# When Unfreeze-Move-Refreeze Isn't Working: Doing, Thinking and Making via Systems Changes Learning

# David Ing

Creative Systemic Research Platform Institute (Ticino, Switzerland)

Systems Changes Learning Circle (Toronto, Canada)

SCiO - Systems and Complexity in Organisations Virtual Open Meeting, July 2022



# Agenda

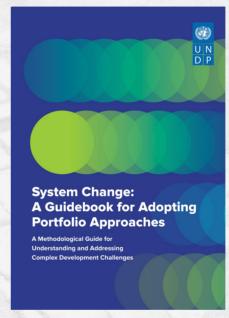
- A. What if Systems Changes aren't Unfreeze-Move-Refreeze?
- B. Doing: Briefing, then hub + 4 spokes in workshop
- C. Thinking: Action learning for facilitators
- D. Making: Systematic methods via multiparadigm inquiry
- E. Co-learning with the 10-year journey

#### A. What if Systems Changes aren't Unfreeze-Move-Refreeze? ...

### Which is/are system(s) change(s) c.f. not system(s) change(s)?









#### **OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation**

"... (rare) use" by governments of systems approaches towards making public services more effective and resilient"

(Cook & Tõnurist, 2017, p. 4).

#### **Stanford Social Innovation** Review

... a way for "policymakers, foundations, ... a three phase methodology: (i) NGOs, and social enterprises tackling issues like poverty, preventable disease position; and (iii) transform ( and poor education" to "solve the root Wellsch, 2022, p. 1) causes" of these intractable problems (Seelos & Mair, 2018, p. 35).

#### **United Nations Development Programme**

sense and frame; (ii) engage and

#### Forum for the Future + McConnell Foundation

"What is systems change?" "... asked people attending and unable to attend to offer their definitions of systems change" (Birney & Riddell, 2018, p. 5)



A. What if Systems Changes aren't Unfreeze-Move-Refreeze? ...

## "Change as Three Steps" as attributed to Kurt Lewin is a "largely post-hoc reconstruction"; he never wrote "refreeze"



Unfreezing change as three steps: Rethinking Kurt Lewin's legacy for change management

Reprints and permissions DOI: 10.1177/0019734715577703 (\$)SAGE

Stephen Cummings Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

**Todd Bridgman** Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

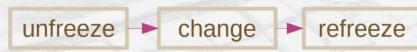
Kenneth G Brown

Kurt Lewin's 'changing as three steps' (unfreezing → changing → refreezing) is regarded by many as the classic or fundamental approach to managing change. Lewin has been criticized by scholars for over-simplifying the change process and has been defended by others against such charges. However, what has remained unquestioned is the model's foundational significance. It is sometimes traced (if it is traced at all) to the first article ever published in Human Relations. Based on a comparison of what Lewin wrote about changing as three steps with how this is presented in later works, we argue that he never developed such a model and it took form after his death. We investigate how and why 'changing as three steps' came to be understood as the foundation of the fledgling subfield of change management and to influence change theory and practice to this day, and how questioning this supposed foundation can encourage innovation.

CATS, changing as three steps, change management, Kurt Lewin, management history Michel Foucault

Stephen Cummings, Victoria Business School, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zea Email: stephen.cummings@vuw.ac.nz

[Change as Three Steps] has come to be regarded both as an objective self-evident truth and an idea with a noble provenance [p. 3]





Unfreezing change as three steps | Sage Publishing | Youtube

#### Lewin never wrote 'refreezing' anywhere.

As far as we can ascertain, the re-phrasing of Lewin's freezing to 'refreezing' happened first in a 1950 conference paper by Lewin's former student Leon Festinger (Festinger and Coyle, 1950; reprinted in Festinger, 1980: 14).

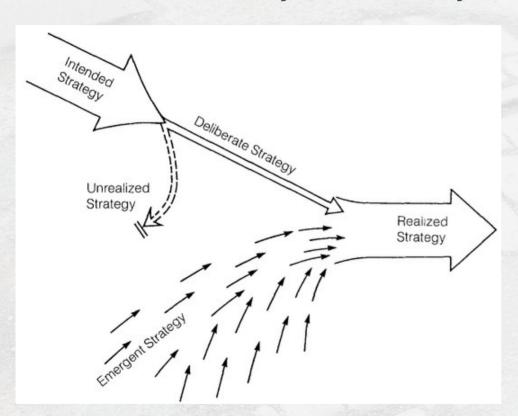
Festinger said that: 'To Lewin, life was not static; it was changing, dynamic, fluid, Lewin's unfreezingstabilizing-refreezing concept of change continues to be highly relevant today'.

