

Building Ecosystems For Positive Change

By Rachel Sinha & Tatiana Fraser | 2020



You, along with a team or community –
are starting to nurture a new ecosystem
for systems change. How exciting.

You see the promise, the problems, you
know some of the people doing amazing
work and you see the potential of
bringing them all together.

A woman in profile, facing left, wearing a vibrant, patterned headwrap in shades of purple, green, and yellow. She is looking out over a body of water at a sunset, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, orange glow. The text "BUT WOW IT'S HARD" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on the bottom left of the image.

**BUT
WOW
IT'S HARD**

BUILDING ECOSYSTEMS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

It's tough trying to work out the right moves to make while you manage the expectations of stakeholders who have already invested in getting your work started.

You have set some sort of goal, you have communicated this intention, but now you and your team are tasked with generating a track record that proves you can do something that will meet the promise. You are managing relationships, coming up with a strategy, often before you're ready and hosting lots of meetings, virtual or face-to-face.

We have a couple of years under our belt of supporting people launching new ecosystems initiatives for systems change. The biggest teacher has been our personal experience of starting up projects ourselves. We have been there. We know how difficult this stage of operations is.

And, it's also not impossible. You will get there. There are some simple steps you can take to make sure you're headed in the right direction.

In this guide we wanted to share common challenges we see our colleagues come up against to remind you you're not alone, along with some insights and frameworks that have helped us and those that we wish we'd had when we were in this stage of development.

WHAT IS AN ECOSYSTEM FOR POSITIVE CHANGE?

When you set out to change things at a systemic level you have to face the fact that one intervention, one silver bullet solution, is not going to get you to the place you need to be.

Cultivating the conditions for genuine systems change, whether you're working on the opioid crisis, gender inequity or the food system, means you need to work at many places in the system at the same time.

That's where ecosystems for positive change come in useful.

An ecosystem in social innovation terms, is an initiative that nurtures multiple interconnected initiatives at the same time. Here you are working at different levels of a system, to create the conditions for change. Ecosystems “offer a powerful framework for considering the conditions of a system, emergence, adaptation, and the complexity of intervening in a web of interdependent relationships. They also help us focus on root causes — to ask why? So we get to the core conditions entrenching a problem.”¹

1 SiG and Oxfam, Building Ecosystems for Systems Change, 2014





An ecosystem in social innovation terms, is an initiative that nurtures multiple interconnected initiatives at the same time.

These initiatives are often called for when an individual, foundation, NGO or community sees one of two opportunities:

- **TO CONNECT PROMISING PEOPLE FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:** Connect the people doing amazing work, encourage them, resource them. Help the system “see itself” and in doing so break down silos and duplicated, disconnected efforts. To link the people in need of support with the people who can help them, the people with interesting ideas to others with complementary ideas. In doing so we move closer to our goal of positive change.
- **TO BUILD COLLABORATIONS THAT WON'T EXIST WITHOUT INTERVENTION:** Support people to work together to tackle tricky systemic issues they could never shift alone. The Theory of Change in this case is – what we're doing isn't working, there are big roadblocks like policy that stand in our way, narratives from the media that need to shift and alternative innovations that need significant funding to have a real impact. Let's bring key actors together and see what we could get done if we work together.

If things are going well, all this connecting or great people in an ecosystem will give birth to multiple interventions in the system. Common projects include coalitions driving for policy change, accelerators supporting new business models in the system, new networks with a shared interest in systems change and campaigns to shift negative stories that get in the way of changing hearts and minds.



CHALLENGES WITH GETTING STARTED

Starting ecosystems is never particularly graceful. To begin with plans are almost always a bit vague and a bit shaky as practitioners try and work out what to do. If your work is murky, you are not alone. Below we have outlined common challenges that we've seen from our own experience and from our clients who are leading this work internationally:



Are we building an ecosystem or supporting systems change? I'm confused.





Two things are conflated- supporting a thriving ecosystem of key actors in a system to develop and thrive and creating systemic impact on our issue of choice.

These objectives are interconnected and almost all projects we work on are trying to do both of these things at the same time. Often key stakeholders have a different objective in mind but have not articulated this clearly and the project starts anyway.



Bringing People Along With You

When you're supporting the emergence of an ecosystem, you really can get nothing accomplished without bringing some people along with you.

This stage is chicken and egg, you need key people to get involved for your project to work, but you need to be able to sell the idea before you know exactly what it's going to look like.

Usually the team who instigates the project lacks a track record leading the full range of participants they know they need to convene. Regardless, taking the lead can feel very vulnerable.

Connecting with people who are not already in your network means a lot of meetings. A lot of coffees trying to explain your goals and describing what you think the project might be doing, when frankly you are really not clear on this yourself. This inevitable lack of clarity attracts political maneuvering and self-interest and can motivate people

to project what they want to happen onto your fledgling initiative. The problem is compounded by multiple members of a core team bringing their own personal bias about methodology and very different language and you end up each selling a different vision of your project which hasn't moved forward to stakeholders.

