

Abstract for International Association of Community Development Conference: Glasgow 2014

Conference Theme section: Wealth:

Seminar/Workshop (or presentation):

Title: Community Leadership as Learning

Summary of Proposal

Inspiring Communities has been working to support and enable locally-led change through creating conditions for leadership and learning, since 2008. Inspiring Communities was born when 30 people in Aotearoa New Zealand debated how to support the leadership of *people working together 'in place'* i.e. local neighbourhoods and communities, to unleash potential and address problems. By 2011, 300 people gathered in a national community-led development learning conference connecting people from all sectors *working collectively to create tangible impact*. By 2013, 6000 people were talking about their neighbourhood initiatives across NZ with Jim Diers from Seattle. Knowledge and action are being co-constructed with the understanding that *how* we work to enable active citizen leadership is as important as *what* activity, project or outcome may be our particular focus.

This session shares emerging understanding about enabling active citizen leadership. The learning comes from innovative PhD research through collaborative inquiry with Inspiring Communities. Leadership strategies will be illustrated with Inspiring Communities stories, based around four inter-related layers: *personal, relational, structural and cultural*. Taken-for-granted assumptions about leadership will be challenged. Leadership as an interactive learning dynamic will be explored, to support ways of thinking and acting that cultivate and harness “the common-wealth” of community leadership.

Short description of contributors

Margy-Jean Malcolm, Senior Lecturer with Unitec NZ, has recently submitted her PhD “Civil Society Leadership as Learning.” Mary-Jane Rivers is co-founder and current Chair of Inspiring Communities. Both have been active in community leadership, in voluntary, paid and consultancy roles over the last four decades locally, nationally and internationally.

Community Leadership as Learning

Introduction

E nga mana, e nga reo, e rau rangitira ma, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Warm greetings to you all. This workshop is about changing conversations:

- It's about how the conversation has begun to change in NZ around 'local' and community-led development (CLD) in the last five years: we'll share some stories from Inspiring Communities' experience of that shift.
- It's about changing our conversations about leadership: we will explore with you what happens when we shift our focus from the (heroic) individual leader to seeing leadership as a whole, multi-layered, dynamic learning system
- It's about strategies and tools for growing active citizen leadership drawing on complexity thinking and collaborative inquiry

What we are sharing with you today arises out of a collaborative inquiry in 2010/2011 where Inspiring Communities' national leadership team inquired with Margy-Jean around a central shared research question: **what supports the emergence of civil society leadership?** MJ's PhD has since harvested wisdom from this and another civil society leadership learning context to support theory-building and to support praxis outcomes for practitioners. We feel we now have a clearer understanding of what works, and why, as we seek to enable active citizen community leadership of the many, not just the few.

Everything we do is built on a foundation of relationships. In Aotearoa NZ, we call that early investment in relationships '**whakawhanaungatanga**' – literally meaning becoming family. Today, as a shortcut, we would like you to introduce yourself to someone else near you, with your name, where you are from and one thing (however large or small) that you do that supports active citizen leadership.

Now a little bit about us, Inspiring Communities and what we have been noticing. IC was formed in 2008 and has been championing **community-led development, supporting and enabling locally-led change** – through creating conditions for leadership and learning, ever since.

Inspiring Communities was born when 30 people in Aotearoa New Zealand debated how to support the leadership of *people working together 'in place'* i.e. local neighbourhoods and communities, to unleash potential and address problems.

By 2011, 300 people gathered in a national community-led development learning conference connecting people from all sectors *working collectively to create tangible impact*. The hosts were the local Victory school and community health centre in Nelson, known as Victory village, who have become nationally recognised for how they have transformed a school in a low income neighbourhood into a vibrant community hub transforming school achievement, the lives of whole families and the wider neighbourhood. Other communities around NZ came to the Forum to share their own inspiring stories of community engagement and learn from each other. Local and central government agencies came to listen and learn too. The Families Commission in particular were key

partners, along with IC and the Victory community in both hosting the conference and subsequently producing the “At the Heart” resource. Together we created a space for lots of new learning links. (slides: [Victory Village and At the Heart Resource](#))