It is worth noting that Festinger's first sentence seems to **contradict** the second, or at least to contradict later interpretations of Lewin as the developer of a model that deals in static, or at least clearly delineated, steps.

Furthermore, Festinger misrepresents other elements; Lewin's 'moving' is transposed into **'stabilizing**', which shows how open to interpretation Lewin's nascent thinking was in this 'preparadigmatic' period (Becher and Trowler, 2001: 33). [p. 5]

Cummings, Stephen, Todd Bridgman, and Kenneth G Brown. 2016. "Unfreezing Change as Three Steps: Rethinking Kurt Lewin's Legacy for Change Management." Human Relations 69 (1): 33-60. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726715577707 .

# In contrast to strategy as *plan*, strategy as *pattern* in a stream of actions is defined by consistency in behavior, whether or not intended



To paraphrase Hume, strategies may result from human actions, but not human designs.

If we label
the first definition *intended* strategy
and the second *realized* strategy,
as shown in Figure 1, then we can distinguish
between

deliberate strategies,

where intentions that exists previously were realized, from

emergent strategies,

where patterns developed in the absence of intentions, or despite them (which went *unrealized*).

Mintzberg, Henry. 1987. "The Strategy Concept I: Five Ps For Strategy." California Management Review 30 (1): 11–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/41165263 .



A. What if Systems Changes aren't Unfreeze-Move-Refreeze? ...

# Three works in 2022 reflect the current (i) doing, (ii) thinking, + (iii) making, in year 4 of 10 for the Systems Changes Learning Circle

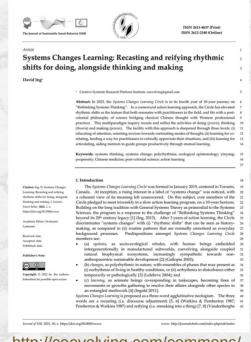
http://systemschanges.com/online/presentations

http://coevolving.com/commons/publications



http://systemschanges.com/online/presentations/20220304\_cfc

http://coevolving.com/commons/20220304 -systems-thinking-through-changes



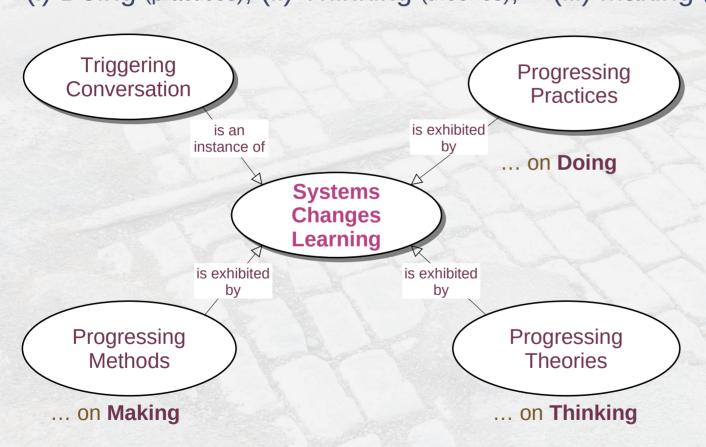
http://coevolving.com/commons/ 2022-07-recasting-and-reifying-r hythmic-shifts



http://coevolving.com/commons/2022-07-08-appreciating-systems-changes

@ ① § @ BY NC SA

# Systems Changes Learning initiated with Triggering Conversation exhibits (i) Doing (practices), (ii) Thinking (theories), + (iii) Making (methods)



#### **Object Process Language**

- Systems Changes Learning is physical and systemic.
- Triggering Conversation is physical and systemic.
- Triggering Conversation is instance of Systems Changes Learning,
- Systems Changes
   Learning exhibits
   Progressing Practices,
   Progressing Theories,
   and Progressing
   Methods.
- Progressing Practices is physical and systemic.
- Progressing Theories is informational and systemic.
- Progressing Methods is informational and systemic.

