

LCLI BRIEFING #7

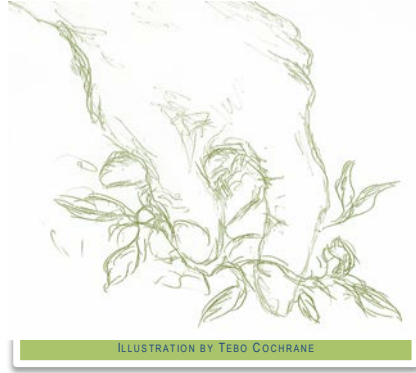


ILLUSTRATION BY TEBO COCHRANE

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Dear LCLI Fellows and friends,

Silence is not golden. We/I have been out of touch for a while about developments in the Leading Causes of Life Initiative. Yet the connections between us are crucial to the vitality of the LCLI, and an apology is appropriate. A Briefing is overdue and there are things you should know about.

Masana’s contribution

First, and foremost, Masana Ndinga-Kanga (whom many of you have met), an indispensable member of our core group from the beginning and the key person helping me behind many of our communications and operations, ended her part-time work for the LCLI in February. She helped us greatly while working for LCLI Fellow Francis Wilson in the South African Poverty and Inequality Initiative (which addresses a fundamental and threatening fracture in that society, though of course by no means only there), but now, besides becoming a new mother to daughter Elikia, she is employed full-time as part of a major multi-country study for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in its Cape Town office. Masana remains an LCLI Fellow.

Shingai’s arrival

Second, we are delighted to announce that Shingai, spouse to Masana and father of Elikia, has agreed to step into the role of assisting the Initiative and me with our operational and administrative work as of July! Both he and Masana (plus a tiny Elikia!), were with some of us in Taizé last year at its centenary event leading our workshops there on the “leading causes of life.” Shingai, besides conveniently being able easily to consult with Masana, has thus already been part of our work and is ideally placed to help us forward. You can expect to be hearing from him regularly!

LCLI Fellows: Funding a gathering ...?

Third, also affecting our operations, we spent a fair bit of time at the end of 2015 and into 2016 on a proposal to a Foundation for funds that we hoped would enable us to bring together the whole group of Fellows. Though interest and good will from the highest level of the Foundation was strongly supportive, the economics were unfavourable and they could not in the end help.

It remains our desire, still, to gather the LCLI Fellows as a whole. We will continue to search for a way to make this possible. We know from our and others’ experience how valuable a protected space for a networked, intentionally reflective gathering can be to enable the connected, generative intellectual juices of wisdom and experience of our Fellows to flow across disciplinary and practice silos, something of benefit to all and full of potential for grounded and insightful innovation in meeting the challenges of the future.

Emerging themes

❖ *Generative leadership*

Following on the recommendation of last year’s Advisory Group meeting, we are picking up on particular interests of smaller groups of Fellows. Seven of our LCLI Fellows—Doug Reeler, Craig Stewart, Gary Gunderson, Teresa Cutts, Jeremy Moseley, Jim Cochrane and Kirsten Peachey (a new Fellow; more about her and other new Fellows in the next Briefing)—met over three days in North Carolina, USA, to discuss ways of taking up a key concern: the

issue of what “generative leadership” means (more on page 3).

❖ *The life of the economy*

Another, motivated by Masana Ndinga-Kanga in the first instance, is “the life of the economy,” meaning rather more than material exchange and financial relations. “Agency” as a central ‘cause of life’ is one dimension of this, but an LCL approach would address the entire field, boldly ready to go outside the boundaries of standard ways of describing the economy and finance, pushing the frontiers of what we might think of as “economy” in relation to “living human systems” and the spirit and imagination that enlivens them. Again, you should hear more about this in due course as Masana and some of the Fellows think about ways of going about it.

❖ *The living ecology of medicine*

A third area of ongoing discussion among some Fellows is what an LCL framework or emphasis might mean for medicine. Because he has already actively expressed interest in this, we are in discussion with LCLI Fellow Sunny Anand, now at Stanford University, but it is early days and we will keep you updated. It also has some links to interactions last year and early this year that five of our LCLI Fellows (Leslie London, Teresa Cutts, Gary Gunderson, Doug McGaughey, Jim Cochrane) have had with the leadership of the Health Impact Assessment Directorate in the Western Cape Department of Health, South Africa, who are rethinking policy and practice in the Province along the lines of “wellness” rather than “illness.” How this will play itself out also remains to be seen.

❖ *Emerging graduate student work*

It is worth reporting that two University of Cape Town doctoral students there and another two in Johannesburg associated with LCLI Fellow Mohamed Seedat, Director of the Institute for Social and Health Sciences and Director of the MRC-UNISA Violence, Injury and Peace Research Unit, are incorporating an Leading Causes of Life approach into their research.