Starting a new project is an act of leadership. When you or your core team lead it can prompt the question "who are you to convene?" Your initiative might be addressing a problem everyone talks about, but you are putting a stake in the ground and saying "We are going to lead this new strategy for change".

There is no magic solution to this vulnerability, other than to know it's a common experience and is inevitable.

As much as possible, surround yourself with a support network. Stay focused and keep moving forward towards your goals.

Hosting v.s. Nurturing

Deciding whether you are launching interventions yourself or simply enabling what's already out there to flourish is a crucial strategic decision and depends a great deal on the context.

If you are a bit more shoestring, a common strategy is to convene the community, ask them what's needed and identify which members of the ecosystem have the passion and drive to lead new work themselves. Your role can then simply be to connect people and shine a light on their work.

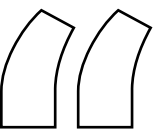
The risk you face with this strategy is that what emerges might be based on the personal interests of the people you attract. If you do limited systems analysis of what's genuinely needed, you might support something that's easy rather than something that will make a transformational difference. If your network is limited to the usual suspects, or if unconscious bias kicks in, you might not invite a big enough diversity of players and end up with a significantly less rich view of the system than was possible.

Employing this strategy, your work might take some time to look good from the outside. When people ask you what you're doing, it's hard to articulate the invisible relationships that are being forged and deepened that you know will reorganize the way the system is working.

If you're better resourced, have a significant track record, or keen to tackle the systemic issues you see first, you might analyze what's there and pick a number of key projects to launch that fill some of the systemic gaps you find. With a budget to deploy you might design leadership programs, accelerator projects, online platforms etc.

The benefit is you are creating infrastructure that is beneficial and probably wouldn't have happened naturally without someone championing it. The downside of this is that you set up a power dynamic in a community where people will see you as a place to get resources or possibly see you as a threat to theirs. You become less of a community member, more of a power player.





A lack of money means that you will likely be seen as more of a peer by the stakeholders you convene.



The Challenge of Money

Money sometimes brings with it pressure and expectations funders to build infrastructure before you're ready. You may be encouraged to invest in things that look impressive from the outside– a governance structure, an accelerator, an online community, a big conference. You will naturally attract people to your work who think they will benefit financially from being close to you.

The bonus of funding is that you will have the resources to be sure you are bringing in the right people from diverse locations in the system to engage in your ecosystem work. The challenge is there will be an innate power imbalance in that invitation.

A lack of money means that you will likely be seen as more of a peer by the stakeholders you convene. But a core team who is worried about whether they have a job next quarter, isn't fully focused either. It is hard to set out with stakeholders if you can't promise with confidence that this work will continue in the future. It's hard to bring people in who have limited resources or are preoccupied with keeping their specific work alive.

