NO ONE IS AN ISLAND: FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR MULTI-SECTOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

Marty Jacobs
Saybrook University
475 14th Street, 9th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

ABSTRACT

Large-scale social change is becoming inevitable in the public and nonprofit sectors, yet the literature and models addressing this need are lacking. To address this gap, the author introduced a model for multi-sector transformational change called the Emerging Systems Transformational Change Model (ESTCM) in 2016. This paper gives an overview of the model and then explores in detail the five critical processes that create the foundation for an effective multi-sector transformational change effort. These processes are developing readiness for change, relationship building, mapping the system, designing social systems, and establishing a reflective practice.

Keywords: transformational change; dialogue; multi-sector; transformative learning; system mapping; reflective practice; social systems design; change readiness

INTRODUCTION

"No one is an island, entire of itself" –John Donne

As society and social issues continue to increase in complexity, non-profit and public sectors are realizing that they can no longer be islands unto themselves, each working to address intractable problems with limited effectiveness. They are realizing that they must grow stronger networks where organizations can share resources and build capacity collectively. Nevertheless, the concept of multi-sector transformational change is still quite foreign to many non-profits and public agencies, and there are few examples of successful practice for such inter-organizational endeavors. Furthermore, much of the literature and many of the models concerned with transformational change have been developed with the for-profit sector in mind and are typically implemented within single organizations. Add to this the fact that many funders still focus their grant making on individual organizations and it becomes nearly impossible for non-profits and public agencies to collaborate effectively to bring about transformational change.

Based on my twenty-five years of organization development consulting in the nonprofit and public sectors, I developed the Emerging Systems Transformational Change Model (ESCTM) (Jacobs, 2016). The model addresses the differences between multi-sector transformational change and single organization transformational change, such as the complicated challenges of identifying stakeholders, determining leadership, building trust amongst stakeholders, coordinating work, and maintaining momentum and motivation.

The scope, complexity, and timeframe are also significantly greater than in a typical single-organization effort, and the structure and governance required for multi-sector transformational change is substantially different from what is sufficient in the for-profit sector. The purpose of this paper is to take an in-depth look at the five critical processes of the ESTCM that create a strong foundation for work in multi-sector transformational change.

OVERVIEW OF ESTCM

The ESTCM consists of five different phases as depicted in Figure 1: (1) the discovery and dialogue phase, (2) the deepening, refining, and assessing phase, (3) the infrastructure, communication, and coordination phase, (4) the on-going implementation and progress reporting phase, and (5) the learning, celebration, and sustainability phase (Jacobs, 2016). Phase 1 is the phase in the model that establishes the essential infrastructure for the entire project. It is here that the foundation for the multi-sector transformational change will be built. One of the first functions that must be performed is to determine a shared vision for the system. This vision will include individual organizational visions that coalesce into a system-wide vision. As part of that process, a coalition of organizational and community leaders formed to facilitate the change effort will encourage cross-organizational networking and relationship building, as well as stakeholder and community engagement. It will also establish shared facilitation and determine shared system outcomes and performance measures. Finally, the coalition will need to decide how funding is distributed. This is probably the area where the greatest conflict is likely. Shifting individualistic mind-sets of the partner organizations to one that looks at the greater good will be challenging, both for recipients of the funding as well as for the funders themselves.

Phase 2 of the model continues refining the functions already set up in Phase 1, while establishing new functions. The coalition will decide what data to collect as well as how to store it such that it can be accessed by anyone in the system. It will also be important for the coalition to build overall system capacity through a collective needs assessment and sharing of resources. The greater the capacity of the system, the more likely it is to achieve its outcomes and sustain itself. The partner organizations in the system also engage in assessing the strengths of the various actors, avoiding duplication of effort, and collaboratively designing, delivering, and coordinating programs and services. In doing so, the system will use resources more efficiently and effectively.

Phase 3 of the model is where the infrastructure of the system is built and begins to be implemented. The coalition will establish a leadership model and determine how it will govern itself. Figure 2 illustrates one such structure, developed by the consulting firm FSG, which might evolve out of a multi-sector effort. The coalition or steering committee provides overall direction, and workgroups engage in the design, development, and implementation of new strategies with the help of a support organization as they engage partners and the community in the effort. Kania and Kramer (2013) refer to this as "cascading levels of collaboration" (p. 5), and it is critical for the success of any multi-sector transformational change effort. Another essential function of this phase is establishing system-wide communication, both within the system and across the larger network of interacting systems. Finally, and equally as important, there is the need to set