By 2013, 6000 people were talking about their neighbourhood initiatives across NZ with Jim Diers from Seattle. ([power point slide: and Jim in neighbourhood discussions](#))

Actions are being co-constructed with the understanding that *how* we work to enable active citizen leadership is as important as *what* activity, project or outcome may be our particular focus. For Inspiring Communities these have been multi-layered; local, regional and nation-wide:

- working with 9 locally-based initiatives - Core learning Clusters- providing an external ‘critical friend’ for action reflection, capturing the experiences of learning and outcomes and writing them up
- creating, brokering and building networks and communication nodes, eg peer learning in Bay of Plenty, CLD learning group in Nelson
- hosting discussions and workshops – provocative breakfasts in Auckland
- creating and providing, resources tools and guides – 2011:“What We Are Learning” and 2013 “Learning By Doing”
- hosting and making available international speakers – Jim Diers about Neighbourhood empowerment, Liz Weaver, Tamarack- Collective Impact and place-based poverty reduction
- light touch connecting and sharing through e –newsletters - nation-wide and two regional

And now I will hand over to Margy-Jean to tell you a little bit about the research process.

The core value at the heart of the research approach with IC was a commitment to co-creating research ‘with’ each other, rather than me coming in and doing research ‘on’ IC. We were **all co-researchers** designing the research, participating in gathering the data, analysing together what we were noticing, writing up different aspects and today is a great opportunity to be disseminating our learning together. I was curious to see **how the way we did the research** could support leadership learning at the micro-level, as we inquired together into leadership learning in the macro community-led development context.

We invested strongly at the outset, in developing a **detailed working agreement** about *how* we would work together as five co-researchers. We agreed to four full day workshops spread across a year and use of journals (or ‘random jottings and dumpings’ as we later renamed them) in between to keep our multi-sensory noticing antennae switched to ‘on’ as often as possible. New knowledge emerged and was validated through an epistemology summed up by John Heron (1996, p. 169) as “it’s true because it works and it works because it’s true”. Emergent theory arose from our reflections on our practice. Patterns and propositions emerged as we made sense of what we were seeing and in turn the new thinking continues to develop and inform our practice. I have since contributed towards Inspiring Communities’ Learning by Doing publication (Inspiring Communities, 2013), and the IC team have contributed much wisdom towards my PhD recently been published.

What has emerged is **more a way of thinking and acting** in our work with communities. It's not a model or a recipe!

So what did we find out from our inquiry?

The first big idea is that we need to be **open to reframing our understanding of leadership**, disturbing some of our taken-for-granted assumptions about what leadership 'is'. So let's start with what your immediate, top of mind word associations are with the leadership word. (*Invite input to brainstorm*). Our immediate, dominant, implicit assumptions about leadership are often about strong, heroic, decisive, visionary individual leaders. But what we noticed was that for each leadership property we identified as important, **we often found the opposite was equally relevant at different points in time too**: Leaders needed a strong sense of self, *and* to be able to be vulnerable. They needed to be able to facilitate inquiry to find answers together as much as having the decisive answers themselves. They needed to be able to lead out front, *and* from behind *and* from the middle. They needed to work to put structures and systems in place *and* be equally comfortable with more organic, emergent mess. They needed to build a strong culture of doing 'with', *and* discern the time for doing 'for'. We started out thinking about leadership behaviours that blocked or enabled active citizen leadership, and came to realise the same responses could be a block or an enabler at different times and contexts. There was no fixed truth about 'good' community leadership – it depends on the situation. Rather community leaders need what we call '**and-and**' thinking, to work with paradoxes, contradictions and multiple truths.

We came to think of **leadership as a whole living learning system**, not just as an individual leader with particular qualities or competencies. Learning was at the core of the community leadership we were noticing, **always moving between polarities of potentially contradictory responses**. It's like the flow of the tide always moving in and then out. I move between my strong self and my vulnerable self all the time. The challenge is not to stay stuck in one or the other, or take them to the extreme. Because **each polarity taken to the extreme has its shadow side**, like the rip current in the sea in which people sometimes drown: strong can become big, controlling ego-driven. Vulnerable can become paralysed by self-doubt. The interesting thing about rip currents is that you have to swim in a different direction to what you intuitively want to, if you are not going to be dragged under by it. Similarly, when we can use our encounters with the shadow sides, the negative extremes of these polarities, as an energy source helping us shift in a new direction. The tensions between these polarities and with their shadow sides are actually a key part of what keep complex adaptive systems moving and learning.