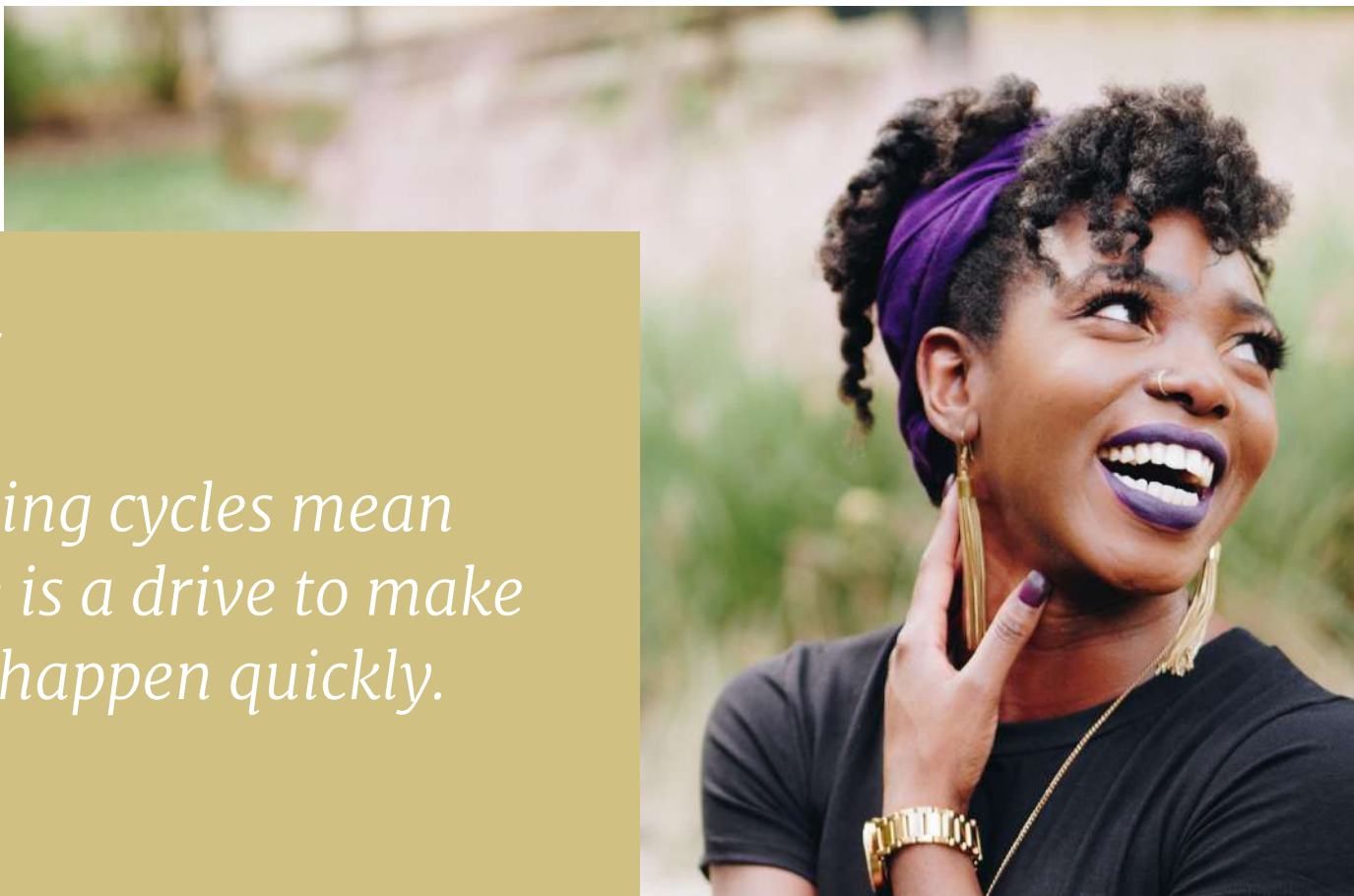
The Race To Make Progress, Fast

Funding cycles mean there is a drive to make stuff happen quickly. This jars with the ambition of taking an emergent strategy, to convene, listen deeply and take steps that resonate with the community you wish to serve.

Ideally this phase should be slow and reflective. In practice it likely looks more like making new contacts, convening multiple gatherings with complex logistics, building marketing strategy and thinking through how on earth to communicate, while building new operational processes for your initiative. Really there is little time for reflection.



Funding cycles mean there is a drive to make stuff happen quickly.





Trying to navigate it all when everyone's watching and the clock is ticking can be very stressful and can lead to wasted resources.

What's My Methodology Here?

Which of the myriad of approaches to systems change and social innovation will work in your context?

Are you building a network? Contributing to a movement? Creating a platform? Launching a Lab or a Collective Impact initiative? The structure and form of the ecosystem building work will constrain and catalyze the possibility you are working towards and picking a winner is hugely confusing.

Choosing methodologies to bring into your structure is even more confusing. Do you lead with Systems Thinking? Design Thinking? Theory U? Holacracy? Art of Hosting? Your core team will likely arrive with a collection of these tools they've used before, or are curious about and meshing them together is tricky. Being open to 'anything works' is good on paper, but in practice many of these methodologies are underpinned with fundamentally different theories of change. Trying to navigate it all when everyone's watching and the clock is ticking can be very stressful and can lead to wasted resources.

**HOW
MIGHT
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Through our work building networks and innovation labs, we have learned a lot about how to support the growth of an ecosystem and about the frameworks that can help lift the fog and overwhelm in the first two years of operation.



HOW MIGHT YOU DO THIS WITH SOME GRACE?

Our experience tells us that successful ecosystems connect on a regular basis with people engaged in a shared commitment to shift a system. Within these initiatives there is time for collective reflection, inquiry, sense-making, sharing of challenges and exchange across participant experiences. There is a clear process for capturing and sharing learning; the community builds learning into every single experience in a structured way, that feeds back into their work and the broader field. People engaged in these ecosystems are working across sectors and silos and accessing new resources and partners. Participants actively seek out collaboration with each other because they have built trust and understanding. They have the capacity to work systemically and continue to learn together and grow.



HERE ARE SOME FOOTHOLDS THAT MIGHT HELP YOU NAVIGATE FORWARD

Work With An Equity Lens

Systems change work risks perpetuating the systems and structures we are trying to change. No matter what issue you are taking on, power and equity will cut through. Take time to be sure you have equity integrated in your work from the start. This begins with understanding how you are located in the system as an individual. What privilege do you hold in relation to the issue you are addressing? What is your social location, culture, history in relation to the system you are working in?





Sometimes you just have to get things moving first, get some processes underway, start to get a clear reason why and then look out for possible collaborators as you move.

Starting

In no way are you ready, but you have to start anyway. You will always have dissenters who are unconvinced you should be leading this work. Admit this will never be perfect. Starting in partnership with others creates conditions for you to attract a diversity of actors to your work.

Sometimes you just have to get things moving first, get some processes underway, start to get a clear reason why and then look out for possible collaborators as you move.