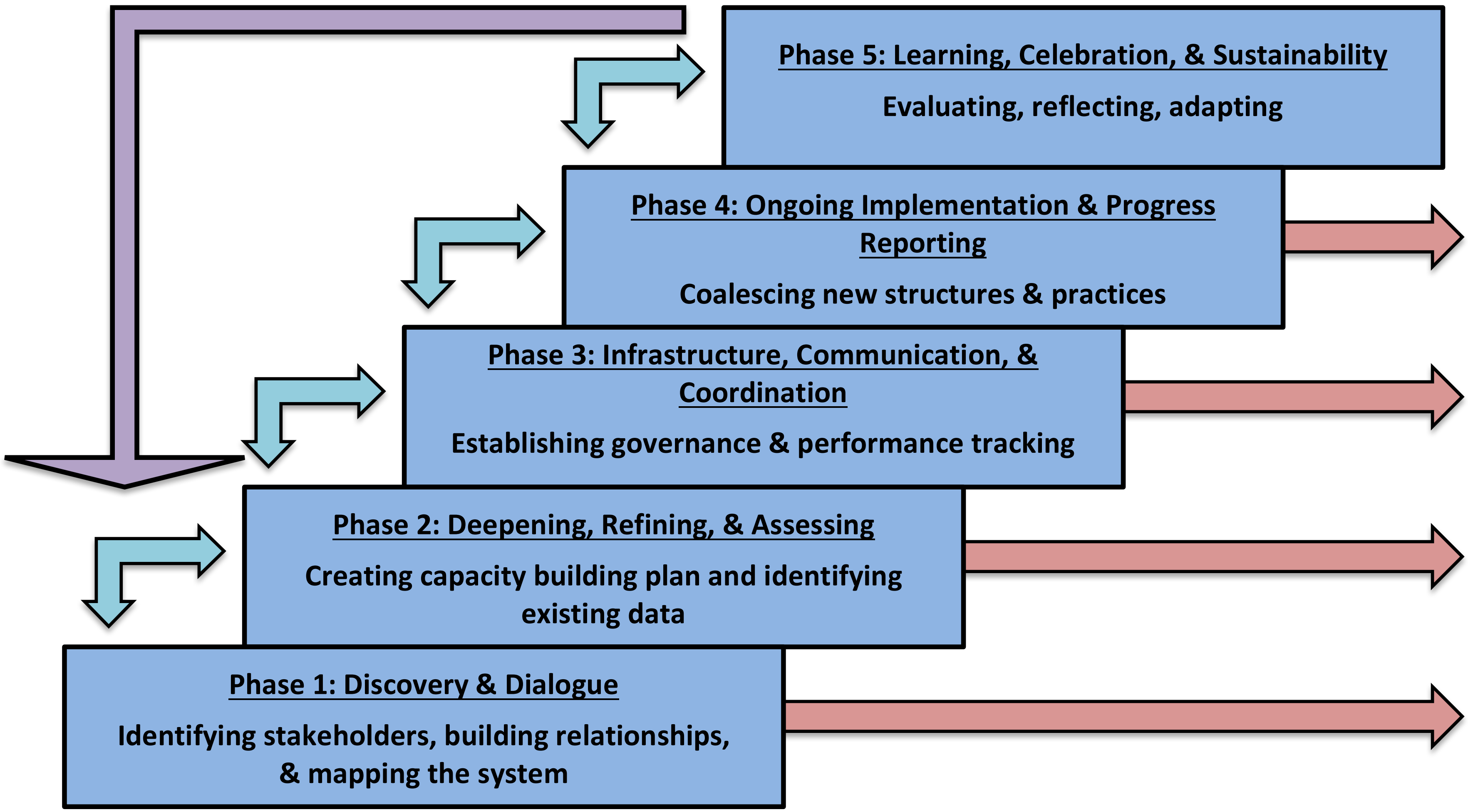

Figure 1. The five phases of the Emerging Systems Transformational Change Model (Jacobs, 2016, July).

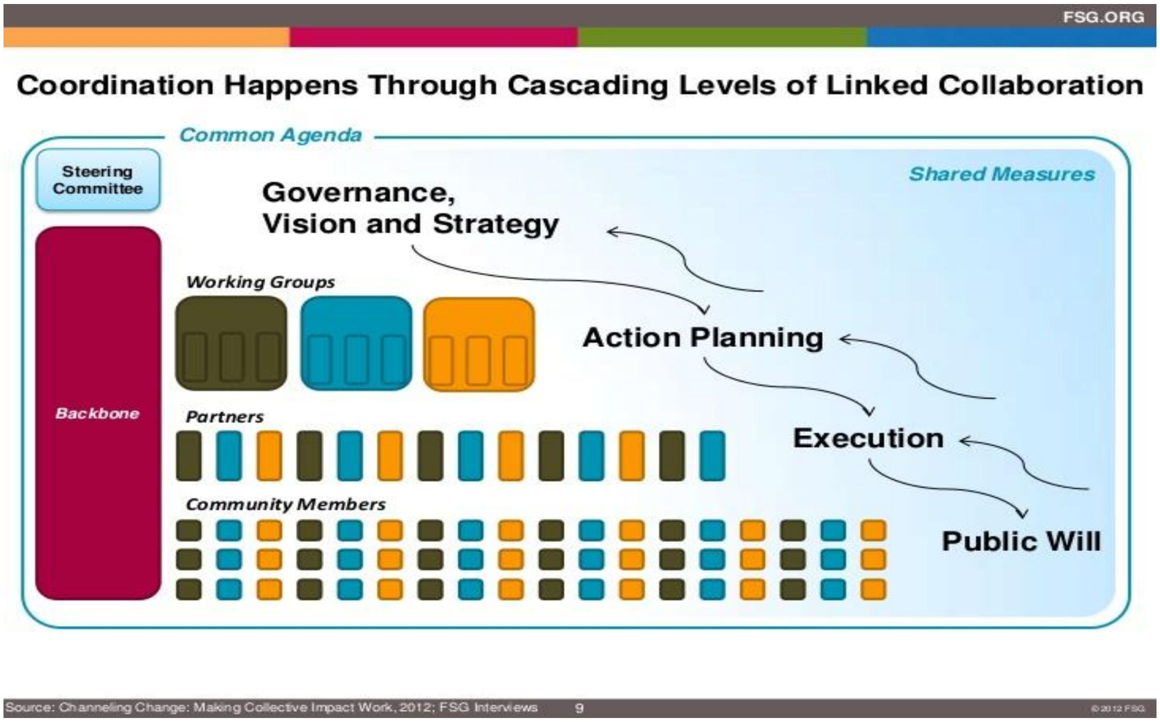

Figure 2: Cascading levels of collaboration. Reprinted with permission.

up the technology for communications, knowledge sharing and storage, data sharing, and performance measurement.

Phase 4 is where implementation becomes well established and progress reporting begins. These are two critical functions that need to be refined and solidified in the system and at the same time remain flexible and adaptable to on-going environmental changes. Phase 5 is the time to evaluate and reflect on the process, learning what might be adjusted and adapted to move closer to the overall vision. This function is particularly important to the survival of the system. It must be flexible because the system will always be in flux. Finally, it is important for the system to recognize and celebrate its achievements. If partner organizations in the system begin to see themselves as part of a larger whole that has influence on particular issues, that system will have achieved ultimate success.

Although I have described these phases sequentially, it is important to note that they are often not established in sequence nor do they end once established. Figure 1 was designed to illustrate the complexity of multi-sector transformational change. The five phases are stacked on top of each other to indicate the concept that each subsequent phase builds on the work of all previous phases. The pink arrows pointing to the right represent the ongoing nature of many of the tasks in each phase. The green double-headed arrows signify movement forward and backward amongst the phases, and the larger purple arrow symbolizes the iterative nature of multi-sector transformational change. Most of the functions must be tended to regularly to maintain the health of the system and ensure sustainability. Particular attention should be paid to the foundational elements of the ESTCM, which I will describe in the next section.

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR MULTI-SECTOR CHANGE

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR MULTI-SECTOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

There are core functions in the ESTCM that build a strong foundation on which to design and implement transformational change: assessing readiness for change, building strong relationships within the system, mapping the existing system, designing a new social system, and developing a reflective practice. Figure 3 illustrates how these functions fit together, with readiness for change, relationship building, mapping the system, and social systems design (SSD) at the center of the design. Those components are embedded within a system of on-going communication that is then embedded in a system of reflective practice. These core functions cannot be short-changed if the effort is to be successful. I will discuss these functions in greater detail below.

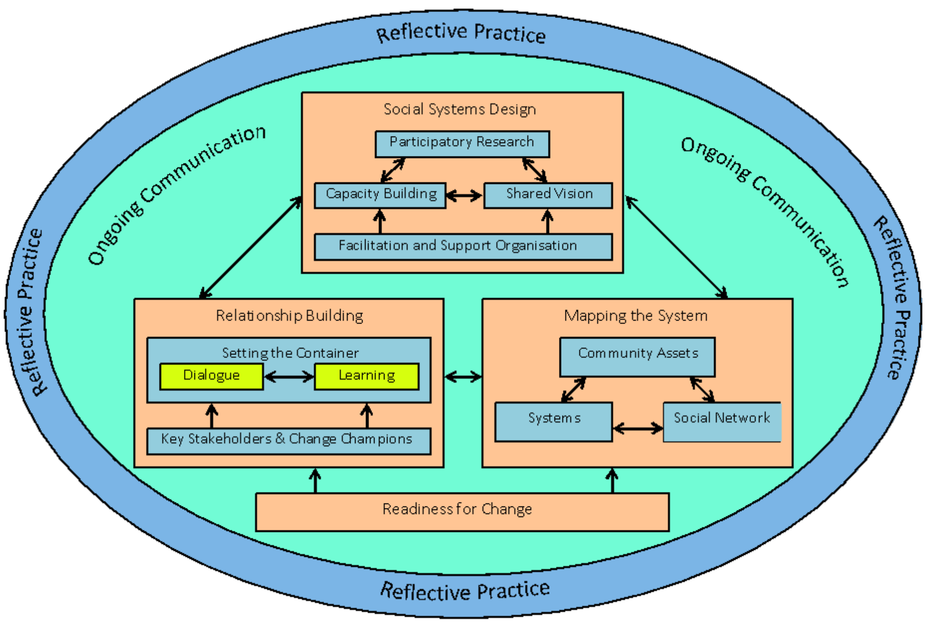

Figure 3: Foundational elements for multi-sector transformational change.