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# Session Agenda for Canadian Digital Service

:60	:60	:80		:10	:60		:30
I. Presentation	471	II. Workshop			III. Workshop		IV. Read-outs
<ul> <li>Welcome</li> <li>Systems         Thinking as         Systems         Changes         Learning         Action learning         practices as a         hub + 4         spokes     </li> </ul>		<ul> <li>Reforming as groups</li> <li>Knowing from within</li> <li>Contextural influences</li> <li>Diagnosing rhythmic disorders</li> </ul>	:10 :20 :20 :30		<ul> <li>Prognosing likelihoods</li> <li>Reordering pacing</li> <li>Reflecting on progress + process (preretrospective)</li> </ul>	:20 :20 :20	• Show and tell (:10 per team)

- D. Post-workshop retrospective (homework)
- Summary (1 page) of paths considered and not taken, actions to be negotiated

### Favoring 3 groups of systems thinkers, we add new contributors

#### **Early cybernetics**

Gregory Bateson (1904-1980) Norbert Wiener (1894-1964) Warren McCulloch (1898-1969) Margaret Mead (1901-1978) W. Ross Ashby (1903-1972)

#### **General systems theory**

Ludwig von Bertalanffty (1901-72) Kenneth Boulding (1910-1993) Geoffrey Vickers (1894-1983) Howard Odum (1924-2002)

#### **System dynamics**

Jay Forrester (1918-2016) Donella Meadow (1941-2001) Peter Senge (1947-)

#### Soft & critical systems

C. West Churchman (1913-2004)
Russell Ackoff (1919-2009)
Peter Checkland (1930-)
Werner Ulrich (1948-)
Michael C. Jackson (1951-

#### **Later cybernetics**

Heinz von Foerster (1911-2002) Stafford Beer (1926-2002) Humberto Maturana (1928-) Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998) Paul Watzlawick (1921-2007)

#### **Complexity theory**

Ilya Prigogine (1917-2003) Stuart Kauffman (1939-) James Lovelock (1919-)

#### **Learning systems**

Kurt Lewin (1890-1947)
Eric Trist (1911-1993)
Chris Argyris (1923-2013)
Donald Schön (1930-1997)
Mary Catherine Bateson (1939-)

#### **Practice theory**

Hubert Dreyfus (1929-2017) C. Fernando Flores (1943-) Étienne Wenger (1952-)

# **Ecological** anthropology

J.J. Gibson (1904-1979) Tim Ingold (1948-)

# Postcolonial & Chinese philosophy of science

Keekok Lee (1938-) François Jullien (1951-) John Law (1946-)

#### Service science

Richard Normann (1953-2003) James C. Spohrer (1956-) Gary S. Metcalf (1957-)

#### Systemic design

Harold G. Nelson (1943-) Birger Sevaldson (1953-) Peter H. Jones (1957-)

Source: Ramage, Magnus, and Karen Shipp. 2020. "Introduction to the First Edition." In *Systems Thinkers*, edited by Magnus Ramage and Karen Shipp, xiii–xx. Springer London. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4471-7475-2, p. xvii

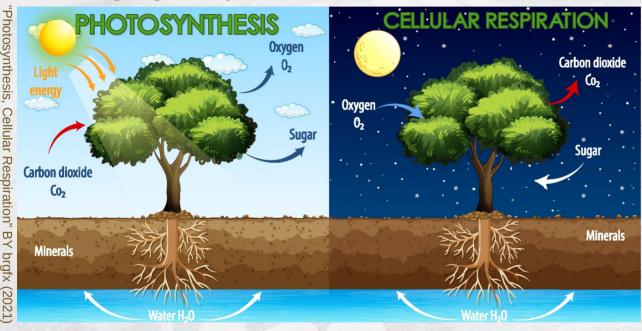
### With authentic systems thinking, synthesis precedes analysis