This kind of work is murky at the beginning because two objectives are usually conflated:

Process (I'm supporting an ecosystem to emerge) and Content (e.g. my ecosystem is trying to shift the financial system).

These objectives are clearly interconnected and almost all projects we work on are trying to do both of these things at the same time. So often key stakeholders in a project as well as core team members, have different assumptions in mind, but have not articulated this clearly and the project starts anyway. It helps to clarify what you're doing when, and why.

You need to better understand where you are on both of these activities:

- **ECOSYSTEM BUILDING:** How much support does this ecosystem of people, projects and ideas need in order to thrive? What could be our unique role in helping that emerge?
- **SYSTEMS CHANGE:** What are the systemic issues at the heart of this topic? Who is already working on addressing systemic issues, and how can we help?

The good news is whatever approach you take, the beginning is almost always about listening and building relationships with others who care about the same thing you do.

Begin knowing full well you never please everyone, your work won't look wonderful by the end of the year, you may very well feel overwhelmed most of the time, but you are not alone in this experience and you are doing something that has huge potential.

You Don't Have To Do Everything

As a backbone organization or convener it's crucial to remember you are not starting from a blank piece of paper. In every case there are already amazing people working towards the change you want, you just need to get closer to them to understand how you can help them do their work better.

This often requires a mental shift from backbone doing everything, with people dependent on you for funds, to nodes engaging and leading the work in different ways. Getting clear on how much you are doing vs enabling. Ideally you are 'doing the work by enabling'.

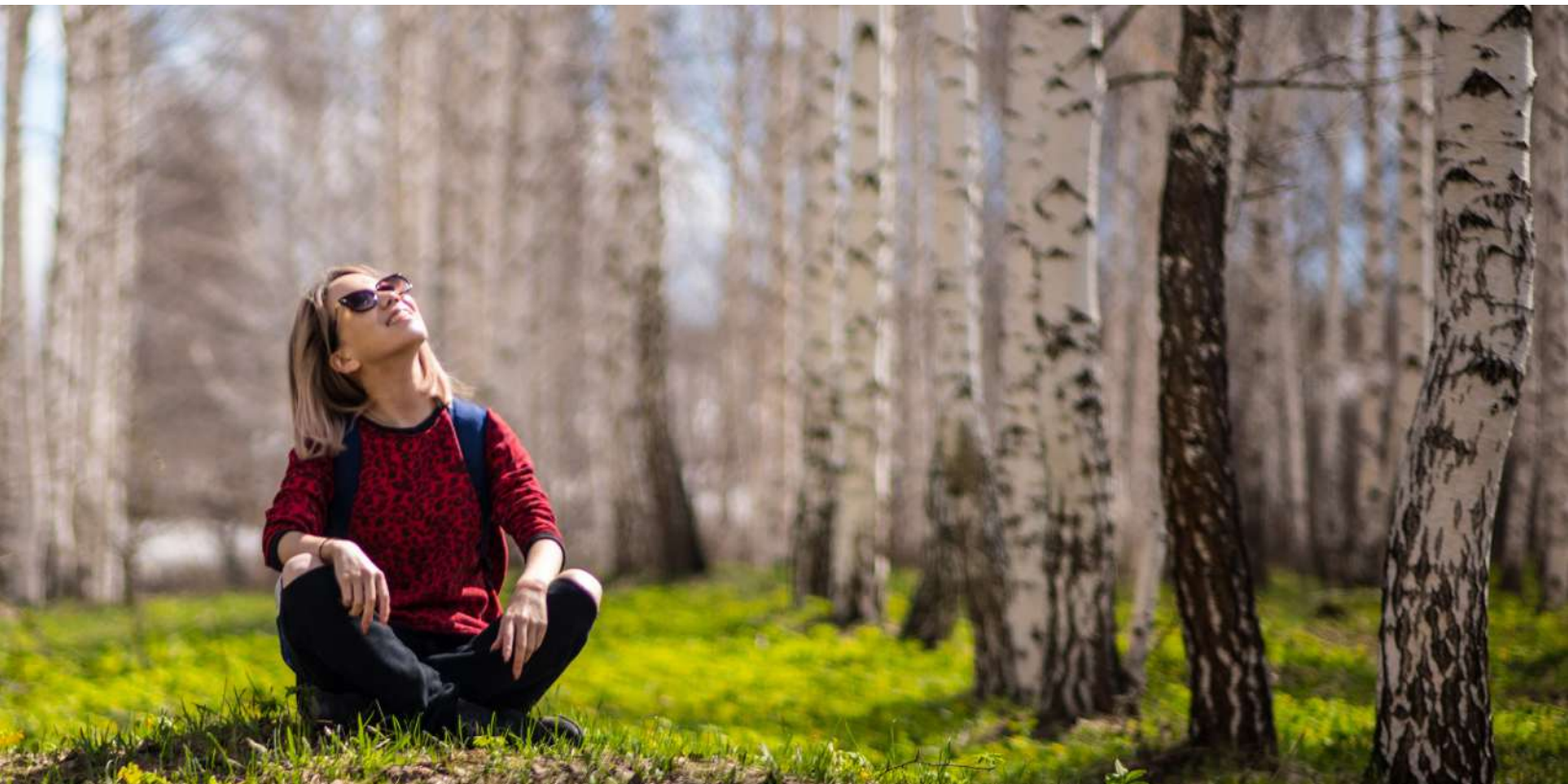
This can often be an important mindset shift for conveners, especially those who sit in dominant centers rather than fully embedded in the community. It helps to think about what work needs to happen first, then think about the structure that supports that to grow. Exploring roles to help define next steps to move forward.