Readiness For Change

Readiness for change is a necessary antecedent for transformational change, and yet it is probably the most challenging of the essential elements to realize. Antoine de Saint-Exupery, author of *The Little Prince*, captured the concept well when he said, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Developing readiness for change takes place at two intricately interwoven levels: the individual and the organizational. Individual readiness for change

> [can be] defined as a comprehensive attitude that is influenced simultaneously by the content (i.e., how the change is being implemented), the context (i.e., the circumstances under which change is occurring), and the individual (i.e., characteristics of those being asked to change/be involved). (Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007, p. 235)

Cunningham et al. (2002) describe four stages of individual readiness for change which, when combined, create organizational readiness for change. The first stage is the *precontemplative stage*, where individuals are not aware of the need for change. The second stage is the *contemplative stage*, where individuals begin to consider the possibility of change. In the *preparatory stage*, individuals begin planning for change. The final stage, the *action stage* is where individuals actively engage in changing behavior. In multi-sector transformational change, individual and organizational readiness for change must be implemented in complex layers. There needs to be adequate individual readiness within the coalition of organizational and community leaders as well as within each of the partner organizations. Similarly, the coalition and the partner organizations need to demonstrate sufficient readiness for change.

There are a significant number of factors that influence both individual and organizational readiness. These factors can be divided into four categories: individual perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors; organizational, leadership, and individual capacity for change; the work environment and culture; and implementation of change. There appears to be widespread agreement amongst researchers (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Bridges, 2009; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Holt et al., 2007; Walinga, 2008) that the first two categories are critical to assessing and creating readiness for change whereas there are significant differences between these researchers' opinion with regard to the latter two categories. Moreover, Eby et al. (2000) argue that the context of the change may determine which factors are more influential.

Individual perceptions and attitudes along with their concomitant behaviors are powerful forces in organizations and society as a whole. With respect to readiness for change, they can make or break a potential change effort. Within this realm, most researchers agree that the perceived need for change is essential for initiating any change effort (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Armenakis et al., 1993; Bridges, 2009; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Holt et al., 2007). This perception (or lack thereof), in turn, influences whether or not an individual holds a favorable attitude toward the proposed change (Choi & Ruona, 2011; Eby et al., 2000; Rogers, 2003; Walinga, 2008). Another factor affecting change readiness is the individual's perception that the proposed change is personally beneficial (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Bridges, 2009; Holt et al., 2007) as well as beneficial to the organization (Choi & Ruona, 2011; Holt et al., 2007). Assessing and developing readiness for change also includes a demonstrated commitment to change from senior leaders, managers, and employees (Cinite, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2009), particularly a change champion (Voelker et al., 2012), and alignment of most organization members with the goals of the change effort (Bridges, 2009). Finally, Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2001) note that the organization's track record in implementing change significantly impacts employee support for a new effort. Many of these factors will likely affect multi-sector change as well.

Walinga's (2008) research on change readiness adds a unique and important perspective to the literature. Her work studied the effects of appraisal of stressors (positive or negative), coping strategies, and an individual's perception of how manageable the change appears to be. She notes that if the perceived manageability of the proposed change fits within an individual's capability, he or she is likely to approach the change with a problem-focused coping strategy. On the other hand, if the proposed change feels overwhelming to an individual, he or she is likely to choose an emotion-focused coping strategy: "emotion-focused coping strategies or foci are generally less effective because they tend to shift attentional resources away from the task at hand and toward reducing, controlling, or avoiding the anxiety that results from a perceived lack of control" (Walinga, 2008, p. 328). Walinga (2008) insists that an individual's ability to accept his or her lack of control and tolerate ambiguity enhances readiness for change by focusing his or her energy on what is within control. This is a particularly important concept in multi-sector transformational change, where uncertainty and ambiguity abound.

Readiness for change is directly related to capacity for change, and capacity for change can be assessed and developed at three different levels: individual (Armenakis et al., 1993; Bridges, 2009; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Holt et al., 2007), leadership (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Armenakis et al., 1993), and organizational (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Armenakis et al., 1993; Bridges, 2009; Cinite et al., 2009; Eby et al., 2000). At the individual level, employees need to be provided with adequate training, both in terms of technical information and process-oriented skills, to develop their capacity to implement change (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Bridges, 2009). Bridges (2009) specifically points out the need to develop conflict management skills. In addition to building capacity at the individual level, Holt et al. (2007) argue that individuals must also favorably view the process of change, the content of change, and the context in which the change is taking place. Rogers (2003), however, cautions that having a favorable or unfavorable opinion of a proposed change does not necessarily lead directly to adoption or rejection.

Leadership capacity for change, although similar to individual capacity, includes unique requirements above and beyond what is expected from individual employees. Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2001) suggest that leading transformational change is significantly different than leading an organization or department on a day-to-day basis. They posit that leaders need to be skilled at supporting both the people and the process, modeling the desired behavior, building an integrated change strategy, and mobilizing their employees and the necessary resources to achieve the desired outcome. They recommend that an organization develop a specific educational program aimed at change leaders. Furthermore, Burke (1992) advises organizations to identify and engage informal leaders in the process of change, something that is particularly salient for multi-sector transformational change.

Organizational readiness for change relies heavily on high levels of individual and leadership capacity for change. Consequently, organizations need to examine their existing structures and processes to assess how well they align with the goals of the change effort (Eby et al., 2000). Cunningham et al. (2002) found that individuals employed in jobs that “foster personal empowerment, improve performance, increase initiative and contribute to organizational innovation” (p. 386) are more likely to be actively engaged in the change process. Hence change leaders should examine existing positions with the organization to determine if some can be redesigned in order to create a higher level of organizational readiness. Armenakis et al. (1993) more broadly state that “existing organizational conditions affect employee loyalty, commitment, or other feelings toward an organization, consequently influencing readiness” ("Typology of Readiness Programs," para. 2). Cinite et al. (2009) also support the proposition that organizational context influences employees’ perceptions that the organization is capable of successfully initiating and implementing change. They include the following contextual factors: leadership at all levels, open and honest communication, supportive organizational and management practices, meaningful engagement of employees in the change process, and human resource systems. Lehman et al. (2002) have developed an assessment instrument for organizational readiness for change that assesses, among other factors, institutional resources (offices, staffing, training resources, computer access, and e-communications) and organizational climate (clarity of mission and goals, staff cohesiveness, staff autonomy, openness of communication, stress, and openness to change) to determine organizational change readiness. Examining these organizational factors in combination with leadership and individual capacity for change builds an overall foundation for organizational readiness and capacity for change.