❖ *New systems of health*

Also relevant in the context of health care and health systems is Stakeholder Health, the health systems learning group that has been led and driven in part by LCLI Fellows Gary Gunderson, Teresa Cutts and Jerry Winslow, supported by Tom Petersen.

It is a voluntary learning collaborative of some 40 plus participating health systems and invested institutions across the USA calling for operational transformations that will align with the profound changes occurring in the provision of health care, including far greater integration with local communities, sparked by a series of stakeholder meetings convened by the White House Office and HHS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Stakeholder Health has just released its second major publication, a book of 11 chapters with 44 authors focused on *Insights from New Systems of Health* (see separate box), with no less than 14 of our Fellows contributing to it, frequently using an LCL lens. For a great intro, see Gary’s blog: <https://garygunderson.net/2016/06/20/new-systems-of-health/>

THE LCLI INITIATIVE



Our website is our virtual ‘Tent’ or homeplace. Here you will find the LCLI Manifesto and perspective, as well as information on our core group and Fellows, a blog (‘Drumbeats’), resources (‘Backpack’), and more.

<http://www.leading-causes.com>

At a recent meeting a few Fellows began to unpack what it might mean to speak of “generative leadership.” We share some extracted notes from that discussion.

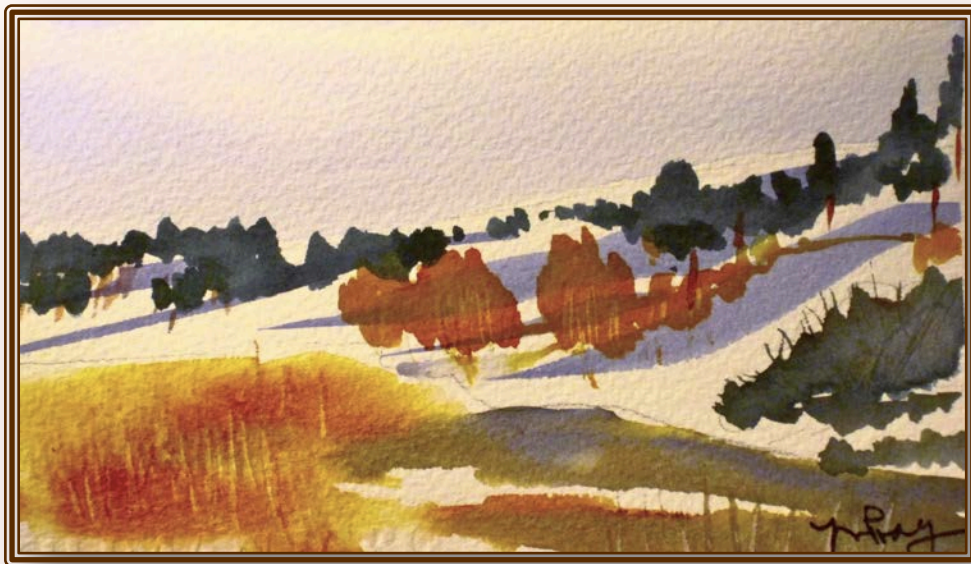
NOTES ON “GENERATIVE LEADERSHIP”

What is generative, “already alive” in communities, that can be worked with, enhanced, aligned by trust, and how do we scale this up? What kind of leadership is necessary that does not require a supervised, curriculum based “heroic leadership” model?