So why does this matter? I don't know about your culture, but people I meet in my teaching and community development work are usually rather self-effacing people with a typical response of: **Who me? I don't think of myself as a leader**. When we expose our assumptions and put a learning orientation at the centre of leadership, then we open up the potential for everyone to engage, lead, learn and contribute as active citizens from whatever our roles – in extended family, street, neighbourhood, community, workplace, voluntary organisation, or tribal structures. Whereas if we think of leadership as strong, decisive, visionary heroes and heroines then we can quickly write ourselves out of the leadership story because we can't see ourselves in that image or role – it's too big a leap. I had a student recently who was frustrated with her role and things going on in her community organisation. When she started to think beyond her struggles with those in positional

authority, and think of herself as part of the leadership of a complex, moving, adapting, learning system, she could see all sorts of possibilities for using her position of influence as a student on a management and leadership programme as the naïve inquirer to enable organisational learning and change. She described this as life-changing learning for her. So what else can we make possible with this different way of thinking about leadership as learning, leadership as a moving tide between polarities, to work with tensions we might experience ourselves?

Let's have a go and take some still time to identify some polarities or paradoxes you grapple with. Seeing and sense-making requires us to use all of our senses, so don't overthink this! This exercise uses silence and a chance to get in touch with a polarity or paradox that is real for you just now. For example, when I did this exercise in a workshop with Allan Kaplan and Sue Davidoff earlier this year, what came to mind was "energised, engaged, busy, stretched" as the high energy part of my life and on the other polarity as the part of me that longs for "stillness, space, rest" – a paradox of two ways I live my life that is never in balance! The task is then to write each polarity on a different piece of paper. Find a space in the room and stand on one and then the other. See what it feels like in your body standing in each. Then how does it feel moving between the two? If you wish, share your response with someone else in the room. Come back in ten minutes – we will ring the bell!

On your tables you have a handout with a chart that offers many more examples showing the sense of movement between polarities, tipping over to shadow sides, and some examples of enabling practices that support discernment in the middle. The more I have come to understand about complex adaptive systems and complexity thinking, the more I realise that **there is no life without polarities and movement**. So often we seek for consensus and equilibrium around one answer, yet the polarities need each other, embody aspects of each other and it is often out of the tensions and movement between them that we are able to create change, innovation and transformation. Rather than trying to resolve polarities, **we can ask different questions about what might these tensions make possible?** What am I noticing that needs to shift? How can I play a part from where I am in this system to keep it moving towards new creative possibilities? What's a good enough response for now? For example, trying to create daily times for even a little stillness, space and rest to support the energised, engaged, busy, stretched self, letting go any idealised ideas about 'balance' which I have never found possible except in very temporary, momentary forms!

Multiple Layers – 4 Quadrants

So now that we have some sense of the idea of movement between polarities, let's explore the multiple layers of this living, learning system of leadership further. Before our inquiry began, Inspiring Communities had adopted a particular theory of change based on a reflective peace building framework which had been developed from noticing successful change in challenging circumstances (Lederach, Neufeld, & Culbertson, 2007) The framework identified four dimensions of change (personal, relational, structural and cultural) that need to be influenced for transformation within communities. We worked with this framework to reflect on our practice and theorise about what we were noticing about leadership that was supporting community transformation.

The strategies we will outline bring together complexity thinking principles with our research findings to identify an emerging perspective about 'how' we might lead effectively within the complexity of the civil society space. We are going to share some stories that help illustrate some of

the strategies we identified **[handout with the four quadrants slide and the four leadership layers on it]**. Then we'll explore these strategies further together and come back to **explain more about** complexity thinking principles at the end.