In addition to the aforementioned factors influencing organizational readiness, there are other aspects of the work environment and culture to consider when assessing readiness for change. Of these, organizational culture is by far the most influential. Organizational culture is a powerful influence within an organization (Kotter, 2012; Schein, 2010) and evolves from the founder’s (and subsequent leaders’) beliefs, values, and assumptions (Anderson & Ackerman-Anderson, 2001; Schein, 2010). Organizational culture is defined as “…the set of values and beliefs that members or an organization generally share and that guide their behavior” (Kotter, 2012, p. 32). Change agents must determine whether or not the organizational culture supports the proposed change. Choi and Ruona (2011) consider a learning culture to be instrumental in creating higher levels of readiness for change. The organizational culture must also generate trust amongst peers as well as with leadership (Burke, 1992; Eby et al., 2000). Such a culture would then establish a foundation for a willingness to change or abandon old habits and behaviors, an important first step in change implementation (Bridges, 2009; Burke, 1992). This first step can be reinforced through the support of an individual’s immediate supervisor (Cinite et al., 2009) and his or her peers (Cunningham et al., 2002). Accordingly, the organizational culture has an enormous impact on all levels of readiness for change.

Implementation of change does not signal an end to a change agent’s concerns about readiness for change. Indeed, creating readiness for change must be an on-going and active process (Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt et al., 2007). As the hard work of changing current work processes and behaviors begins, change readiness at all levels will need to be monitored, and there are a number of strategies change agents can apply to maintain the necessary level of change readiness. As mentioned previously, creating a learning culture is a particularly effective approach to setting the stage for change. Several researchers argue that persuasive communication and clear information about the change are effective strategies (Armenakis et al., 1993; Bridges, 2009; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Cinite et al., 2009), although Rogers (2003) states that such a strategy does not provide information specific enough for an individual to make a decision about whether or not to support the change. Another effective strategy is to involve individuals in the design and implementation of the change effort (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Armenakis et al., 1993; Bridges, 2009; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Cinite et al., 2009; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006). As Margaret Wheatley (2006) so eloquently states:

> No one is successful if they merely present a plan in finished form to others. It doesn't matter how brilliant or correct the plan is–it simply doesn't work to ask people to sign on when they haven't been involved in the planning process. (p. 68)

Participation in all aspects of the change process can greatly augment readiness for change, keeping in mind that individuals need to focus on what they can control and let go of what they cannot (Walinga, 2008).

Perceptions of the change effort, capacity for change, organizational culture, and strategies for increasing readiness for change are all essential aspects to be considered when undertaking transformational change and assessing readiness for that change. Although these factors play an important role in individual organizational change efforts, it is likely that some of these factors have little or no influence in multi-sector transformational change. Moreover, there are a number of potential factors that are missing, owing to the greater complexity of multi-sector work. Specifically, the coalition of organizational and community leaders will need to develop a greater understanding of how complex adaptive systems function, particularly with regard to the concept of emergence and the fact that the change process will be uncertain and unpredictable. They will also need to make a concerted effort to include all stakeholders from the beginning. They must be willing to take risks, challenge their worldviews, and let themselves be vulnerable in order to create new knowledge. The partner organizations need to have good relationships with each other and a history of successful collaborative efforts. All these additional factors need to be assessed to determine readiness for change in a multi-sector transformational change effort.

Relationship Building

With the assumption that the readiness for change is adequate to support the multi-sector transformational change, establishing strong relationships, both within the coalition and workgroups as well as across the system and external to the system, is the most important function of the entire change effort. The coalition must identify key stakeholders and champions for change and invite them in to a dialogue about the issue being addressed. They must set the container, that is, create the right environment so that dialogue, meaning making, and learning can take place. As Isaacs (1993) points out, dialogue must first create a space that allows for "a free flow of meaning and vigorous exploration of the collective background of their thought, their personal predispositions, the nature of their shared attention, and the rigid features of their individual and collective assumptions"

(p. 25). Effective containers create a sense of equality amongst participants and help them focus, enabling them to speak directly and listen deeply to one another (Corrigan, 2015). The trust, respect, and creative engagement that effective containers encourage make it possible for participants to begin shifting away from an individualistic perspective to a collective one (Corrigan, 2015). It is this foundation that makes it possible for participants in a multi-sector change effort to challenge the status quo.

The practice of dialogue serves a variety of purposes among which, most theorists and practitioners would agree, the suspension of assumptions is the main one (Bohm, 2004; Bojer, Roehl, Knuth, & Magner, 2008; Isaacs, 1993, 1999; K. C. Laszlo & A. Laszlo, 2005; Nelson, 2004; Schein, 1993). In suspending assumptions, participants gain insight that leads to exploration of each other's differences (Isaacs, 1993, 1999) with collective thinking (Isaacs, 1999; Nelson, 2004; Schein, 1993) that results in the "group reaching some form of common understanding" (Nelson, 2004, p. 265). Bojer et al. (2008) would describe this as moving "from fragmentation to wholeness through inclusiveness" (p. 20). In more practical terms, dialogue can fulfill the purposes of generating awareness, problem-solving, building relationships, sharing knowledge, creating innovation, developing shared vision, building capacity, personal/leadership development, dealing with conflict, strategy/action planning, and decision making (Bojer et al., 2008).

The process of dialogue can vary depending on its purpose. Isaacs (1993) describes the process as a series of steps moving from invitation to conversation to deliberation to suspension to dialogue and ultimately to metalogue, which he defines as "learning to think and speak together for the creation of break-through levels of thought, and to know the aesthetic beauty of shared speech" (p. 38). Laszlo and Laszlo (2005) describe it as moving from self-knowing to other knowing to differences holding and then to differences transcending. Both consider dialogue to be an emergent process (Isaacs, 1993; K. C. Laszlo & A. Laszlo, 2005).

Isaacs has outlined four practices of dialogue: listening, respecting, suspending, and voicing (1999). Listening is the process of "[developing] an inner silence" (Isaacs, 1999, p. 84) where individuals listen for disconfirming evidence of their own assumptions and for gaps in what others say and do (Isaacs, 1999). In other words, individuals listen in order to understand rather than debate. Listening in dialogue is also a collective activity used to "evoke a deep and unusual experience of common understanding and communion" (Isaacs, 1999, p. 103). Respecting is seeing others as legitimate, looking for the best in others, and believing that they have something to teach us (Isaacs, 1999). It also means making the space for expressing different points of view (Isaacs, 1999). Suspending means taking a step back to acknowledge and observe our thoughts and assumptions and see them with new eyes (Isaacs, 1999). Suspending is about asking questions of oneself and "[observing] one's own thoughts and feelings …to bring into them a perspective and attention that can transform them" (Isaacs, 1999, p. 141). Voicing is the process of speaking one's truth and trusting the sense of not knowing (Isaacs, 1999). These four practices set the stage for generative thinking that can create systemic change.