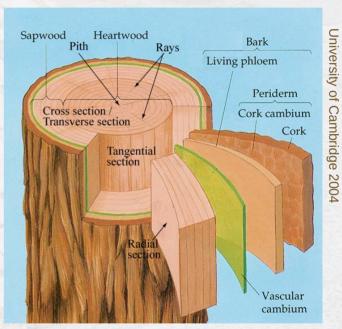
#### Thinking synthetically

Placing together parts into wholes

Thinking analytically

Loosening from wholes into parts

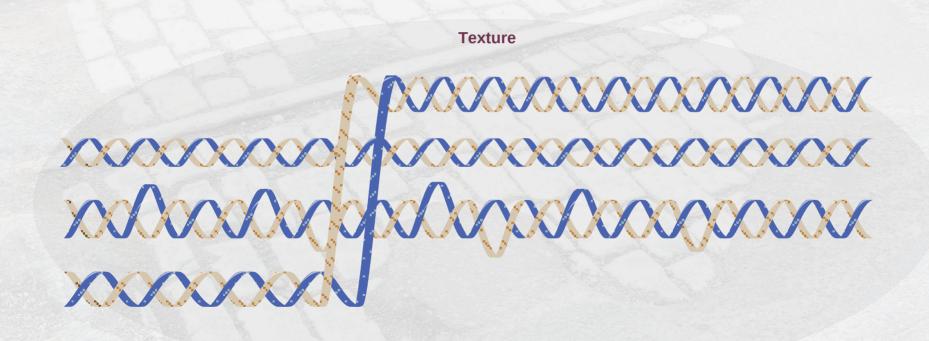




#### Systems Changes Learning adds ... thinking dyadically ... over time

- e.g. the sun waxing (increasing in strength) and waning (decreasing in strength)
- Dyadic (yinyang waxing and waning) is not dualistic (e.g. sun, no sun)

Our attention is drawn to rhythmic shift(s) in the texture, as the line of the system of interest crosses over co-related systems of influence



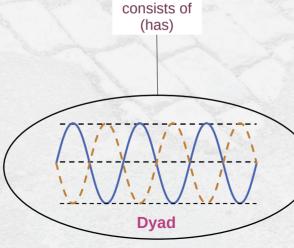
# Rhythms of a living system of interest weave into a contexture of co-related systems of influence





"Giom Perret at The Redeemer CC-BY David Ing 2018







d Occhipinti + Mike Murley at rake", CC-BY David Ing 2008

### Mechanisms ⇒ causality in conditions. Living systems ⇒ propensity in conditions

#### Water skiing, motion via causality

Motorboat towing

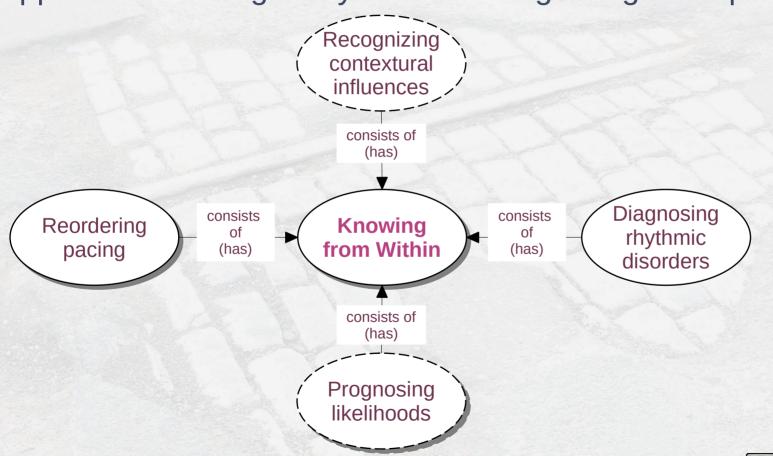


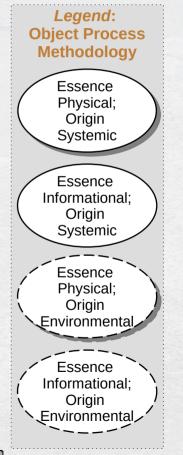


#### Surfing, motion via prospensity

- Waves in the ocean
- Surfer on the board

Systems Changes Learning centers on a hub of *knowing from within*, appreciated through a cycle of learning along four spokes

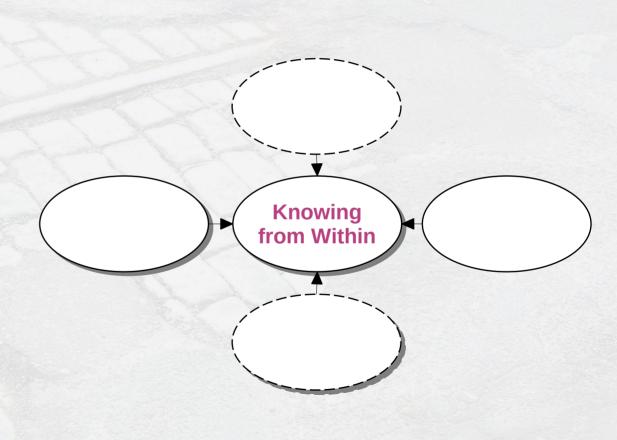




### Knowing from within embodies a becoming within rhythmic shifts of a system of interest, in the synthesis of co-responding dyadic processes

### **Guiding questions**

- Which rhythmic shift(s) is/are most present to you?
- 2. Which is your system of interest, that (i) can and should know, and (ii) can adapt and/or learn?
- Which two dyadic processes carry on synthesizing to sustain living?
  - Yang == working, dissipating, expanding
  - Yin == resting, materializing, contracting



