

**THE POWER OF ONE**  
THE ROLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL IN  
SYSTEMS CHANGE

Discussion Notes, Links, and  
Resources



## The Power of One – The Role of the Individual in Systems Change

### A Tamarack Webinar with Liz Weaver (Tamarack) and Cameron Norman (Cense)

#### The Big Ideas

The temptation with systems approaches to strategy is to look at the whole system, but that is dependent upon whether we can see the boundaries of the system to help us understand the range of activities we need to consider in developing a model to guide us.

1. Coherence is what we are seeking. In order to achieve coherence, we need to take some kind of action (often called a probe) and then see what that does. This helps us to examine how the system is behaving and how an action generates reactions and where (or whether) coherence forms. Coherence is basically a way of saying that things go together with some manner of alignment where
2. Seeing or creating coherence is about meaning and meaning is context dependent. What is meaningful for us depends on our circumstances, but it also provides us with a means to focus our attention amid the various signals we're getting. Various patterns, relationships, interconnections and signals that we see that align together and create something meaningful are coherent.
3. Coherence also provides us with a language to communicate. When you observe coherence, it begins to create a language you can use to communicate to others about what you're seeing. When we look at what is happening at a societal level, it's difficult to find what coherent narratives are actionable. At a smaller level, we might find them, and this allows us to communicate more fully with others and this will allow us to scale and grow our learning.

This is the smallest visible system (SVS) in which you can make a difference. Once you can act wisely on this system, you can expand the boundaries and scope to work larger.

Advice to Community Change Practitioners:

1. Build in mindfulness moments asking what am I doing and why am I doing it this way?
2. Look for where your energy is and follow that – what excites me and what energizes me at this moment?
3. Consider your leadership – what can I lead or who should I be following?

#### Additional Tools, Resources and Links

- Tamarack Institute website: [www.tamarackcommunity.ca](http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca)
- Cameron Norman, Cense website: <https://www.cense.ca/contact/principal/>
- Jennifer Garvey Berger: <https://www.amazon.ca/Unlocking-Leadership-Mindtraps-Thrive-Complexity/dp/1503609014>
- Jennifer Garvey Berger website: <https://www.cultivatingleadership.co.nz/our-team/jennifer-garvey-berger>
- Three Horizons Framework: <https://www.internationalfuturesforum.com/three-horizons>

- Tim Brodhead – On Not Letting Another Crisis go to Waste: <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/not-letting-another-crisis-go-waste-tim-brodhead>
- Three horizons and culture change: <https://medium.com/activate-the-future/the-three-horizons-of-innovation-and-culture-change-d9681b0e0b0f>
- Riding the waves of resilience <https://censemaking.com/2019/08/19/riding-the-waves-of-resilience/>
- Innovation, Change, and the Leopard: <https://censemaking.com/2019/05/15/innovation-change-and-the-leopard/>
- Cense Newsletter: <https://censemaking.com/newsletter/>

### Check in Conversation: How has the Covid-19 Pandemic impacted your work?

Nancy Tregunna	I am involved in quality improvement within a large regional health authority in MB, My work has shifted from working with departments on quality improvement and Accreditation-related activities to monitoring PPE, screening people coming into the hospital and currently am collecting cloth masks from community groups.
Cathy Sharp	I'm joining from Edinburgh UK. All my work is now on-line - for now anyway.
Marion Trent-Kratz	Hi City of Hamilton Ontario Canada currently redeployed to Housing Services as part of the emergency response to those experiencing homelessness during the covid-19
Luis Ulerio	Newark, New Jersey here!
Wendy Robinson	I am from Alberta, Canada, working for a municipality in the social services world. Our mandate is preventive social services...
Lyn Brooks	greetings from Vancouver
Tracey Campbell	Good Morning everyone, here from the ministry of Labour and Immigration in Alberta. Looking forward to learning from all of you.
Lisa B	From Hamilton, ON. Improvement Advisor for the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. Work with several lovely, ambitious, driven communities working to bring an end to homelessness and protecting their neighbours during COVID.
Carolyn Bee	My work hasn't been influenced too much. I've worked remotely as an urban sustainability researcher (at "Metabolism of Cities") in the last years and was used not going to the office, but to the library instead. My colleagues are in France and South Africa, so it has been interesting to hear from them what is going on in other places.
Pam Churchill	Pam Churchill, Toronto Canada; a volunteer in the condo sector. We cannot see people in person and try to stay connected. I am also an advocate for better long term care.
Mishma Mukith	Hi all! I am from Edmonton, Alberta (Canada), and work as a Partnership Coordinator for the UofA's Community Service-Learning Department. Our work has shifted online, and we are now thinking ahead of what student placements will look like in the fall.
Abbie Grafstein	I am in Waterloo Region, Ontario, Canada. The Lyle S. Hallman Foundation is place-based funder, typically in the prevention space for children and families. In Mid-March we shifted all active program grants to unrestricted so that organizations could use funds however needed. In April we made several

	proactive, unrestricted emergency grants and we joined a collaboration of local funders in a community response fund--both of these moved us away from our prevention approach to crisis response and essential services and programs.
Alexandra Arsenault	Hi from Halifax, Nova Scotia! I'm a student, currently getting my bachelors degree in gender studies. I was directed towards the Tamarack Institute in a policy evolution course, and I'm here to learn more about the work and message of the organization!