The outcomes from dialogue are also linked to its purpose, but there are some specific outcomes that occur with every type of dialogue. First and foremost, dialogue results in a variety of types of learning. Isaacs (1993) describes the learning by building on Argyris's

(1990) concept of single- and double-loop learning and adding another level called triple-loop learning:

> Double-loop learning encourages learning for increasing effectiveness. Triple-loop learning is the learning that opens inquiry into underlying 'why's.' It is the learning that permits insight into the nature of paradigm itself, not merely an assessment of which paradigm is superior. (Isaacs, 1993, p. 30)

Nicolaides and Dzubinski (2016) also use the framework of single-, double-, and triple-loop learning to describe transformative learning, "the process of effecting change in a frame of reference" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). Isaacs (1993) describes the outcomes of dialogue in a way that is much akin to the definition of transformative learning:

> As people learn to perceive, inquire into, and allow transformation of the nature and shape of these [living fields of assumptions], and the patterns of individual thinking and acting that inform them, they may discover entirely new levels of insight and forge substantive and, at times, dramatic changes in behavior. As this happens, whole new possibilities for coordinated action develop. (p. 25)

Indeed, triple-loop learning, transformative learning, and Bateson's (1972) Learning III are all essentially one and the same. Another form of learning, evolutionary learning, is another possible outcome of dialogue. Evolutionary learning begins with an awareness of the situation and then moves into understanding the implications of that situation, then to gaining an ability to act and finally to catalyzing evolutionary development (A. Laszlo & K. C. Laszlo, 2008). Other potential outcomes of dialogue are a shift in worldview (Isaacs, 1993) and innovation (Bojer et al., 2008). These outcomes are what make transformational change possible, and they all begin with one initial process: building relationships. In multi-sector transformational change, relationship building begins with and relies on dialogue as the means to new understanding and insights. Wheatley (2014) claims "that there is no more powerful way to initiate significant change than to convene a conversation" (p. 26). Those conversations result in the outcomes of learning and perspective transformation that are the foundation for transformational change.

Mapping The Existing System

Mapping the existing system gives organizational leaders an opportunity to assess current reality, as well as creating an opportunity to build relationships. They need to ask the questions: "What already exists?" and "Where are the gaps?" The intention here is not to begin problem-solving–it is too early for that–but rather to accomplish what Ackoff et al. (2006, p. 5) call "formulating the mess," a process of identifying where an organization might go if it stays on its current path. Mapping the system will not necessarily illustrate the entire mess, but the maps are useful tools to support the process. There are three different types of maps that are used with the ESTCM: a community assets map, a systems map, and a social network map.

The idea of a community assets map comes from assets-based community development and is intended to help an organization or group of organizations to identify the assets, resources, and/or items of value in the system. In the first phase of the ESTCM, the process of identifying key stakeholders and champions of change jumpstarts the process of community assets mapping, and as more stakeholders and champions are engaged in dialogue, the coalition can fill in the gaps. Community assets maps can take a variety of forms, depending on how a group intends to use them. Figure 4 is an example of one such map that uses locator pins to show geographically where resources are located. The advantage of this type of map is that it is interactive, can store a significant amount of data in the pin, and is easily updated. It can also be displayed on websites.

A systems map can come in a variety of forms: mind maps, nested systems, stock-and-flow diagrams, flow charts, and causal loop diagrams, to name a few. All systems maps illustrate relationships between elements in the system. Figure 5 is an example of a causal loop map depicting the affordable and supported housing system in a local community. A causal loop diagram is a set of interconnected feedback loops that attempts to model the behavior of the system. For example, in Figure 5, if we begin at the top with the price of housing, we find that when the price increases, residents are more likely to endure a longer commute to find affordable housing. As a result of that longer commute, household expenses increase, disposable income decreases, the household carbon footprint increases, and the social capital available to the community decreases. These all, in turn, have additional effects on the system. By creating a causal loop diagram, it is possible to identify major leverage points in the system by looking at what elements have more out-arrows rather than in-arrows. However, it is important to keep in mind that the most effective leverage points may be outside the system. Causal loop diagrams have their greatest impact when developed collectively.

Social network maps and social network analysis are powerful but underutilized tools for supporting multi-sector transformational change. Formal structures within organizations represent only part of the entire organizational configuration. There are informal structures that are not reflected in the organizational chart (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002; Cross & Thomas, 2009). Social networks (not those of the electronic type such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) are what form these informal structures, and social network analysis (SNA) helps organizations assess the strength and effectiveness of those networks:

> A **social network** is a social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called “nodes”, which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige.
>
> **Social network analysis** views social relationships in terms of network theory consisting of nodes and ties (also called edges, links, or connections). Nodes are the individual actors within the networks, and ties are the relationships between the actors. ("Social network analysis: Theory and applications," 2011, p. 1)

