

LCLI 1ST CONSULTATION – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



These two pages list focal points of discussion, with a condensed summary note. Each focal point hyperlinks to the fuller discussion below (acting like a contents listing).

Introductory remarks: Gary Gunderson

Four points: the LCL model is best suited not to analyzing ‘problems’ (for which we already possess rich ideas and tools), but to identifying emerging life, the better to support it; ‘five’ causes are seen as just enough to help guide our thinking and actions; LCL’s ‘reverse epidemiology’ aims not just at individuals but social ensembles; a relevant body of science already exists that needs to be identified and integrated. The model is promising but must gain more substance, robustness.

Day 1: Discussion Summary

On ‘Life’

What one means by ‘life’ needs greater clarity. The model is not about ‘quality of life,’ but about a potential, a capacity that can be enhanced. In this sense, there is a ‘moral discourse’ behind the LCL approach as well. A dichotomy between ‘life’ and ‘death’ is not intended.

Beyond the Personal: Structures, Systems, Institutions

The LCL approach encompasses the personal and the structural, systemic or institutional realities of human life. Numerous examples and ways of expressing this are offered.

Day 2: Is LCL the ‘Right Framework’?

The right question is whether it is adequate, parsimonious, practically useful for specific fields of practice in the face of life dynamics. It is a holistic model aimed at sufficiently grasping the complexity and turbulence of living systems, including the material and environmental conditions that shape such systems. Certain ‘meta-dimensional’ aspects may be seen to penetrate or undergird all five ‘causes,’ including spirit, imagination, wisdom, compassion and the like.

Day 2: ‘Taking the temperature’

The LCL approach is best seen as a set of interwoven processes, never free of ambiguities or contradictions. It’s critical edge also needs to be clearer, especially with respect to power. What happens between its elements or intersecting ‘causes’ are also important. Conceptually, it is best understood as a lens, as a *way of seeing* what one has to work with; practically as a *way of being* that works at potential. It could be seen as a theory of change.

Day 2: Probing individual ‘causes’

One issue concerns how one measures the ‘causes.’ What if they cannot be measured? Conversely, does it throw light on what is often mis-measured (by reductionist instruments), such as critical intangible dynamics and outcomes. The metaphor of ‘pathways’ of life may be helpful for understanding the dynamism involved. Here there can be no dichotomy between research and practice. The issue is to look for where life is manifesting itself, to analyze that with evidence, and to act to accordingly to enhance life. This applies to institutions as much as to anything.

On Coherence

Coherence can be understood as ‘integration’ and ‘wholeness.’ Life journeys sometimes gain from periods of incoherence too, when this forces one to search for a new coherence. The quality of ‘wisdom’ was suggested as important here, perhaps for all the ‘life causes.’

On Connection

Several ideas feed into ‘connection,’ including ‘resilience,’ ‘attachment theory,’ and communal or institutional history. Communication is a key issue here, as is an ecological view on relationality (as a generalizable dynamic, beyond the individual, incorporating wider human relations and a relation to the earth/environment).

On intergenerativity

Felt to be one of the distinctive contributions of the LCL model, intergenerativity is about memory and time, but also affirmation and historical validation.

On hope

Hope evokes the possible, not just wishful thinking or immature faith, not naïve, it includes what one might call a ‘memory of the future,’ and ‘riskable expectation.’ It matters a great deal, however, what one hopes for. It may be linked to ‘patience,’ ‘waiting,’ ‘enduring.’

On agency

Agency, which embraces thought and action, is the flip-side of anomie/apathy/resignation. Several narratives illustrate what this means in particular contexts, including some where one would think agency is absent. Agency is not just personal or individual, but also a social. ‘Connection’ creates agency in itself: a web of people, a movement, or community of practice. It is also found in the exercise of imagination. Agency, too, is ambiguous—it can be destructive. Here ‘discernment’ or ‘wisdom’ comes into play. It is a dynamic expression of our creative freedom, of a human capacity, of potentiality.

Day 3: Brief Comments on Meta-dimensional Ideas

On Spirit

What is meant here is human spirit, a capacity to transcend the given, whether through our exercise of agency, our connection to others and the world, or our attention to what coheres the whole. Not identical to ‘spirituality,’ it may (and does) produce embodied forms of spirituality.

On ‘Cause’

‘Causal’ language raises many questions. Some suggest speaking of processes that ‘enhance’ rather than ‘cause’ life. This remains to be fully clarified, as long as it is clear that the idea of ‘causes of life’ acts as a potentially powerful lens on the real, a different way of seeing and acting.

Day 3: What Potential Does the LCL ‘Model’ Have?