Personal

At the personal level, we identified **curiosity** as at the core of effective leadership, change and development. A learner, 'not knower', inquiring mindset brings a humble attitude which assumes I may not have the only or best answer, solution or knowledge for any particular situation. 'Not knower' inquiring curiosity engages diverse perspectives, which are essential in complex contexts where much is unknown or unknowable. I don't need to know the answer to exercise leadership, but I do need to offer and keep engaging with **insightful questions** to find a way forward, and bring all my senses to then **notice** what then unfolds. I need to be aware of my own strengths, shadow sides, values and identity. I need to try to **let go my need for power and control and my fear of the unknown and unknowable**. I need to remember the non-linearity principle – that small actions can produce big outcomes – beyond any logical predictions or plans. I need to be intentional about **redistributing power in how I lead and engage people**. Is it time to be actively influencing out front; stepping back and leaving gaps to allow others to step up and self-organise; or enabling and walking alongside from the middle?

Barbara Cunningham had long held the idea of starting a community garden in Matura, a small rural town of 1500 people. No-one had been interested. In 2007 a troubling report on the health of the community had been written. There was little formal response from agencies and locals felt 'angry that the town was being taken for fools' (their words) so decided to come up with their own solutions.

The timing seemed right for Barbara to nervously test interest during a community workshop - "Imagine Matura" - where people focused on the change they wanted to see for encouraging healthy lifestyles by building on local assets.

... and the way in which the community garden operates has adapted and changed largely because of the open, inquiring and inclusive style Barbara has brought. It was originally created to help locals stretch their budgets and enjoy healthier nutrition.

- Now it is feeding 65 families
- 60 people volunteer their time and skill
- the 'purchase system' is a gold coin donation because people didn't want to receive handouts!
- there are several offshoot projects such as:
 - fruit tree workshops
 - support to the local school garden club
 - providing fresh produce for a new local "Meals on Wheels" for housebound people – replacing frozen meals that were previously coming in from out of their town.

Relationships

In the relational layer, we identified that our ability to **facilitate inquiry within ourselves and with others** was central to civil society leadership as learning. Intentional individual and collective reflective processes support stillness, personal awareness, respectful relationships and the growing of really important collective wisdom. We know it's a challenge to take time out for that reflection amidst our passion for action. It feels like a luxury but it's actually a necessity! Ongoing cycles of **noticing, reflecting, reading patterns, making sense of what is going on, exploring possibilities, designing temporary support structures and action steps informed by learning**, need to be resourced with time and space. It's one of the ways we build our leadership confidence and competence in the whole team, by learning together, not just relying on a few individual leaders to do all the thinking and planning.

Complex situations like communities live far from certainty and agreement. Complexity thinking encourages us to make the most of uncertainty, messiness, diversity, tensions, discomfort, disturbance and paradoxes as the driving energy for learning, movement, change, innovation and pushing us away from the shoreline into counter-intuitive, creative possibilities. Movement away from equilibrium is essential and life-giving for complex systems. Our job is to shape insightful questions to support sense-making through the unknown. We need to offer encouragement for others to also step into the unknown and recognise their potential.

Relationships – Great Start

Barnardos, an early childhood service organisation, owned an old convent in Taita, *a poorer suburb in the greater Wellington city region*. Over the years, a number of services had been provided from the house, but none of them seemed to 'stick'. So in 2007, when Barnardos was assessing what kind of service/s it should run from the house, they came to a very important conclusion –that maybe the decision about the house was not theirs to make. Instead, Barnardos decided to ask Taita residents what they wanted for themselves and their community. Over a six month period two Barnardos people knocked on the doors of hundreds of Taita homes and took time to talk with people on doorsteps and around kitchen tables.

After 1000 conversations what they heard was as fascinating and powerful as the approach they had taken to let the community lead. People in Taita *didn't want any more services*. They wanted to make connections with each other and to be helped to connect with the services that already existed.

And Great Start was born. The first tangible action was a Children's fun day at the 'convent': 500 donated sausages ran out before lunch: photos of families were taken; they were made available at GS house and led to new developments, connections, and relationships ... and then onto multiple initiatives from children co-designing a park with the local Council to a children's string orchestra being formed

At the heart lay conversations and relationships with people from local Council, businesses, social services, between young and old, new and long established residents... Alongside all the messiness, uncertainty, ups and downs of a new way of working, an external 'critical friend' supported ongoing reflection, inquiry and learning about this development as it unfolded.