GCMHC Community Assets

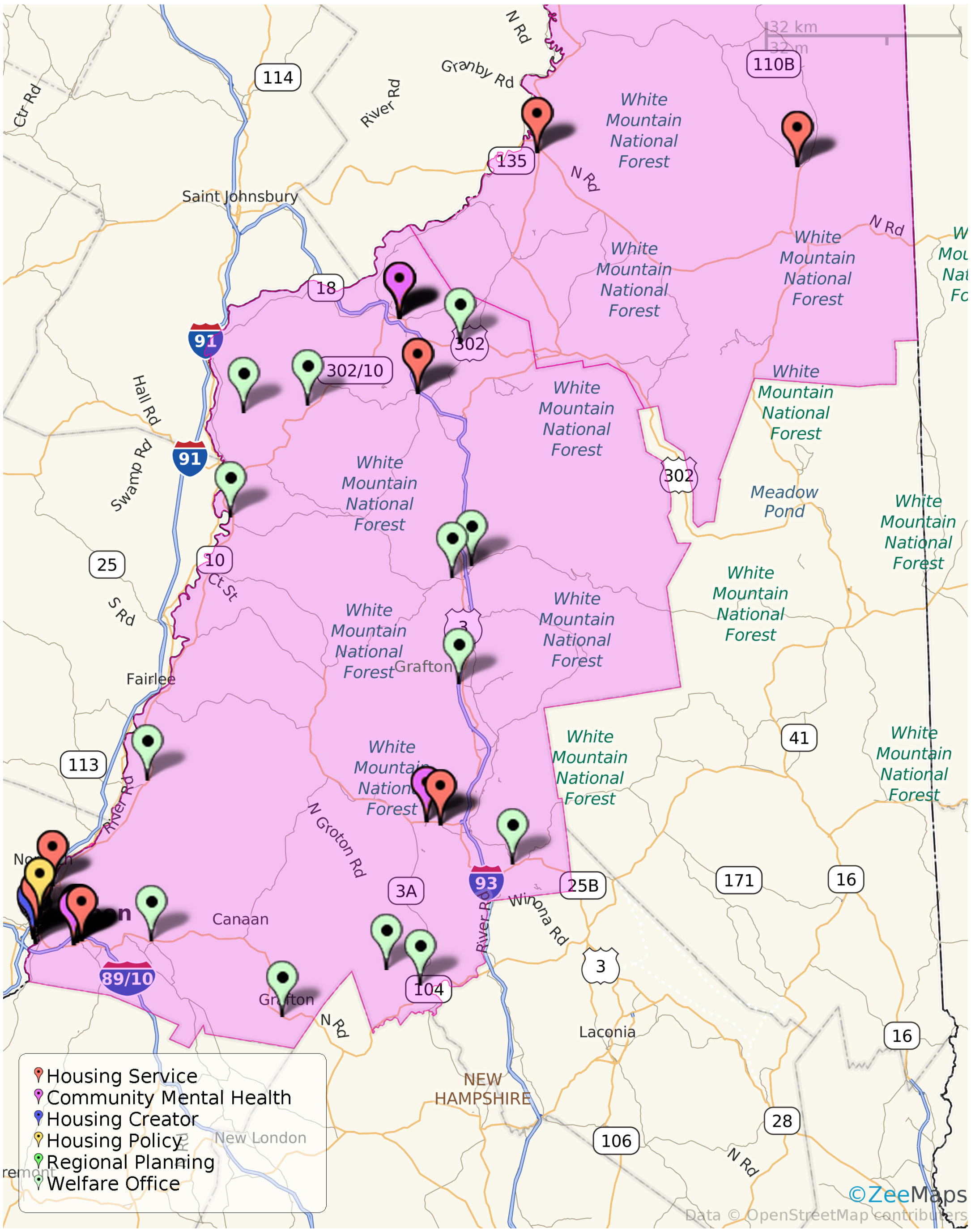

Figure 4: Example of a community assets map.

Figure 5. Example of a causal loop diagram.

SNA makes it possible to identify who the influencers are in the system, who bridges gaps and thus controls the flow of information, and who has high visibility. Figure 6 is an example of a social network, and at a first glance, it is possible to identify that nodes GN, RBR, MB, and NM are the only connection for other more peripheral nodes to the larger system. These nodes, known as structural hole brokers, can be possible bottlenecks in the system. Nodes ADC, KP, MB, SK, MBY, and AW are all highly connected, indicating that they are extremely visible and potential influencers in the system. Mapping the social network can help the coalition in a multi-sector change effort identify areas in the network that are in need of strengthening, increasing the likelihood of success.

These three types of maps – community assets, system, and social network – provide the coalition with a clear, albeit limited, profile of current reality, both in terms of resources and deficits. They enable the coalition to assess capacity for transformational change and to develop a capacity building plan, one that is nimble enough to respond to the constantly changing environment. They also illuminate possibilities for wholesale system change. Without these maps, a multi-sector transformational change effort would resemble the blind men describing the parts of the elephant without understanding the whole.

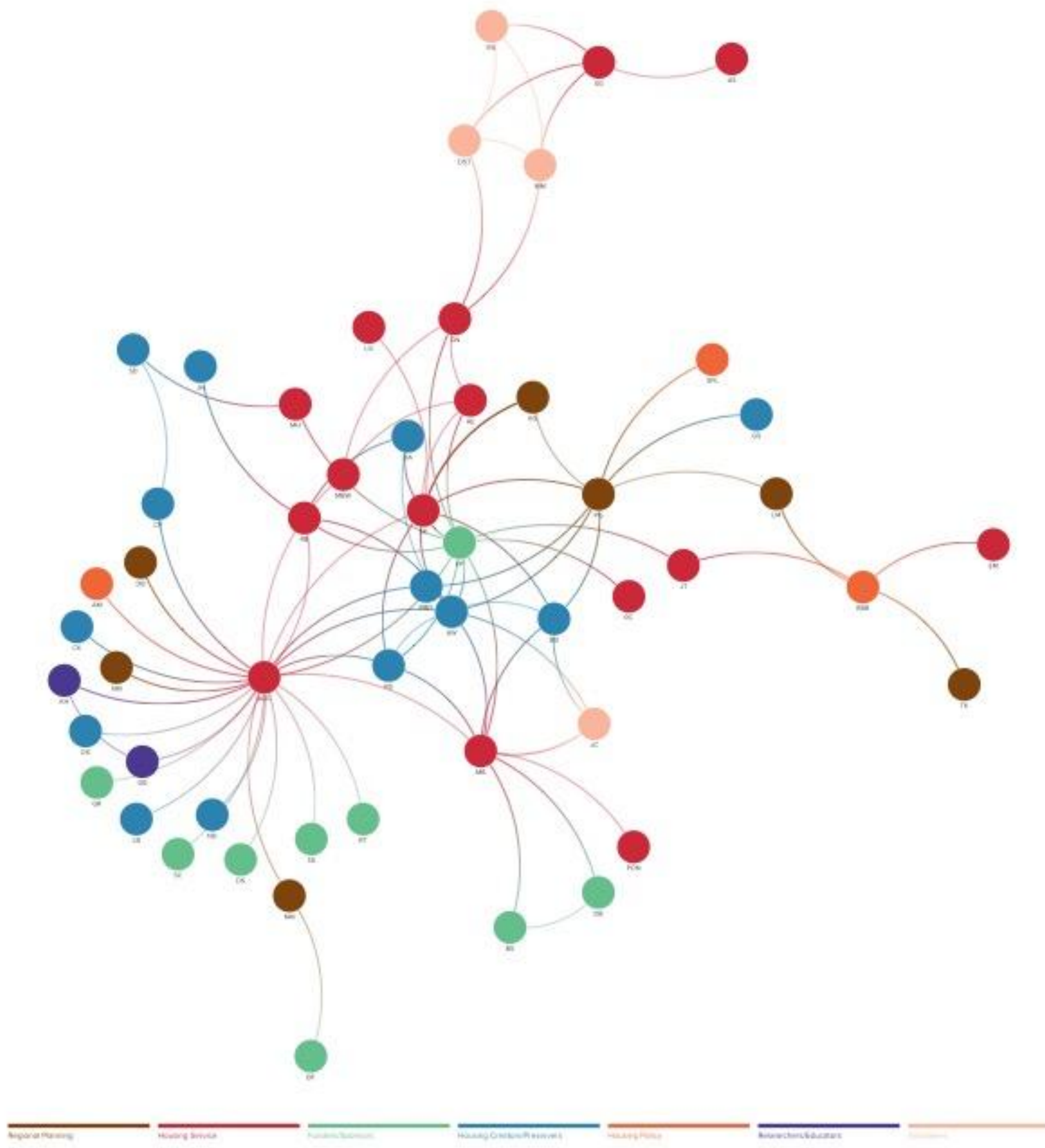

Figure 6. Example of a social network map.

Social Systems Design

SSD is an essential component of the ESTCM. Banathy (1997) defines SSD as

> purposeful creating action, the building of relationship between us and our world. It is the conception and creation of novel phenomena, the realization of what should be. It is the manifestation of knowledge, beliefs, values, and aspirations, translated into a great variety of what we want to bring about and make part of our lives. (p. 188)

He continues, saying that our role as participants in SSD

> must transcend the boundaries of our existing system, explore change and renewal from the larger vistas of our transforming society, envision a new image of our systems, create a new design based on the image, and transform our systems by implementing the new design. (p. 193)

In other words, we must leave behind our existing systems and structures and re-vision our systems in a way that moves us toward an ideal future. Figure 3 depicts the essential components of the ESTCM in SSD. One of those components is the creation and funding of a facilitation and support organization that provides guidance throughout the process of SSD and beyond (Jacobs, 2016). It is not realistic to expect overly scheduled and overcommitted organizational and community leaders to take on that additional responsibility. A multi-sector transformational change effort will likely be doomed to failure if such a facilitation and support organization is not in place.