Working With And From Networks

Ecosystem approaches are rooted in ecology and therefore offer helpful ways to work with complexity and systems. Network models are complementary to ecosystem frames and are really helpful for thinking about complex issues, relationships and collaborations. Networks are an entry point for ecosystem building and system change strategy development.

Networks models visualize the connections and interconnectivity between actors in the system. They offer structures that align with values rooted in decentralized power and leadership, self organizing and building from the ground up. They also help us to see where we can leverage what already exists and make connections that unlock resources in new ways.

Network strategies provide a framework that can be inclusive and engaging of diverse actors in the system and create the conditions for emergence and responsive actions. They help us to see where power is centered, where making connections can be brokered, where relationships are weak and where they are strong.



An ecosystem lens can be very helpful when a network wants to move from communities of practice to communities of influence or when a network wants to get serious about collaborating for systems change. Network thinking, on the other hand, can be very helpful when analyzing and sense making what is needed in ecosystems and when developing light structure, actions and next steps.

Convene Or Map. Ideally Both.

Mapping of the existing ecosystem is best done in a community with a diversity of people you'd love to be better connected with.

Together you can explore what are the systemic issues your community faces. Uncover this with some powerful systems mapping frameworks. Think about which systems leadership capacities exist in your community? Which are missing? Pick a few ways in which you could uniquely contribute to supporting this ecosystem to flourish.

Convene small groups around the issues you've chosen and repeat the process—map who's doing what, where are the gaps? Generate strategies to deal with the issue.



This mapping of the existing ecosystem is best done in a community with a diversity of people you'd love to be better connected with.

We use a few key frameworks to explore ecosystems and systemic issues to help think this through in our work. These are:

- **ICEBERG MAPPING¹:** We use this to surface some of the really hard systemic issues that exist in an issue area. It is a useful tool to: locate root causes and underlying cultural causes of systemic problems, assess patterns of interaction within a system, understand different perspectives and identify critical levers for change within a system.
- **ACTOR MAPPING:** We use this to identify actors in the system. It is a useful tool to identify the subsystems you are connected with, to analyze the relationships and gaps in and across the systems, to identify power centers and your relationship to them. All of this intel will inform your strategy to move forward.
- **TRANSITION THEORY²:** One of our favorites, this is invaluable for projects who are trying to work out “who is already contributing to systemic change in our ecosystem?” We ask a convened gathering to drop their projects, organizations or initiatives into the framework so we can get a collective picture of where our current change efforts are focused.

The framework gives you a way to think about working at multiple levels at the same time in a system. The levels it includes are:

1. **LANDSCAPE** – the 'climate of ideas', culture or societies', current world-view.
2. **REGIME** – the institutions, markets, organizations, companies that currently exist to hold up the system of interest and the rules, policies and procedures that govern them.
3. **NICHES OF INNOVATION** – the pockets of innovation that bubble up and represent alternatives to the current regime. Often built on different values, or with a different culture to the mainstream system.

If you can't do this face to face, you can do this virtually, with the help of a skilled facilitator.

1 M. Goodman, (2002), The Iceberg Model by Hopkinton, MA: Innovation Associates Organizational Learning. Copyright 2002 by M. Goodman.

2 Geels F.W. (2002), Technological transitions as evolutionary reconfiguration processes: a multi-level perspective and a case-study, Research Policy, Volume 31, Issues 8–9, Pages 1257-1274

Make Sense

It's crucial that you build in time after you've done this work to make sense of what emerged.

Sensemaking is intentional analysis designed to identify patterns and opportunities as you work. This is an important step after mapping sessions or convenings. It can also include a synthesis of what you are learning from and seeing in the system. Sense making is iterative and should be done on an on-going basis.

It's best to do this work in a collective, or a team so that you have a diverse group sensing the next steps together. It is also really important to be sensemaking on a regular basis, so that you are incorporating what you are learning into your strategy.



Go Where The Energy Is

As you start to build your strategy, you should be on the lookout for individuals who are already working on something promising from their place in the system or who have great ideas and little support.

Organizations are important strategically to bring along with you. You also need to find the right people with the passion to get things moving. Sometimes the most powerful changemakers have no big brand or job title behind them. Sometimes the people with the big job title are the least passionate. Be open minded and go where you see energy in your community.