Structural and Systems

We identified the **power of peer learning interactions**, when people stepped across established role and organisational boundaries and really engaged with each other about what needed to change in structures, systems, formal 'rules' in communities at any level – to make a real impact. That means thinking beyond the usual allies and people we have within our immediate sphere of influence. If the whole system is going to make a shift, then we need to maximize the connections and **peer learning interactions horizontally and vertically across and between every level of the system**.

An important lesson from complexity thinking links to this need for porous boundaries, with a warning against **over-specialisation of roles** (of people, organisations, neighbourhoods, sectors). Apparent duplication or excess in the system may not be inefficient at all, but a vital resource for innovation, change and turbulent times. Because any **structures, agreements and roles** we create will most likely be **temporary** and need to continue to adapt. So we need to hold them lightly and discern together when and how these need to evolve organically into new forms.

The Porirua Good Cents Initiative, In Porirua East, emerged from local conversations at the height of the economic boom in 2007. Porirua East is a set of neighbourhoods that are low income, higher unemployment, and mainly rental accommodation.

Members of the Wesley Community Action Board a social service and community action agency - were surprised, that despite economic growth and higher employment rates, demand for the Wesley Porirua foodbank remained high.

Close relationships with families using the foodbank revealed that many of these families were trapped in a cycle of debt (where interest rates can be 400% or more) Conversations with these families revealed the huge impact this financial stress was having on the individuals concerned, their families and the community as a whole.

Good Cents emerged as a locally grown response to the concern about debt. It came to involve multiple sectors – individuals and families affected - through to Banks. A key step for setting direction and building ownership was a workshop that brought 'the whole system' into the room. Bankers, people in debt, the local Mayor, senior central and local government staff, funders, church ministers, 'loan sharks' and voluntary service organisations. 'Thinking together' they shared their concerns, experiences and insights. These were people and roles that would often actively avoid each other – for a variety of reasons – from deep shame or blaming each other. Together they developed a common goal and created a core group – as a 'light structure' - to guide the Good Cents initiative. This initiative has, in turn, built a number of practical activities creating tangible changes based on structures, agreements and peer support.

Cultural

The cultural layer expresses how and why we do things the way we do. At the core of this dimension is the CLD principle of building a strong **collaborative inquiry culture of 'doing with' in preference to 'doing for'**. We experienced the power of that for ourselves in being co-researchers rather than just research participants and researcher. In everyday CLD contexts we were noticing ourselves and

others consciously **stepping up, stepping alongside and stepping back**, to intentionally redistribute power, to support resourcefulness, and to enable the growth of the leader in everyone, at every level of the system. Service delivery organisations are similarly grappling with what it means for them to make a shift from 'doing for' to supporting more place-based CLD and 'doing with'.

In the Bay of Plenty, one of the regions in Aotearoa, New Zealand, known from the outside for its kiwifruit, beautiful beaches, strong Maori culture, geysers and hot pools in Rotorua – counter-balanced by high levels of poverty and wealth. There is also a cultural shift going on around community-led development.

Based on an approach of 'doing with' - initial region-wide workshops where people shared experiences about community-led development has grown into sub-regional peer mentoring, based learning communities, multiple local, community-led initiatives, and consistent interest and partnering from three key funders.

Enabling this has been a dedicated Inspiring Communities resource person Barbara MacLenann – convening, catalysing, facilitating and connecting within the region and with external expertise eg NZ's "Neighbours Day", Jim Diers about Seattle's neighbourhood empowerment, Mark Cabaj and Liz Weaver about Canada's place-based poverty reduction initiative and Collective Impact.

So now ...