SSD is steeped in the principles of participatory research. These principles include a democratic society in which to conduct the research, a safe space where participants can express their personal views, inclusion of those most affected by the research topic or issue, and varying degrees of participation (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Moreover, participatory research seeks to create change through reflective practice, address the power relationships within the system, and study data in the context of where they were collected (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). The participatory nature of SSD "is based on the premise that we cannot design *for* others: we can only design *with* others" (A. Laszlo & K. C. Laszlo, 2002, p. 354). Indeed, Banathy (1997) argues that it is unethical to design a system for others.

Two critical functions in the ESTCM are creating a shared vision–what Banathy (1997) calls the "image of the future system" (p. 203) and what Ackoff et al. (2006) refer to as the "ideal design"–and building the capacity of the system to undertake a transformational change effort. Creating a shared vision can be a challenging prospect when it involves many organizations and stakeholders. As with participatory research, it is essential that all who have a stake in the outcome of the effort play a part in creating that shared vision. Senge et al. (1994) use the metaphor of a diamond, where each facet represents an individual vision, the integration of which is necessary to produce the whole. With a shared vision in place, the coalition can begin to assess the system's need for capacity building, particularly in the areas of readiness for change, leadership, transformative learning, and organizational learning. Capacity building is likely to be an on-going process as the system evolves and incorporates new members.

SSD is highly relevant to addressing our current social problems. It is what enables us to create that future we so desire. It gives power back to stakeholders and engages them in a process of understanding the breadth and depth of existing problems and of finding appropriate solutions. In other words, the process of design creates ownership of both the problem and the solution. It also creates resiliency (Edson, 2012) within communities as well as sustainability (A. Laszlo & K. Laszlo, 2002). Individuals ultimately learn a new way of thinking that will enable them to address problems creatively on an on-going basis.

SSD is essential for strengthening our connections locally, nationally, and globally. Our local communities are becoming more and more disconnected. Robert Putman (2000) accurately depicted this problem in his book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community,* in which he describes the disintegration of many American social structures, including parent-teacher groups, churches, and political parties. Moreover, our dependence on our electronic devices has us choosing what Sherry Turkle (2012, April 22) refers to as connection over conversation. Similar levels of human detachment are also happening at the national and global levels. Connection through conversations about questions that matter is the best antidote for the level of disconnection that exists in the world, and SSD creates the space for those conversations. It is those conversations that will lead to transformational change, which first begins with individual transformative learning (Henderson, 2002) and leads to collective or organizational learning (Calleja, 2014; Ziegler, Paulus, & Woodside, 2006). Collective and transformative learning are achieved through dialogue and a reflective practice (Mezirow, 1994, 1997, 1998), both of which are essential in SSD.

Reflective Practice

A reflective practice is one where participants in a change process reflect on what they are actually doing at the time, surfacing and challenging assumptions in a way that leads to their making sense of uncertain or ambiguous situations (Schon, 1983) and potential innovation. Given the importance of dialogue in creating the opportunity for transformative learning and the notion that transformative learning catalyzes organizational learning, ultimately leading to transformational change (Bess, Perkins, & McCown, 2011; Henderson, 2002; Perkins et al., 2007), a reflective practice is a fundamental component to the ESTCM. Reflection with respect to multi-sector transformational change offers the opportunity to assess progress and course correct, as well as scan the environment for significant changes. There are three aspects to a reflective practice: critical self-reflection, critical reflection of others, and collective reflection. Critical self-reflection is defined as a process that “involves critique of a premise upon which the learner has defined a problem” (Mezirow, 1998, p. 186) and is accomplished collectively rather than individually (Mezirow, 1998). Mezirow (1998) claims that critical self-reflection can lead to personal and social transformation, and van Woerkom (2008) relates the learning from critical self-reflection to the concept of double-loop learning. Triple-loop learning, as described earlier, adds an additional layer of reflection to a reflective practice by challenging worldviews. Indeed, because Mezirow views critical self-reflection as a collective process, he includes discourse as a necessary step toward transformative learning (1994, 1997). He defines discourse as “a dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments, and alternative points of view” (1997, p. 6)–in essence, a reflective dialogue.

Effective self-reflection leads to critical reflection of others. It is important at this point for participants to engage in critical inquiry, which "supports a systemic understanding of the situation and possibilities for change" (Southern, 2015, p. 276). In addition to attempting to understand the different perspectives present in the system, critical inquiry enables participants to discover common ground. As a sense of shared purpose emerges, participants can engage in collective reflection or what could be described as generative inquiry, a process that "creates an opening to new thought and collective meaning making" (Southern, 2015, p. 277). All three forms of reflection are on-going iterative processes that happen throughout the life of a project and create continuous learning. It is a reflective practice that embraces the whole project and creates the space in which transformational change can take place.

CONCLUSION

It is imperative in today's society for organizations to work collaboratively to generate new thinking that can address our major social problems. The ESTCM offers an approach to accomplishing such an effort, one that specifically applies to multi-sector transformational change. In order for it to be effective, however, there is still a significant need to shift mind-sets in the non-profit and public sectors. Establishing the practices and processes outlined in this paper will be futile if organizations and funders cannot come together and think collectively as a wholly integrated system. Furthermore, participants in the process will need to develop patience with the uncertainty, ambiguity, and unpredictability of an emergent process. We cannot know what we need to know if we approach it with the same thinking–we will end up with the same outcomes, not the ones we desire. It is time to turn to one another, as Margaret Wheatley (2014, p. 166) so elegantly describes in her poem below. It is a fitting conclusion for this paper.

Turning to one another

There is no power greater than a community discovering
what it cares about

Ask "What is possible?" not "What's wrong?" Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.
Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.
    Talk to people you know.
    Talk to people you don't know.
    Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.
    Expect to be surprised.
    Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what's possible.

Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know.
Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change our world.

Rely on human goodness. Stay together.

Reprinted with permission.

REFERENCES

Ackerman-Anderson, L., & Anderson, D. (2001). *The change leader's roadmap: How to navigate your organization's transformation*., Pfeiffer, San Francisco, CA.

Ackoff, R. L., Addison, H. J., & Magidson, J. (2006). *Idealized design: Creating an organization's future*., Wharton School, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Anderson, D., & Ackerman-Anderson, L. S. (2001). *Beyond change management: Advanced strategies for today's transformational leaders*., Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, San Francisco, CA.

Argyris, C. (1990). *Overcoming organizational defenses*., Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA.

Armenakis, A. A., Harris, S. G., & Mossholder, K. W. (1993). Creating readiness for organizational change. *Human Relations, 46*(6). Retrieved from ABI/INFORM Complete database.

Banathy, B. H. (1997). Designing social systems in a changing world: A journey to create our future, *Systemist., 19*(3):187-216.