Questions you might ask yourself here:

- Who was energized to get something started? Who led discussions during convenings? Who was passionate about specific bits of the ecosystem?
- Who is working on some of what's needed anyway and has interest in getting some of this off the ground? Who can do some of this as part of their job?
- Who's doing great work and would benefit from connection?
- Where are the clear gaps?
- What roles are being played to support this ecosystem to emerge?
- What is missing and why?
- How might new connections across system actors start to chart a new path that could lead to significant change?
- How can we leverage what already exists to build something new together, that can't be built alone?
- This strategy will help people feel part of a community. This will also help you find resources.



Aim for Minimal Optimal Governance

There will be a recurring conversation around your intent, values and principles as your ecosystem forms. This is because as you bring more people in (stakeholders at your gatherings) you open this up to be redefined.

Expect this, if necessary strike up a working group of people in your community enthusiastic to have this conversation to develop your purpose, values and principles, but hold it lightly. It will evolve as your project morphs to meet the needs of the growing community.

We strongly advise people to create a minimal optimal Governance and operating structure in the first two years. You may need to bring in big names in your world close to the project to give it the credibility to lift off, but limit their executive function and create a clear timeline for their involvement. Your path and priorities will emerge as your work gets underway and you will need people to champion what you're actually doing, not what they hoped you'd do when you started. It can really slow you down.

Finally, be careful not to put all eggs into an on-line platform. Keep this light and not the central strategy. The glue of an ecosystem is actually real life relationships, especially in the early years, even if you can't show these from the outside. They take a lot of time to design and to build and you will need to divert resources to keeping them animated. Platforms should be created in response to the need in the community rather than pre-empted.

Be Conscious Of Self Interest V.s. Collective Interest

Self-interest in the market can get things moving. Leaders and organizations who want to see impact and change on a shared challenge will be drawn to ecosystem building. We have learned that when establishing decision making processes for shared actions and collaborations, it is very helpful to be conscious of what is 'self-interest' and what is 'collective interest'.

Connected initiatives acting from self-interest can share learning, resources and practices. They can become aware of each other's work and shift their approach from traditional competitive - towards exploring ways that they may collaborate, complement each other, and avoid duplication. Actors in the system can become aware of how their initiatives contribute to a whole.

But there are limits when acting in self-interest, especially when entering into territory of shared resources and infrastructure. Here, it is helpful to get clear about the lines between serving self and serving the collective. A helpful differentiation is to define - "what can we do together that we can't do alone?" This will help weed out competitive interests to move individual work and agendas when you are working in collaboration.



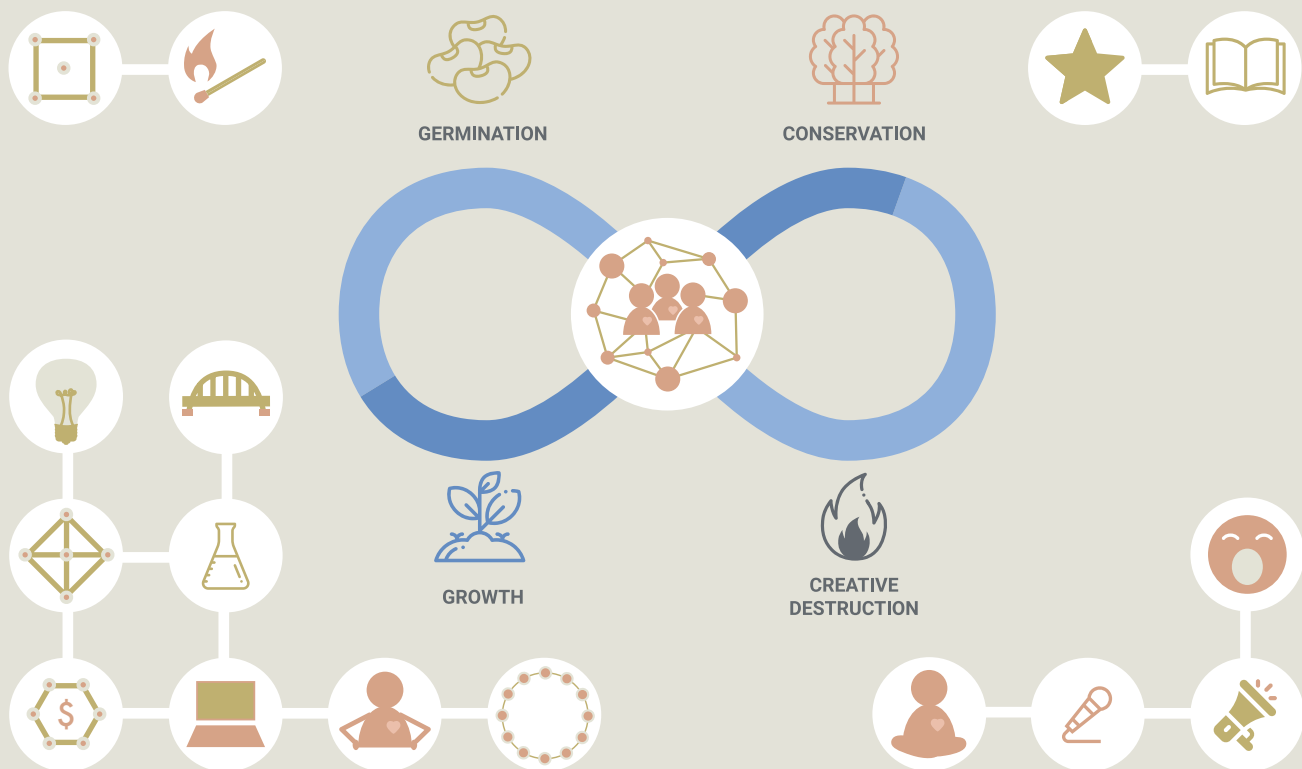
*A helpful differentiation is to define –
“What can we do together that we can’t
do alone?”*