So now that we have painted a picture of these four quadrants and leadership strategies, let's have a play with them together. We are going to divide our space into four quadrants. Please move to which quadrant you feel is your dominant mode, the one you put most energy into. Have a conversation for a few minutes with those near you about the leadership strategies identified for that particular quadrant. Do they resonate or not with you? Any new ideas you might want to experiment with? (5 min)

Now move to the quadrant where you feel you most need to grow your learning. In small groups, discuss the leadership strategies specific to that quadrant. What actions, behaviours, attitudes might you experiment with? (10 min)

Come back to the full group and invite questions, comments surfacing and feedback about what they are taking away and signpost to other resources: other NZ sessions at the conference, poster as the bumping place for more conversations, PhD online. (10 min)

Wrap-Up

In wrapping up, we want to reflect back to you some of the key ideas that inform our work in using the power of collaborative inquiry and complexity thinking as a means of co-constructing knowledge and action.

We have found complexity thinking to be a powerful way of fostering, analysing and understanding community leadership and learning. We introduced earlier the idea of leadership as a **whole living**,

learning system and the metaphor of moving tide. An ant colony is another metaphor that's often used to explain the idea of living, self-organising systems with highly distributed intelligence. These "complex adaptive systems" (CAS) are systems that learn (Davis & Sumara, 2006), given the right conditions. There is no obvious queen ant calling the shots. Yet there are some conditions within the whole system that enable the ants to learn from their interactions with each other and adapt. So what can we learn from the ants and what we know about CAS that can help us understand the enabling conditions for active citizen leadership and therefore where we need to put our energy and attention?

Davis and Sumara (2006, pp. 135-136) suggest that three particularly relevant conditions that a teacher or researcher may be able to affect to support the self-organising properties of CAS for learning. Our research has provided evidence that these conditions are also relevant to CLD practitioners:

- Enabling quality neighbour interactions through decentralised controls
- Living in tension between internal diversity and internal commonalities
- Balancing randomness and coherence

Inspiring Communities' work has shown the power of creating new nodes and linkages for **neighbour interactions for learning and adaptation**: between CLD practitioners, residents, local and central government, business, iwi and more. New nodes, new links and some rewiring of existing connections has been needed for new ideas and new pathways to emerge (Kilduff, Crossland, & Tsai, 2008), and the inertia of the system to be overcome. People have been connected across the boundaries of their traditional roles, hierarchies and silos of working in particular sectors, as Mary-Jane's examples have shown, to enable community gardens, neighbourhood strengthening, regional connections and learning, and a shift in debt culture. And the interactions are not just between people, but also between knowledge systems, structures, projects - which collide, diverge and regroup to support the emergence of new knowledge and learning amidst the action.

Our emerging understanding is that there are **three key interactions** that we need to pay close attention to, in order to facilitate leadership learning in any complex systems. :

- invest from the outset in creating high trust relationships, and over time build peer learning interactions at and between every level of the system – the bankers, the residents, the iwi, the local authority, the community groups and the teachers
- enable people to engage with new ideas and experiences, that stretch them beyond the known and often outside their comfort zones – as *Wayne Dyer* says "when you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change".
- ensure opportunities to exercise leadership in practice, so that people have the chance to build confidence and competence from the doing at whatever level is meaningful for them – whether it's trying out lettuce, helping at a community garden, leading a big new initiative

Secondly, Davis and Sumara (2006) tell us that CAS need to work with the tension between their level of diversity and what they hold in common. This team put plenty of different spices in the soup

to give it a rich, innovative flavour, but put in enough abundance of pumpkin to really bind it all together in a good brew. They might look like some of them are just standing around doing nothing but the overlap of roles is going to help if the chief chef has to go off to a family crisis tomorrow – the rest of his team will have learned how things are done around that kitchen. CAS need diversity as a rich source of information for adaptation and sustainability (Zimmerman, Plsek, & Lindberg, 2002) but not so much diversity that they completely fragment (Kaplan, 2002). Coherence is supported by a level of duplication, overlap and commonalities in the system. One of the patterns that was evident to me in Inspiring Communities' stories is how in so many community situations we put effort into co-creating an abundance of shared understanding around the WHY and the HOW: the vision, values and culture for working together. In contrast there was often a rich diversity around the WHAT and the WHO: the people, perspectives and pathways that would over time achieve the vision and uphold the values and culture. Small changes in one part of the system can produce unexpected interactions that disturb equilibrium. Interactions in CAS are not linear, and therefore our shared common intent around the WHY needs to be open to diverse and unexpected 'WHAT' outcomes and pathways.