- A particular concern is how one shifts institutions (or people who have positional power in institutions) into a different framework of leadership (including “*un-leading*”). Outcomes matter, but the way to define them is not through mechanical, instrumental, technological solutions but through *setting loose the energies and dynamics that power living human systems*—both among those one is there to serve and among those who seek to serve. Training/educating/informing people is simply not enough
- A key question to ask is, “how do you form yourself dynamically?” How does one become a “*learning organization*” that prizes “visible, disciplined thinking,” aware that the ability of those who intervene from above is extremely limited, project-ized, and self-limiting (besides limiting what is already there in communities)?
- Critical is *releasing energies* already there, taking *learning as an adaptive form of organization and self-organization*.
- What kind of leadership enables this? The current generalized tide of frustration with the status quo, partly generational, is a force of change that is suspicious of conventional forms of leadership but hasn’t found anything else that works yet.
- A three-fold approach (Kirsten in Chicago) – 1) relational, convinced that “relationships help create change”; 2) forming “nurturing leaders” by building conversations about and new ways of thinking and acting; 3) convening across a movement – based on *moral imagination*; *spirit-power* as opposed to money-power/people-power; *love*, as a real thing; and holding on to the dialectic of *hurt-and-hope*.
- “*Who has control?*” is a key question. Trust is crucial, and it has to be won and held.
- Data-sharing that is honest and not misleading or manipulative can also help a great deal.
- The more we train “heroes,” the more we suppress what actually takes place in complex living human systems.
- Where then does leadership exist, what does it look like, how does it work, in *complex living human systems*? Think of the “aunties and uncles” of development who have no formal status, are not overtly the public leaders, but are in fact the gatekeepers in communities, a key node in anything that happens.
- Leadership must be seen as a *process* rather than an individual characteristic (or merely a set of skills).
- Affected by choices that are available within any one place, space and time, the actual, in this sense, is not determining: “*possibility is greater than actuality*” and disclosing possibilities that are present is a crucial leadership practice.
- This includes paying attention to how “reality” (actuality) and “ideals” (possibility) clash, who defends what in the process, and what can be achieved by opening up imagination. Leadership is then also not just about delegation.
- The issue of *scale* is also critical; it’s about a *movement across sectors* rather than merely training small groups of people, easy to grasp if we understand what life systems are. Self-interest is one central issue that keeps it from going to scale, an issue we need to confront imaginatively.
- This may well mean moving more explicitly away from a “program” or “project-based” trajectory (generates initial energy, but this often drops dramatically of boredom, leadership change, burnout, historical trauma and internal conflict), toward more *fundamental generative dynamics*; away from “predictable cause-effect” models and mechanical replicability to *connecting the energies of people* that normally don’t see or link to each other.
- Or asking how one shapes an organization so that it becomes a *generative space* for those who are in it? – modelling in one’s organization what one looks for elsewhere.
- Other experiences speak to the importance of non-instrumental criteria for leadership: of the “*human factor*,” of creating “*spaces of innovative boundary-crossing encounter*,” of an emphasis on “*spirit*” or the immaterial, nonsensible dimension of human action, of networks of solidarity and exposure to other contexts, and of “*spaces of hope*” that are able to confront the hurt that is present.
- Some also value the idea of “*leadership as hosting*”: process oriented, inviting, pollinating, not about a task but about a way of coming together; a philosophy rather than a methodology.
- The Shormer *Unlearning/Relearning cycle* is part of this—slowing down rather than speeding up, respecting the force of awareness/focusing, getting out of the way, in a deep sense just part of the flow.
- We aren’t talking about an individual journey in a positional role, but a way of helping a living system achieve the deepest accountability of which it is capable; *artfully signalling* that others are free to express their own presence, against those “normal” signals that paralyze the process.

- It is *wildly inappropriate to think that one can lead a living system*. We need some *new language* to enable us to talk more clearly, accurately about the larger field we are engaging with, to see the interactions in any one place or living system; there is a different mind in “*leading*” something or being a “*generative agent*.”
- Rather than a “*culture of skills*”—which tends to dominate the desire to act and to act quickly with visible outcomes in defined time-periods—a “*culture of will*” is thus vital to generative leadership. To recall a Teilhard de Chardin quote: *We are not so much human beings seeking spirituality but spiritual beings becoming human*.

What, then, if we did not use the word “*leader*” or “*leadership*”? What if we spoke instead of ‘*generative agents*’ and ‘*generative nodes*’? The *one thing that binds everything we are talking about is ‘Spirit’ and we can’t just have workshops or seminars about that—and how we address that is pretty profound*



Another of LCLI Fellow Larry Pray’s watercolours with which has blessed many of us. Despite further strokes that have left him struggling, he continues to share what he can with the help of Connie, his spouse, both iconic exemplars of what the leading causes of life is all about. We wish them and their family very well on this difficult journey. If you don’t know Larry, *please* do watch the 4-minute video with him on his book, *Thresholds*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZC4wEGF-DX0>

A FEW LCLI-RELATED PUBLICATIONS

LCLI Fellows’ author’s names are underlined.

In press:

- Heather Wood Ion, James R. Cochrane & Gary R. Gunderson, 2017 (anticipated). Religion, health, and wellbeing. *International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (Wiley-Blackwell), 2575 words.
- Sandy Lazarus, James R. Cochrane, Naiema Taliep, Candice Simmons and Mohamed Seedat. 2016 (anticipated). Identifying and Mobilising Intangible Factors that Promote Community Peace. In Mohamed Seedat, Shahnaaz Suffla and Kopana Ratele (eds), *Contributions to Peace Psychology*, Springer.

Published:

- Gary Gunderson, Teresa Cutts & James R. Cochrane, 2015. *The Health of Complex Human Populations*. Discussion Paper, Institute of Medicine. [With seminal ideas, here is a summary of it:]
 - Brief outline of the convergence of public health, health quality, health business & civil society
 - A sketch of an alternative integrative paradigm: Leading Causes of Life
 - An explanation for how this paradigm is pertinent to population health
 - Exploration of the work, built on the Leading Causes of Life, that needs to be done, who should do it
 - A description of the financial accounting approach that might be appropriate to allow good management using this different model of population