Funders also need to bring consciousness and self-awareness here when they come to the table with funding and power to sway agendas and priorities. They may have their own ideas of how they want to see an ecosystem act and collaborate. They may have their own agendas to move work forward that they have previously invested in or they may have a pet project that they want to leverage other resources to bring to life. Funders need to be aware of their role and limits in the system and to be transparent to avoid potential grantees from showing up with hopes to get access to resources. Honesty and a willingness to have uncomfortable conversations as well as a collective awareness and consciousness of power, are helpful here. With this approach, the leadership teams can create clear and light decision making processes to keep everyone on the same page.

HOW TO SUPPORT AN ECOSYSTEM FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

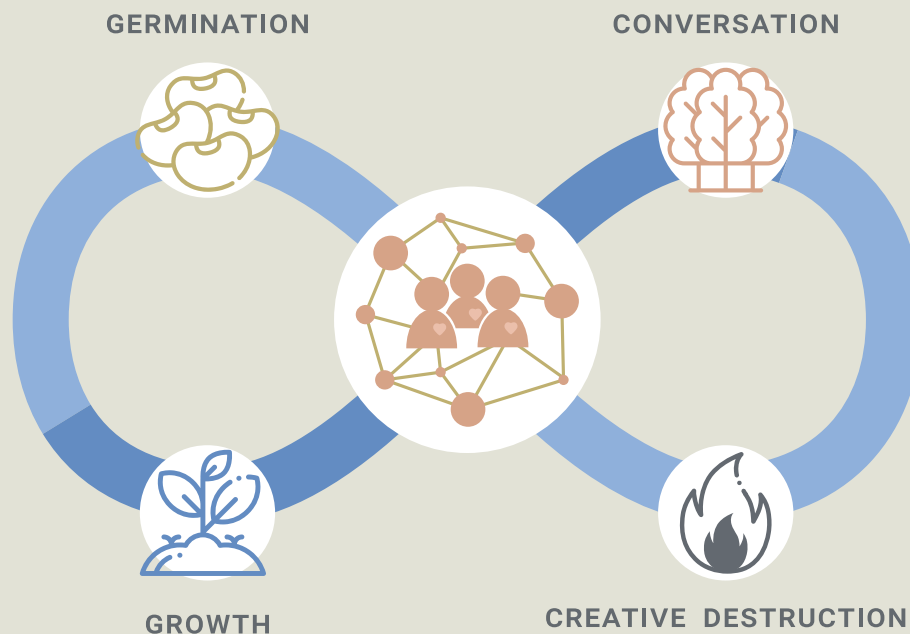
Rachel wrote *Mapping Momentum*¹ with Tim Draimin of SiG in 2016. It outlines the roles people can play to build an ecosystem for positive change. We have tested this out on many ecosystem projects we've worked on over the last three years and updated it slightly, but we find it really helpful to share with clients who are doing this work and are in the early stages of development. The framework is below:



from Mapping Momentum, Sinha & Draimin 2016

¹ Sinha, R. and Draimin, T. (2016) Mapping momentum: A snapshot of the emerging field of systems change, SiG and The Systems Studio

Ecocycle / Panarchy loop



The basis of this model is called the Ecocycle¹ or Panarchy loop and can be used for many things. It talks about the birth and death of natural systems. We explain the model here:



GERMINATION: If you look at the top left and imagine in a natural system seed. There are many seeds cast on the floor, some grow and some don't. They need space and nourishment in order to germinate.



GROWTH: In the growth phase, imagine a big pink flower growing in the sunshine with butterflies and bees buzzing around. It takes a lot of energy, it's very attractive, there's lots of busyness around it.



CONSERVATION: Imagine an old and beautiful green forest. Things need to be maintained, but generally it starts to maintain itself.