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind: Collected essays in anthropology, psychiatry, evolution, and epistemology*., University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Baum, F., MacDougall, C., & Smith, D. (2006). Participatory action research, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health., 60*(10):854-857. doi:10.1136/jech.2004.028662

Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012). Participatory research methods: A methodological approach in motion, *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research., 13*(1). Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1801

Bess, K. D., Perkins, D. D., & McCown, D. L. (2011). Testing a measure of organizational learning capacity and readiness for transformational change in human services, *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community., 39*(1):35-49. doi:10.1080/10852352.2011.530164

Bohm, D. (2004). *On dialogue*., Routledge , London, UK.

Bojer, M. M., Roehl, H., Knuth, M., & Magner, C. (2008). *Mapping dialogue: Essential tools for social change*., Taos Institute, Chagrin Falls, OH.

Bridges, W. (2009). *Managing transitions: Making the most of change*., Da Capo Press, Philadelphia, PA.

Burke, W. W. (1992). *Organization development: A process of learning and changing*., Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.

Calleja, C. (2014). Jack Mezirow's conceptualization of adult transformative learning: A review, *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education., 20*(1):117-136. doi:10.7227/jace.20.1.8

Choi, M., & Ruona, W. E. A. (2011). Individual readiness for organizational change and its implications for human resource and organization development, *Human Resource Development Review., 10*(1):46-73.

Cinite, I., Duxbury, L. E., & Higgins, C. (2009). Measurement of perceived organizational readiness for change in the public sector, *British Journal of Management., 20*(2):265-277.

Corrigan, C. (2015). Hosting and holding containers, in *Dialogic organization development: The theory and practice of transformational change*, (G. R. Bushe & R. J. Marshak, eds), Berrett-Koehler, Oakland, CA.

Cross, R., Borgatti, S. P., & Parker, A. (2002). Making invisible work visible: Using social network analysis to support strategic collaboration, *California Management Review., 44*(2):25-46.

Cross, R., & Thomas, R. J. (2009). *Driving results through social networks: How top organizations leverage networks for performance and growth*., Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Cunningham, C. E., Woodward, C. A., Shannon, H. S., MacIntosh, J., & et al. (2002). Readiness for organizational change: A longitudinal study of workplace, psychological and behavioral correlates, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology., 75*:377-392.

Eby, L. T., Adams, D. M., Russell, J. E. A., & Gaby, S. H. (2000). Perceptions of organizational readiness for change: Factor related to employees' reactions to the implementation of team-based selling, *Human Relations., 53*(3):419-442.

Edson, M. C. (2012). A complex adaptive systems view of resilience in a project team, *Systems Research and Behavioral Science., 29*(5):499-516. doi:10.1002/sres.2153

Henderson, G. M. (2002). Transformative learning as a condition for transformational change in organizations, *Human Resource Development Review., 1*(2):186-214. doi:10.1177/15384302001002004

Holt, D. T., Armenakis, A. A., Feild, H. S., & Harris, S. G. (2007). Readiness for organizational change: The systematic development of a scale, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science., 43*(2):232-255.

Isaacs, W. N. (1993). Taking flight: Dialogue, collective thinking, and organizational learning, *Organizational dynamics., 22*(2):24-39.

Isaacs, W. N. (1999). *Dialogue and the art of thinking together: A pioneering approach to communicating in business and in life*, Currency/Doubleday, New York, NY.

Jacobs, M. (2016, July). *Creating enduring social impact: A model for multi-sector transformational change*. Paper presented at the 60th annual meeting of the International Society for the Systems Sciences, Boulder, CO.

Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2013). Embracing emergence: How collective impact addresses complexity, *Stanford Social Innovation Review.*, 1-7. Retrieved from http://ssir.org/pdf/Embracing_Emergence_PDF.pdf

Kotter, J. P. (2012). *Leading change*, Harvard Business Review Press, Boston, MA.

Laszlo, A., & Laszlo, K. (2002). The evolution of evolutionary systems design, *World Futures: The Journal of General Evolution., 58*(5-6):351-363.

Laszlo, A., & Laszlo, K. C. (2008). The making of a new culture: Learning conversations and design conversations in social evolution, in *Dialogue as a collective means of design conversation,* (B. H. Banathy & P. M. Jenlink, eds.), Springer, New York, NY.

Laszlo, K. C., & Laszlo, A. (2005). The conditions for thriving conversations, in *Dialogue as a means of collective communication* (B. H. Banathy & P. M. Jenlink, eds.), Kluwer Academic/Plenum, New York, NY.

Lehman, W. E. K., Greener, J. M., & Simpson, D. D. (2002). Assessing organizational readiness for change, *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment., 22*(4):197-209.

Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformation theory, *Adult Education Quarterly., 44*(4):222-244.

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice, *New directions for adult and continuing education., 74:*5-12.

Mezirow, J. (1998). On critical reflection, *Adult Education Quarterly., 48*(3):185-198. doi:10.1177/074171369804800305

Nelson, H. G. (2004). Bela H. Banathy: The legacy of a design conversation, *Systems Research and Behavioral Science., 21*(3):261-268.

Nicolaides, A., & Dzubinski, L. (2016). Collaborative developmental action inquiry: An opportunity for transformative learning to occur?, *Journal of Transformative Education., 14*(2):120-138. doi:10.1177/1541344615614964

Perkins, D. D., Bess, K. D., Cooper, D. G., Jones, D. L., Armstead, T., & Speer, P. W. (2007). Community organizational learning: Case studies illustrating a three-dimensional model of levels and orders of change, *Journal of community psychology., 35*(3):303-328.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, NY.

Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations* (5th ed.), Free Press, New York, NY.

Schein, E. H. (1993). On dialogue, culture, and organizational learning, *Organizational dynamics., 22*(2):40-51.

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.), Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Schon, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*, Basic Books, New York, NY.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*, Doubleday/Currency, New York, NY.

Senge, P., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R., & Smith, B. (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*, Doubleday, New York, NY.

Social network analysis: Theory and applications. (2011). Retrieved from https://www.politaktiv.org/documents/10157/29141/SocNet_TheoryApp.pdf

Southern, N. (2015). Framing inquiry: The art of engaging great questions, in *Dialogic organization development: The theory and practice of transformational change* (G. R. Bushe & R. J. Marshak, eds.), Berrett-Koehler, Oakland, CA.

Turkle, S. (2012, April 22). The flight from conversation, *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/opinion/sunday/the-flight-from-conversation.html van Woerkom, M. (2008). Critical reflection and related higher-level conceptualizations of learning: Realistic or idealistic?, *Human Resource Development Review., 7*(1):3-12. doi:10.1177/1534484307311804

Voelker, T. A., Wooten, K. C., & Mayfield, C. O. (2012). Towards a network perspective on change readiness, *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics., 13*(4):96-113.

Walinga, J. (2008). Toward a theory of change readiness: The roles of appraisal, focus, and perceived control, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science., 44*(3):315-347.

Wheatley, M. J. (2006). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, CA.

Wheatley, M. J. (2014). *Turning to one another: Simple conversations to restore hope to the future*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, CA.

Ziegler, M. F., Paulus, T. M., & Woodside, M. (2006). This course is helping us all arrive at new viewpoints, isn't it? Making meaning through dialogue in a blended environment, *Journal of Transformative Education., 4*(4):302-319.