CAS thrive far away from any neat and tidy plans or equilibrium. They hold a paradoxical mix of randomness and coherence in tension. They are always in movement. Chaos theory suggests that order and chaos are partners in the creative process of change (Wheatley, 2006). CAS are full of paradoxes and contradictions, and this invites us to inquire about each polarity needs the other rather than seeing them as either-or choices (Patton, 2011). Collaborative inquiry helps us notice and make sense of what's happening in our ever-changing world of practice, and to review how, where and if we need to intervene next in this moving system- for example: we might need to strengthen clarity and coherence around a shared common purpose and organisational culture at a time of funding crisis or significant change in team members involved.

Complexity thinking (and its understanding of CAS characteristics) challenges many traditional assumptions about leadership – for example, about our intentionality (plenty random things just happen as systems self-organise), our influence (directly as individuals or on the conditions for leadership to flourish in the whole system) and our equilibrium-seeking assumptions (for example about consensus, plans and predetermined performance measures) (Plowman & Duchon, 2008). Complexity leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007) suggests we move between more bureaucratic or top-down levels of influence, to enabling roles in the middle and at other times stepping back to trust self-organising systems to lead themselves. Our research has painted a rich picture of this sense of moving between polarities of very different leadership responses, to work with the complexity of the community or civil society space we work in.

Complexity thinking offers a rationale for holding different perspectives in dialogue, without any one perspective having to be 'right'. 'And-and' thinking enables exploration of multiple possibilities, rather than being locked into 'either-or' binaries. Trans-disciplinary perspectives bring a rich resource for new thinking, without the need to fix on one truth or consensus. 'And-and' thinking enables understanding of leadership within CAS as partly intentional and partly self-organising – and shifts the leadership focus towards influencing conditions for self-organisation, learning and transformation to flourish.

Our take home messages would be encourage you, working from wherever you are, to:

- embrace the paradoxes of community leadership with a learner's inquiring curiosity and a capability to facilitate collaborative inquiry
- think of leadership as learning within complex adaptive, living systems, not just individuals
- keep discerning what layers of the system (personal, relational, structural and cultural) need attention (or not) to change the conversation and keep growing active citizen leadership

Overview of process:

Opening and bridge

(5) Opening around purpose and whakawhanaungatanga - short intro to others at your table/or one other in the room – name; and some well framed questions..... one thing (however large or small) that you do that supports active citizen leadership.

(5) Intro about IC and story of outcomes/impact (MJR) ...from 30 people to 300 to 6000and what you were noticing – a story that lays the foundational picture for the concepts to come

(5) Intro about CI (collaborative inquiry) process (MJM)

Reframing our understanding about leadership:

(10) Exercise One: brainstorm word associations with the leadership word....identify threads of assumptions about leadership as individual leader cf whole system; strong, heroic, decisive, visionary...pull out polar opposites and share one example in each quadrant layer of what we were noticing about how the same response could block and enable at different times, the polarities of leadership responses rather than one fixed truth

(10) Exercise Two: get them to have some still time to identify one polarity they grapple with. Write on 2 pieces of paper – stand on one and then the other – see what it feels like to move between the two – if you wish, share your response with someone else in the room. In paper or handout provided with the workshop, offer the full diagram showing the sense of movement between polarities, tipping over to shadow sides, and enabling practices that support discernment in the middle.

Linking to quadrants of change

(15) Expanding on the multi-layered system of leadership – not just personal or relational – outline complexivist strategies for leading in each quadrant (MJM) with some brief stories (MJR) around each

(15) Exercise Three: Divide space in room into 4 quadrants. Get them to move to which quadrant they feel is their dominant mode they put most energy into. Get them to move to where they feel they most need to grow their learning. Small group work with others in that quadrant around leadership concepts specific to that quadrant. What actions, behaviours, attitudes might you experiment with? Write a haiku???