CREATIVE DESTRUCTION: Here we ask 'what needs to die in an ecosystem, so that new things can grow?' In nature we see wildfires, that very important part of maintaining a forest, they create the space for new seeds to grow. While crucial, this is often the most difficult part of an ecosystem to think about, especially ecosystems that lean towards innovation.

¹ Gunderson, L. H., and C. S. Holling, editors. 2002. Panarchy: understanding transformations in human and natural systems. Chapter 2, Page 34, Island Press. Also see Westley, F. (2008), The Social Innovation Dynamic, SIG@Waterloo

Using this model, we detail below the roles that people play to support the emergence of ecosystems for positive change. We recognize that people often play multiple roles at the same time, sometimes swap and sometimes there are gaps in the roles played.

GERMINATION

Seeding new initiatives



THE STRATEGIST: the intrapreneurs who starts multiple new systems change ventures from within an organization, convenes the partners, pulls in resources and makes things happen



THE FIRESTARTER: The dynamo who partners with pioneers of new projects to help turn ideas into reality, paid and sometimes not

GROWTH

Building amplifying and accelerate the work of the ecosystem



THE ILLUMINATOR: The pattern spotter who creates maps, writes articles and shines a light on emerging trends



THE DIGITAL DESIGNER: Builds the digital platforms that support systems change work



THE EXPERIMENTER: The leader of a growing systems change project. This group is head down, fully immersed in a cycle of action and learning



THE CONNECTOR: The connector, out in the field meeting people in the ecosystem, introducing fellow system change practitioners to one another



THE CONVENOR: The host who builds gatherings of key people at well designed events exploring different elements of systems change.



THE LEADERSHIP ACCELERATOR: Organizations that support existing systems leaders so that they can do their work better



THE ECOSYSTEM FUNDER: Funders who recognize the need to fund the field of practice to organize effectively



THE BRIDGER: Strategic role building relationships across difference and connecting communities across sectors, ways of knowing and system actors. Bridgers can work from the dominant center or from the margins.

CONSERVATION

Stabilizing roles that turn experiments into established cornerstones of the field



THE SHINING STARS: 'Demonstrator' projects that have moved beyond a start-up stage to become established organizations and can be used as case studies



THE KNOWLEDGE BUILDER: Create theoretical and practice-based research within the field you're working on. This work tends to be based at Universities, Colleges and learning hubs

CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

What do we need to let go of for this field of practice to emerge?



THE WISE HEALER: Bringing in spiritual practice, holding space and connection to a deeper sense of truth about what needs to change. Connecting and facilitating healing to bring about system change.



TRUTH-TELLER: Those on the front line who call out the truths of injustice.



THE INCUMBENT DISRUPTOR: Individuals who sit in a place of power and influence and use their position to talk about the need for a systems lens in the mainstream.



THE CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVIST: Raising awareness, getting people engaged in an issue, organizing protests, building movements.

THE SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP CORE TEAM



THE SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP CORE TEAM: Nurture the ecosystem. They identify key actors who are already doing the work, connect them, strategically build projects that plug some of these gaps. Sometimes they play these roles themselves.

IN SUMMARY

If you've already started and you're confused you are not alone.

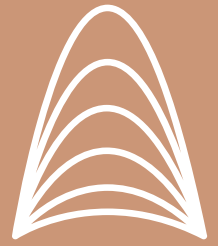
This work is a rollercoaster. We know because we've been there and we've heard from over 70 systems leaders all over the world who are working in this way too.

Sometimes asking for help in the early stages feels somewhat of a failure. But having a space held consistently to reflect on your next strategic move, with people who have been there and believe in you, is the most valuable service we offer.

We support leaders and teams to deal with the emerging set of challenges that come through on a weekly basis. These include; how to position and talk about your initiative and your work as it emerges, how to design a smart marketing strategy, how to center equity in your work, how to building effective strategy and governance systems, how to design effective convenings both face-to-face and virtual, systems frameworks that help to show how work fits together, decision making about which interventions to build on and influencing others. We also understand the operational side of this work – hiring and managing staff, fundraising and support to manage upwards.

Your core team is worth investing in. You are the people who will carry this work forward in the long term. Avoiding sleepless nights and burn-out with an independent perspective who has your back during this early stage, is an act of self-care.

The Systems Sanctuary holds space for collective learning around systems change.



We coach individuals, teams and ecosystems internationally, who are trying to shift unhealthy systems.

Specifically we focus on systems practitioners who are already experimenting with systemic interventions, and women leading systems change.

We speak, teach, host virtual peer-learning programs, we coach teams and individuals. We hold emotional intelligence, and kick-ass strategy for systems change in equal regard. We are open, honest and compassionate and knowledgeable, entrepreneurial and tactical all at the same time.

We love what we do, and most of all, we love the way we work.

Systems change is fundamentally about changing culture and our biggest ambition is to spread a culture that represents a different way of leading and showing up in the world, to all kinds of unhealthy systems. We work internationally and go only where we are genuinely needed.

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