### What is your Smallest Visible System?

Tracey Campbell	I have continued to have daily discussions with team members, weekly conversations with extended family. I hosted a deep dive with other colleagues in my field.
Pam Churchill	My smallest system is my own condo building. I can learn from others here about how older people are affected. I can also speak to them about issues-what we should learn from this experience. For example, has our thinking changed about essential people?
Marion Trent-Kratz	Change management is intensified in the small systems that require immediate adaptation or adoption and this is challenging for those who are typically late adopters and not easy to change. Challenging for moving systems forward in this context
arohanui grace:	Kia ora from Christchurch, Aotearoa NZ. We are still working from home - 6? weeks now. In this COVID situation we have paid careful attention to our team of 7 - how we are individually from day to day, and then how we are together. You are right that it is really dynamic. We have been practising using the language of the Clifton Strengths with each other. It has been really helpful.
Genya Bonfield	I've moved beyond fear and am taking more action as an individual on behalf of others, I've been writing to governments and using the situation to try and bring about change in certain areas that are being magnified now.

### Who are some leaders or systems that are shifting?

Karen Hilfman Millson	90 million new zoom accounts opened this year (as of a few weeks ago) .... 300 million calls a day vs 10 million a day
Marion Trent-Kratz	Greta Thunberg changing conversations about climate change and actions
Marion Trent-Kratz	Mark Zukerberg and using social media as a means for connecting with others...good or bad...still not sure
Marion Trent-Kratz	Interesting...just sewed a duvet cover out of old drapes I replaced but couldn't give the fabric away or use as rags...didn't feel responsible from a footprint perspective

## Other comments

Cathy Sharp: sounds like "inquiring appreciatively!"

Cathy Sharp: yes, and who do I want to do it with?

Sonya Kujat Choy: Does anyone else feel like they are actually experiencing resistance to change right now? I feel a desire to use this "disrupted" season as opportunity to do things differently, but that isn't always received well. As if people just want to go back to the old comfortable. [sonya Kujat choy in Edmonton, home schooling my kids now and wanting to find new ways to impact my neighborhood going forward]

Tara Entwistle: We might also be building relationships across systems now as part of our COVID-19 response that we can nurture and leverage in the long-term to tackle other issues like climate change.

Cathy Sharp: I hear the resonance of the provocation - "We rarely work alone, even if we think we can" <https://workforcotland.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/collectiveleadershipreport1.pdf>

Carolin Bee: We also have to realise that the individual cannot do a lot through their own action. As much as I'm advocating this and I don't fly and eat plant-based, it is estimated that with hardly anyone flying at the moment and staying at home, there will only be a 8% reduction in 2020, compared to 2019. The change really needs to take place by consuming less and systemically changing our industries, economic and value systems.

Carolin Bee: This is in regard to the climate change point. Of course, there are ripple effects etc., but still.

Cate Proctor: @Sonya I work in the arts, particularly as a consultant. There is tremendous coming together of this community currently. No resistance but rather much feeling of opportunity is emanating. Only time will tell if new ideas, partnerships and holistic views are resisted by bigger partners in the community, business and government.

## Your Questions:

I don't think it's not so much that the questions have changed - but the context/shifts etc alter how they are heard, how we respond or dodge questions. Covid has ironically created the conditions for reciprocity. Almost so we cannot avoid each others humanness. Sorry more a statement than a question!
--

Tipping point?
----------------

I can't help to see the synergies between this and how to help people move past feeling overwhelmed about climate change. I am wondering how we can "combine" these different crisis - so we try and "solve" multiple crisis (as they are connected in our systems world) without overwhelming the individual (and there small visible system)
--

Can you explain three horizons thinking more? I'm not familiar with the concept.
--

Where do you think the good ideas go, after they start small (businesses and education) with sustainability and values, but then they grow and they are pressured for revenue, greed, and
---

expansion and the principle that created everything just disappear. Do you think this is an opportunity to go to the basics again?
My team has been talking as a team about how we lead from a distance to influence change in some crappy behaviour in our wider system. some ideas?
Any thoughts about best practices on designing organizational habits when attempting to shift organizational culture?
How does one deal with nepotism in community, innovative proposals either denied without regard or simply stolen...? Discouraging to even try.

## Final Reflections:

tanya fink: thank you

Tracey Campbell: Thank you to the presenters and to Tamarack...GREAT presentation!

Cate Proctor: Some great information on this call. Thank you!

Tara Entwistle: This webinar just erased my webinar fatigue. What an invigorating discussion and presentation. THANK YOU!

Marion Trent-Kratz: Really appreciate the community psychological perspective! It makes such logical sense to begin from a place of emotional response and impact during challenging times to support change and shifts in systems

Marion Trent-Kratz: Thank you