(10) Questions, comments surfacing and feedback about what they are taking away

(10) Cooperative inquiry and three key learning interactions. Complexity thinking. Complex Adaptive Systems as systems that learn. Our role to affect the conditions that enable learning and leadership – neighbour interactions, nodes, linkages at every level, exchanging information, assets, resources across porous boundaries; balancing diversity and redundancy/commonalities building coherence with ongoing learning mechanisms/reflective practice to live with uncertainty

References

- Davis, B., & Sumara, D. (2006). *Complexity and education: Inquiries into learning, teaching and research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Heron, J. (1996). *Cooperative inquiry: Research into the human condition*. London, England: Sage.
- Inspiring Communities. (2013). *Learning by Doing: community-led change in Aotearoa NZ*. Wellington, New Zealand Inspiring Communities Trust.
- Kaplan, A. (2002). *Development practitioners and social process: Artists of the invisible*. London, England: Pluto Press.
- Kilduff, M., Crossland, C., & Tsai, W. (2008). Pathways of opportunity in dynamic organisational networks In M. Uhl-Bien & R. Marion (Eds.), *Complexity leadership: Part 1: Conceptual foundations*. Charlotte, NC Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Lederach, J. P., Neufeld, R., & Culbertson, H. (2007). *Reflective peacebuilding: A planning, monitoring and learning toolkit*. Notre Dame, IN: The Joan Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.
- Patton, M. Q. (2011). *Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use*. New York; NY: Guilford Press.
- Plowman, D. A., & Duchon, D. (2008). Dispelling the myths of leadership: From cybernetics to emergence In M. Uhl-Bien & R. Marion (Eds.), *Complexity leadership, Part 1: Conceptual foundations* (pp. 129-153). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, B. (2007). Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(4), 298-318. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.04.002
- Wheatley, M., J. (2006). *Leadership and the new science: discovering order in a chaotic world* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Berrett Koehler.
- Zimmerman, B., Plsek, P., & Lindberg, C. (2002). A complexity science primer. *Adapted from: Edgware: Lessons from complexity science for health care leaders*, by Brenda Zimmerman, Curt Lindberg, and Paul Plsek, 1998. Retrieved from www.plexusinstitute.org

Removed material but kept here in case something useful

One part of Good Cents is a 'course' of eight sessions. It is tailored to low income people who are experiencing crippling cycles of debt. It is not a budgeting course – far from it. The aim is to empower participants to take control of their financial situations

It's philosophy is to encourage people to look at their own contribution to their financial situation. The focus is on enabling course participants to identify the positive actions they can take to reduce or eliminate their dependency on debt and grow their investment in their future. Small shifts, like the woman who discovered mesculin lettuce as a healthy eating option from the food shared at the course, have had huge outcomes in terms of people stepping into leadership in their own lives that is impacting family and community change.

Co-creating a safe space for sharing difficulties is deliberate and has had a powerful effect on people. Once people's guards are down, and the shame and overwhelming isolation disappear, people are free to begin creating the change that they've been held back from in the past, by their own inhibitions. (Some data from David) Management guru Tom Peters said that "culture eats strategy for breakfast". The Good Cents course is very clear example of this.

In the Bay of Plenty region in NZ's North Island, Inspiring Communities initially working with an interested regional funder, explored regional interest in community-led development. What started as one regional workshop sharing ideas, information about what groups were doing and what they were interested in, has grown into a multi-layered network of learning focusing on CLD in towns, sub-regions and the wider region. To illustrate:

2010-2011 –

- o regional workshops – sharing /building understanding

2012-2013 –

- o skills workshops – peer mentoring, story telling
- o neighbourhood, local town, sub-regional session on neighbourhood empowerment, community economic development, The Treaty and CLD – outside expertise and experience coming in
- o growing local involvement in Neighbours Day and Leadership week

2013-2014 – sub-regional peer learning and mentoring networks for increasing high quality

This is all done through the skill of the IC regional convenor, always working with others for a new informal system to emerge

Margy-Jean Malcolm 29/5/2014 11:42 AM

Comment [1]: Is it just their own inhibitions? the networks and nodes haven't been there either to learn anything different. Maybe leave this phrase out?