### Knowing from within, example 1:

### Consider a shift to pandemic working-from-home on (family) life

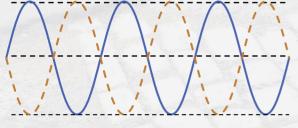
<b>Guiding questions</b>		Knowing from within		
1.	Which rhythmic shift(s) is/are most present to you?	<ul> <li>Residents living + working in closer quarters</li> <li>Easy conveniences → resource preplanning</li> </ul>		
2.	Which is your system of interest, that (i) can and should know, and (ii) can adapt and/or learn?	• Household		
3.	Which two dyadic processes carry on synthesizing to sustain living?  • Yang == working, dissipating, expanding • Yin == resting, materializing, contracting	<ul> <li>Working (providing income)</li> <li>Domesticizing (homemaking)</li> </ul>		

### Knowing from within, example 2:

### Consider a shift into a software app for venue vaccination tracking

Gı	uiding questions	Knowing from within		
1.	Which rhythmic shift(s) is/are most present to you?	<ul> <li>Visitors previously anonymous → tracked</li> <li>Venue checking, recording names at door</li> </ul>		
2.	Which is your system of interest, that (i) can and should know, and (ii) can adapt and/or learn?	<ul> <li>Civic Tech?</li> <li>Collaboration between volunteer technical professionals and small organizations in a region</li> </ul>		
3.	<ul> <li>Which two dyadic processes carry on synthesizing to sustain living?</li> <li>Yang == working, dissipating, expanding</li> <li>Yin == resting, materializing, contracting</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Privileging access of personal records for entry</li> <li>Right-to-be-forgotten after n days</li> </ul>		

# Knowing from within, hint (philosophy of science, Classical Chinese Medicine): Dyadic processes make up a whole with parts that co-respond







Yang Yin

Illuminating Darkening

Working Resting

Warming Cooling

Rising Descending

Dissipating Materializing

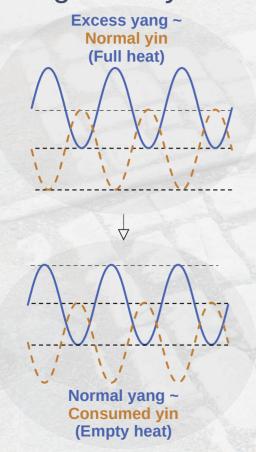
Scattering Congealing

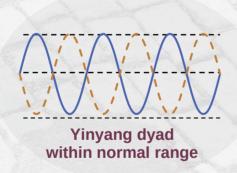
Generating Growing

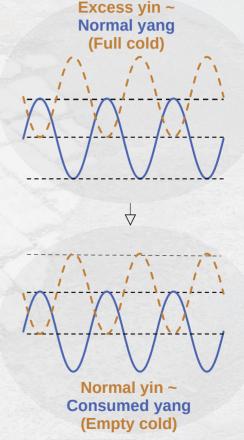
**Expanding Contracting** 



# Diagnosing rhythmic disorders hint: Pathologies may be diagnosed as one of four conditions







B. Doing: Briefing, then hub + 4 spokes in workshop ...

Recognizing contextural influences, hint:

Concurrent changes over time and space can be placed as (i) at hand for directly joining, and/or (ii) remote engaging via intermediaries

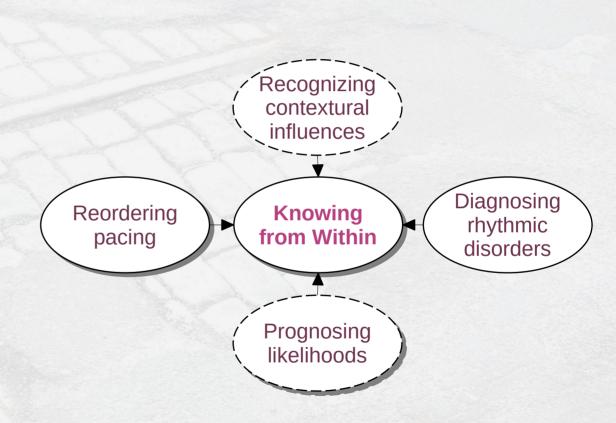
**Distant** Expediting trauma emergencies Organizing operating room teams Scheduling neighbourhood clinics Local Summoning battlefield medics Urgent

*Important* 

# Action learning is formalized through documenting joint deliberations, alternatives considered, and paths not chosen

### **Guiding questions**

- 1. What did you collectively learn during the workshops?
- 2. What more do you need to learn?
- 3. Which options did you choose?
- 4. Which paths did you disfavour (and why)?
- 5. What actions are next?