Different views emerged on the potential of the LCL model, which this section captures. It is seen to have value for reshaping professional and institutional life, development practice (poverty and inequality strategies), evaluation and assessment protocols, and research programmes, though there are questions about its reach, utility, and approach. It’s strength lies in its focus on ‘non-specific factors’—mostly relational/human factors—which often account most for change in people, and into which too little is invested. It is best seen as aiming at a ‘community of practice’ (in an inversion of ‘standard’ practice) rather merely as a conceptual model.

In Closing ...

The Initiative is inspiring and worth pursuing, as long as it remains flexible, open-ended, and inclusive of existing insights, but it requires a more robust conceptualization and empirical testing.



LCLI 1ST CONSULTATION NOTES – AN EXTENDED SUMMARY

These notes are an edited summary, intended both to help remember the discussion and to highlight salient points for future discussion. They come from notes taken by Sana Mulaudzi, Teresa Cutts and Jim Cochrane, with additional comments ([...]) by Jim. The notes are only partly congruent with the actual flow of discussion. Who said what is generally not specified except where this helps clearer understanding. Some issues were repeatedly addressed at different points during the three days; they are mostly coalesced here.

The suggestion is that the LCL ‘model’ offers a potentially powerful way of pulling together and aggregating a range of ideas, thoughts, and science that are currently fragmented. The assumption that it can do the job has to be tested, and shown to be sound, rigorous. This conversation is one of a few that will be held as part of the systematic work needed to do this.

Introductory remarks: Gary Gunderson

Four initial points are worth emphasizing.

First, crucially, the LCL framing is not much help for analyzing *problems* (or ‘pathologies’). We already possess a huge and powerful apparatus for that, and the LCL model is not an attempt to replicate or gainsay what we know in that respect.

Second, we are also certainly wrong about the number of causes—maybe there are 4, 5 or 30. The point is to keep it tight and small enough to grasp hold of in the midst of challenges and crises, to help us avoid rapidly shifting always to the default ‘death’ focus. We need something [*like an airplane pilot’s checklist*] that is just enough to help anyone quickly remember what to look for, yet deep and valid enough to capture the core dynamics that animate life.

Third, the LCL approach, resting on Bill Foege's vision of 'reverse epidemiology'—grasping the most important factors that enhance life—asks: 'How do we do that? How do we 'study life' to get more of it?' The qualities of life are not just individual, but part of social ensembles as well, at different scales.

Fourth, it turns out that there is a focused body of science, often on the edges of the mainstream, a 'minority report,' that supports this kind of approach. One thing we need to do is become 'hunter-gatherers' of this 'found science.'

In public health the critical notion of the 'social determinants of health' is aligned with LCL. Yet it remains pretty crude, mostly a list of things missing; it needs to be supplemented. The LCL lens holds the promise of becoming more actionable. *[Among other things, the LCL lens holds together in one easy-to-grasp frame, a key set of concepts, each capturing a decisive dimension of life, that overlap with each other tightly, while providing discrete foci for analysis and action.]*

Causal language leads us to a more linear type relationship, which does not fit the LCL framework. It's more about a process, like trying to capture a river one handful of water at a time. *[Yet using the term 'cause' also helps us link to a common way of thinking while, in effect, posing the question of what counts as causal. More on that later.]*

Overall, we seek to focus attention on a 'living system' that brings into play a 'complex identity'—which we all have. This is often hated by other systems that want to simplify what is complex. *[We may think here of what sociologists and others refer to as instrumental, purposive-rational systems, whose imperatives are governed by much narrower ends. And it might be worth revisiting Georg Simmel's theory of 'living systems.']*

Some quick comments on the 'causes': First, connections are not single, one-direction, instead they are multi-directional. Connection must be understood not as a functional relation, but as a vital web—words like 'holding,' 'touching,' 'investing,' etc. Second, coherence includes: the writing of history, the telling of our story, the power of art and symbol, ritual (including rituals of kindness), song, narrative, tradition. Third, when it comes to agency, it is about 'doing' but it is also about 'not doing,' or 'leaving' (which links agency to time, as in 'waiting,' kairos, etc.) *[If it is 'agency,' however, and not passivity, inertia or lack of consciousness, then 'not doing' or 'leaving' also reflects an intentional choice, knowingly made. Perhaps, then, the word 'act' is more precise than 'doing,' with intentionality as the key ingredient.]* Paying attention to agency also helps us see that the structures and systems within which we live and move, however strong, fixed or rigid they may appear, are in fact eminently malleable.

