. *When Good People Do Terrible Things* In Chapter 7 of *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (Peter Senge, ed.).

Kahane, Adam. *Solving Tough Problems*

Perlas, Nicanor. *Shaping Globalisation*

Scharmer, C. Otto.  
*Theory U: Leading from the Emerging Future*.  
(Forthcoming)

Schein, Edgar. *Process Consulting Revisited*

## Sensing

Sachs, Wolfgang. *The Development Dictionary* (see chapter on "Helping")

## Presencing

Cohen, Ken. *The Way of Qigong: The Art and Science of Chinese Energy Healing*

Jaworski, Joseph et al. *Setting the Field: Creating the Conditions for Profound Institutional Change*. May 6, 1998.  
Available at [www.generonconsulting.com](http://www.generonconsulting.com)

Jaworski, Joseph, and Scharmer, C. Otto.  
*Leadership in the Digital Economy: Sensing and Actualizing Emerging Futures*, p. 32. (Society for Organizational Learning, 2000).

Kahane, Adam. *Solving Tough Problems*  
Chapter: "Closed Fist, Open Palm" (Berrett-Koehler, 2004).

Milton, John. *Sacred Passage and the Way of Nature Fellowship*  
Available at [www.sacredpassage.com](http://www.sacredpassage.com)

Scharmer, C. Otto. *Theory U: Leading from the Emerging Future* (Forthcoming).

Senge, Peter, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, and Betty Sue Flowers. *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future* (SoL, 2004).

## **Realizing**

Andersen, Ray. *Mid-Course Correction*

Benyus, Janine M. *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*

Cook, David. *The Natural Step: Towards A Sustainable Society*

Hawken, Lovins, and Lovins. *Natural Capitalism*

Holmberg and Robert. *Backcasting from non-overlapping sustainability principles - a framework for strategic planning*  
([www.naturalstep.ca/articles/3b%20Backcasting.pdf](http://www.naturalstep.ca/articles/3b%20Backcasting.pdf))

Idea Factory, Inc. *Why prototype?*

Kelly, Tom. *The Art of Innovation*

McDonough and Braungart. *Cradle to Cradle*

Thackara, John. *In The Bubble: Designing in a Complex World*

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