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## Systems Change Learning first reorients attention, and then aims to nurture both co-relating and articulating

	Praxis - Doing	Theoria - Thinking	Poiesis - Making
Educating of attention	Behavioral and/or ecological?	Changelessness and/or temporality?	Causality and/or propensity?
Learning for co-relating	Action- agencing	Theory- enskilling	Methods- weaving
Learning for articulating	Action- guiding	Theory- building	Methods- composing

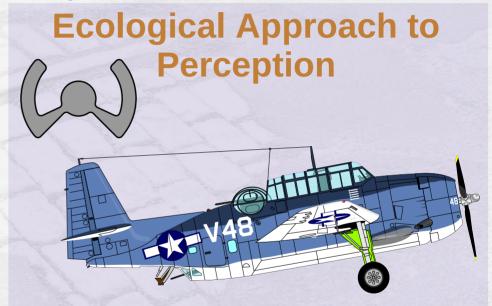
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C. Thinking: Action learning for facilitators ...

### While Behavioral Psychology asked "What's inside your head", an Ecological Approach asks "What's your head inside of?"



[In the 1950] ... the psycho-physical program was ... traditional in considering perception to be a set of responses to presented stimuli (albeit "higher order" stimuli).



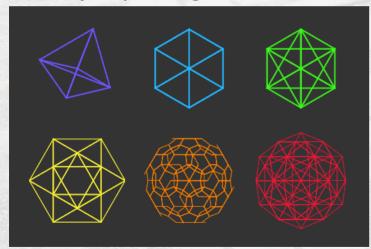
[James J. Gibson] has tried to develop enough theory ... to demonstrate that **direct perception** is indeed plausible ... The ... analysis of the optic array, stimulus organization, and the functional organization of perceptual systems are what Gibson oftens points to as radical features ....

William M. Mace 1977. "James J. Gibson's Strategy for Perceiving: Ask Not What's inside Your Head, but What Your Head's inside of." In Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing: Toward an Ecological Psychology, edited by Robert Shaw and John Bransford, 43-65. Doing, Thinking and Making via Systems Changes Learning

# Two ways of seeing nature, since ~500 BCE, have set how humans beings negotiate with themselves and in their world(s)

#### Reality as a changelessness state

- Parmenides of Elea, Confucius
- Shift → stability → sustainable
- Analytic paradigm



Hyper Platonic, by Nathan P. Seddig (natpbs.tumblr)

#### Reality as a state of change, not a change of state

- Heraclitus of Ephesus, Laotse
- Beauty of dynamic (c.f. protection of static)
- Contextual appreciation



Walking, by Dominique Taswell (strawberrylicorice.tumblr)

Hawk, David L. 1999. "Changelessness, and Other Impediments to Systems Performance." In *Proceedings of the Conference to Celebrate Russell L. Ackoff, and the Advent of Systems Thinking*, edited by Matthew J. Liberatore and David N. Nawrocki. Villanova University. http://davidhawk.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Ackoff-Birthday-Conference.pdf#page=59.

### Willful action and non-intrusive action are central in Chinese thinking





```
为(為)wéi: p. 517
I (动,verb)
```

- 1. do; act: 敢做敢 ~ gǎn zuò gǎn ~ bold in action
- 2. act as; serve as: 以此 ~ 凭 yí cǐ ~ píng This will serve as proof.
- 3. **become**: 变沙漠 ~ 良田 biàn shā mó ~ liáng tiān turn the desert into arable land.
- 4. **be; mean**: 一公里 ~ 二华里 yī gōng lǐ ~ èr huā lǐ One kilometer is equivalent to two li.

无 (無) wu2: p. 526

I (名, noun) nothing; nil: 从 ~ 到有 cóng ~ dào yǒu start from scratch

II (动, verb) not have; there is not; without: ~ 一定计划 ~ yī dìng jì huà have no definite plan

III (副, adverb) **not**: ~ 须多谈 ~ xǔ duō tǎn need not go into details

Concise English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary (2004), 3ed, Commercial Press and Oxford University Press

Wei meant application of the force of will-power, the determination that things, animals, or even other men, should do what they were ordered to do, but wu wei was the opposite of this, leaving things alone, letting Nature take her course, profiting by going with the grain of things instead of going against it, and knowing how not to interfere.