On Intergenerativity, it is important to see it as a consciousness of being-in a relationship or a set of relationships between or across generations. It is more than just a handing down or a handing over. And finally, on hope, this is best understood as 'hope for life'—not just a 'me-life' but a 'you-life.' It is hope with muscles. On the 'causes,' let's also note the importance of story-telling and humour—they are crucial to coherence, value and valuing, accompanying.

Finally, we know from many encounters that the LCL view is inspiring, but it is not yet strong enough or robust enough to shape practice, to restructure the way we do things or the exemplars we use to help us understand what it is we are doing. It is worth pursuing, however, if it helps us do our work better.

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Day 1: Discussion Summary

On 'Life'

If the 'effect' of the various 'causes' is life, what do we mean by life? Activation, animation, Life Potential, optimal functioning? This is not adequately clarified. It could easily be a 'suitcase word' – you can pack into it anything you want (taking out only what fits at any point). One might add the word 'authenticity' [*this also raises questions: authentic about or towards what?*].

Anna's story about two men, one a bed-ridden paraplegic, the other a stigmatized man suffering from diagnosable mental illness, is instructive. Anna noted that her professional skills as a doctor and psychiatrist, including the provision of necessary drugs to the one man (which did help), were wholly unable to solve the problems of either person, despite her close relation and immense good will towards them. They found a way to meet each other such that each was able to express his own agency in an utterly surprising way, one using his particular, if very limited, agency, to assist the other exactly at the point where he lacked agency. It led both to greater 'life' (through their increased experience of connection, sense of coherence, enhanced agency, mutual blessing, and aspirational hope).

We are not talking then primarily about a *kind* of life (e.g. 'quality of life,' the 'life well-lived' or 'life abundant'), but about a potential, one that exists even in the midst of life's traumas. (Here Gary shared his friend and co-writer—of the original *Leading Causes of Life*—Larry Pray's description of a painting of Jesus in a Montana chapel: as a Native American in the midst of dramatic, stormy plains scenery—life precisely in a field of storms.)

Another dimension Anna's story introduces is language, broadly understood. If language is key to the emergence of homo sapiens (which seems highly plausible), then is not *communication* the beginning of life, the causal ground? [*Noting that 'being human' depends heavily upon relationality, that is, interaction with others.*]

A critical question: if, as seems clear, there is a kind of 'moral discourse' behind LCL in its focus on the positive – what about the negative? Is the model to be too 'happy'? Is life built at the expense of the other? That would make life a matter of 'survival of the fittest.' LCL, however, focuses on the generative possibilities of the other. In this regard, and remembering Antonovsky's work on holocaust survivors (hardly happy), we might think about life as a *capacity* rather than as 'the good life' (or anything similar). In turn, we could relate this to human capabilities thinking (Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum) and its emphasis on potential as a key to understanding how to act in the economy and polity. A 'zero-sum competitiveness' and 'survival of the fittest' system, it was noted, is problematic and often masked with greed. Focusing on the generative qualities of life, the hopefulness that this represents, challenges the idea of the 'zero-sum' idea that is promoted in the general political economy.

Life can be linked, Jim suggested, to the fundamental capacity of spirit that enable human beings to move beyond instinct, habitual behaviour and nature-as-is to transcend the actual and create the possible—that which is not given in nature-as-it-is. So we create things found in nature, languages,

social arrangements—all depend upon this capacity. Going one step further, we can with good grounds suppose that there are three basic, interwoven and inseparable, but discrete dimensions to human life: the level of physical/material needs without which we would not be alive at all, including food, energy, shelter, breathable air, and so on; the level of social and cultural needs, including fulfilments of desire, identity, prestige, authority, recognition, acceptance and so on; the level of creative freedom or spiritual capacity, by which we can choose to transcend even our most basic physical, social and cultural needs for the sake of something greater than ourselves (including for the sake of the other).¹ Thinking about life as a capacity is thus different from thinking about ‘the good life.’

[In this view, the LCL ‘model’ can be understood to take for granted the fulfilment of our physical/material needs, as a sine qua non, while focusing on the relational and aspirational dimensions of our life together as social beings (at different levels—interpersonal, familial, communal, etc.). Further, the ‘moral discourse’ that undergirds the LCL approach is congruent with the level of ‘creative freedom’ and the search for the ‘highest’ of which we are capable as human beings in relation to each other and the world we live in. In part at least, this is the ‘kind of life’ the LCL approach proposes as adequate to its intentions.]

This raises another question: Can we talk of life without a consciousness of death? Why see life and death as a binary? It is not possible to have life without death; indeed, there is a sense of death that leads to a sense of coherence. Why create a dichotomy? Even those who spend their time focused on pathologies normally defend ‘life.’ Fear of death/torture even drives some life impulses. Clearly, we need better to understand the intricate connection between life, fear and death. (See, as one example, contemporary criticisms of positive psychology for underplaying the importance of the negative in trauma work, for—as it were—commanding ‘hope.’)