Needham, Joseph. 2004. "General Conclusions and Reflections." In The Social Background, edited by Kenneth Girdwood Robinson. Vol. VII:2. *Science and Civilisation in China*. Cambridge University Press. p. 16

Some scholars have argued that the interpretation of *wuwei* as "non-intrusive action" or "non-interfering action" is more philosophically profound and interesting. These latter translations support a meaningful rendition of the concept *wuwei* both at the sociopolitical level (arguing against the imposition of artificial, conformist and universally binding norms) and at the metaphysical level (acknowledging the inappropriateness and fatality of imposing egocentric or anthropocentric norms upon other individuals or species).

Lai, Karyn. 2003. "Conceptual Foundations for Environmental Ethics: A Daoist Perspective." *Environmental Ethics* 25 (3): 247–66. https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics200325317.

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D. Making: Systematic methods via multiparadigm inquiry ...

# Appreciating philosophies in (i) architectural design, (ii) ecological anthropology and (iii) Chinese medicine led to insights into systems rhythms

	Appreciative Systems			
	Reality Judgments	Value Judgments	Instrumental Judgments	
Philosophy of Architectual Design	Differentiating space	Living order (Quality without a Name)	Unfolding patterns, constructing, repairing, systems generating systems	
Philosophy of Ecological Anthropology	Lines of becoming, meshworks	Attending (wayfaring) alongside other beings	Co-responding through habit, agencing and attentionality	
Philosophy of Classical Chinese Medicine	Diseases as internal, with external causes	Wei, wuwei	Tonifying yin or yang, expelling pathogenic factors	
Philosophy of Rhythms		1	<b>\</b>	
Philosophy of Systems Rhythms	Rhythmic shifts, in textures	Propensity	Reordering pacing	

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# Coevolving Innovations

in Business Organizations and Information Technologies

# Christopher Alexander, Horst Rittel, C. West Churchman

At U.C. Berkeley in the 1960s, Christopher Alexander, Horst Rittel and C. West Churchman could have had lunch together. While disciplinary thinking might lead novices to focus only on each of pattern language, wicked problems and the systems approach, there are ties (as well as domain-specific distinctions) between the schools.



Circa 1968-1970: Christopher Alexander, Horst Rittel, West Churchman

#### Recent Posts

- Christopher Alexander, Horst Rittel,
   C. West Churchman
- Open Innovation Learning and Open Data
- · Learning data science, hands-on
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Anshansicun: Whimsically residential area,... bit.ly/2jU

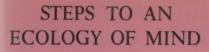






D. Making: Systematic methods via multiparadigm inquiry ....

The Perception of the Environment (Ingold, 2000) extends ecological epistemology as by Gregory Bateson in "Form, Substance and Difference" (1970)





"the mental world ... is not limited by the skin" [Bateson 1972, p. 461]

Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill TIM INGOLD

... an 'ecology of life' ... all hinges on a particular answer to Bateson's question: what is this 'organism plus environment'?

For conventional ecology, the 'plus' signifies a simple addition of one thing to another, both of which have their own integrity, quite independently of their mutual relations. ....

A properly ecological approach, to the contrary, is one that would take, as its point of departure,

the whole-organism-in-its-environment.

In other words, 'organism plus environment' should denote not a compound of two things, but one indivisible totality (Ingold, 2000, p. 19).

D. Making: Systematic methods via multiparadigm inquiry ...

# In contrast with a science based on the universals + duals, Chinese medicine follows traditions of contexts + dyads

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL
FOUNDATIONS
CLASSICAL CHINESE
MEDICINE
Philosophy, Methodology, Science
VEEKOK LEE
KEEKOK LEE

Dualistic (Modern Western formal logic)		Contextual-dyadic (Classical Chinese implicit logic)
Abstract and permanent, is independent of context  Can extrapolate from propositions	Truth - Falsity	Application and meaning is relative to a particular context • Evaluate assertion as embedded
Oppositions Superior ↔ Inferior Superordinate ↔ Subordinate Intrinsic value ↔ Non-intrinsic value Human ↔ Nonhuman	Pairings	Characteristics under context A term presupposes it opposite  • e.g. cat implies non-cat, not universe Context-dependence • e.g. men or women superior when/where?
Hierarchical Reductionist Entity- (thing-) ontology	Frames	Yin-Yang Harmonious whole Mutually engendering or constraining

Lee, Keekok. 2017. *The Philosophical Foundations of Classical Chinese Medicine: Philosophy, Methodology, Science*. Lexington Books. https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781498538886/The-Philosophical-Foundations-of-Classical-Chinese-Medicine-Philosophy-Methodology-Science.

D. Making: Systematic methods via multiparadigm inquiry ...

Polyrhythmia is an alignment of multiple organic repetitions in time and space, beyond metrics of mechnical regularity

### **Polyrhythmia**

### **Isorhythmia**

is an equality of rhythms, in an identity of temporalities

Isorhythmia is present in symphonic and orchestral music, but otherwise is rare.

#### **Eurhythmia**

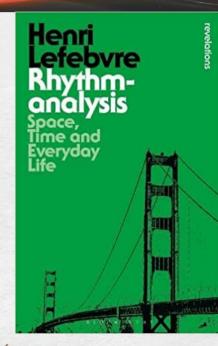
is an association of heterogeneous rhythms, as normal in a healthy living body

Eurhythmia is present
in living bodies
as diverse rhythms in a
metastable equilibrium
unified with the environment.

#### **Arrhythmia**

is a breaking apart of rhythms, altering and bypassing synchronization

Arrhythmia appears as functional disruption than can manifest into illness and progress into morbid and fatal disorder.



Lefebrve, Henri. 2004. "The Rhythmanalyst: A Previsionary Portrait." In Elements of Rhythmanalysis: An Introduction to the Understanding of Rhythm, translated by Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore, 19–26. *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. Continuum. "liquid light ~ modulate I" CC-BY hobvias sudoneighm 2004.

# Agenda

- A. What if Systems Changes aren't Unfreeze-Move-Refreeze?
- B. Doing: Briefing, then hub + 4 spokes in workshop
- C. Thinking: Action learning for facilitators
- D. Making: Systematic methods via multiparadigm inquiry
- E. Co-learning with the 10-year journey

# Centered in Toronto, the Systems Changes Learning Circle originates from CSI, OCADU SFI and Systems Thinking Ontario



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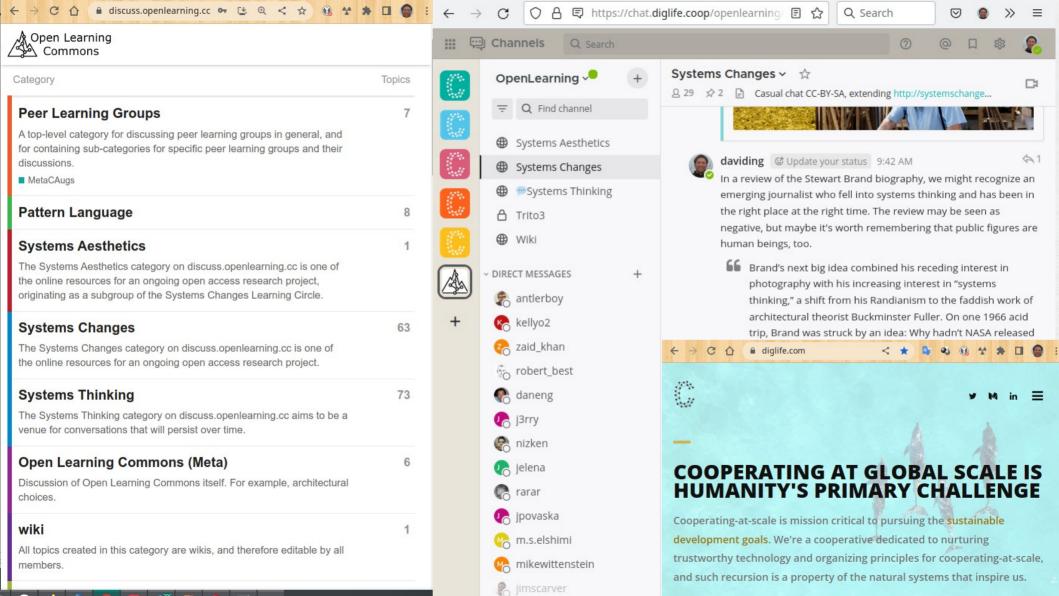
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# Creative Systemic Research Platform Institute

is an institution aiming to promote research and development of non-profit projects. We focus on investigating the skills needed for Community Resilience, supported by ecological practices and systemic and creative learning.

Existing since 2017 as a non-profit research group, we evolved in December 2020 into the CSRP Institute.

More about

Contact us

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