This comes back to the question, which should be part of ‘life-logic,’ of where one is prepared to give one’s life, but also to invest oneself (including our prestige, our credibility, our licence). For example, PHC (primary health care) has become a narrow focus on early identification and treatment of specific conditions – and the rest of its powerful original vision is lost. So LCL is about how we go about changing where we invest our life, time and energy. Life also needs to be understood in relation to time. We need to take the past seriously, whereas we live in a time of the ‘now’, when time and history are too easily relegated. A critical question: is what we are talking about not simply about ‘comprehensive wellness,’ about which quite a lot of work has been done?

The project should then make clear what its vision of the world/life is, compared, say, to a vision of the world that focuses on metrics, facilities such as hospitals, and so on. This would be crucial to its success.

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¹ This typology of the human derives from Immanuel Kant, and is predicated upon his search to ground ‘the highest’ of which human beings are capable (in the face of our limits, ambiguities, always mixed motives, and the evil of which we are also capable). The original suggestion that it might have relevance to the LCL model is owed to Doug McGaughey.

Beyond the Personal: Structures, Systems, Institutions

The LCL seems quite personal/psychosocial – what about the institutional or structural dimensions of life? What about the political and economic levels of life that are not personal or psychosocial?

In response, various narratives were offered that show institutional, structural or systemic examples, in different contexts, of the relevance of aspects of the LCL approach, including: the promotion of agency as the core of social change in Black Consciousness's insistence on Black agency; the networked link between 'grassroots' activism and activist organizations or international bodies as shown by the anti-Apartheid work of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa; Martin Luther King's notion of the 'beloved community' and its application to the struggle for civil and human rights in the USA.

Perhaps it is worth noting the book *The Spirit Level*,² and the strong correlation it shows between inequality and almost any disease you care to name. Should inequality not be what we worry about? Then comes the question: how do you 'fix' it? *That's* where the LCL comes in perhaps. It responds to the issue of how we go about dealing with 'death.' It also hints at spiritual capacities, which may be understood as the capacity to imagine what does not exist and to bring it into being—a creative freedom that allows us to transcend our environment.

We could (and have) describe many social and structural examples of the 'causes of life'—agency, connection, hope, for example, are evident in the life of movements such as Black Consciousness in South Africa. But we should not see structure/individual or system/personal dialectics as though they are solid distinctions. This is one reason to turn to the idea of 'boundary zones' [or 'interstices'], a recognizing in this the reality of malleable spaces, and the importance of boundary leaders who can work in and with these spaces (as Gary puts it, 'any geography is itself alive!').³

Note (South African cosmologist) George Ellis's distinction between 'causation from below' and 'causation from above' – referring to the distinction between components of a complex system and the system itself impacting on its components. This has implications for thinking about LCL in relation to institutions. Referring to *The Biography of an Institution*,⁴ Francis pointed to the importance of 'great institutions' (the single school, Healdtown, that produced leaders such as Mandela, Biko, Sobukwe and several others, for example), of which we must not lose sight. They may be seen, with respect to LCL, as 'causes of life from above.'

This would have relevance to health systems research, a growing focus globally, and especially the continuity of health systems in the face of failures, e.g. in Africa. How do they continue to be resilient?

² Kate Pickett, Richard Wilkinson, 2010. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (Bloomsbury Publishing).

³ Georg Simmel's work is again of interest here, a philosopher/sociologist who emphasized creative consciousness, the emergence of life forms, interpersonal interaction, social relations, and the play of association, and the danger of objectified structures as key to understanding the dialectic between persons and institutions.

⁴ J. E. Hodgetts, William McCloskey, Reginald Whitaker, and V. Seymour Wilson, 1972. *The Biography of an Institution: The Civil Service Commission of Canada 1908-1967*. Canadian Public Administration Series #1.

What would LCL offer to understanding that? That would be very helpful. Similarly, Andy, whose daily work is with institutions of various kinds, noted having seen several systems collapsing, usually because people become ‘slaves to the institution’ rather than serving the larger context within which that institution sits—a major weakness.

Referring to a current process taking place in Wake Forest Baptist Health, where a proposal to outsource the jobs of almost 300 janitors has instead been turned into a process to have those same janitors use one day of their work as community health workers in their own home contexts, Gary suggested that this is one example, in the hospital context, of how LCL would probably work well for HR divisions in helping them to understand better their own human resources and how to draw upon them.

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DAY 2: IS LCL THE ‘RIGHT FRAMEWORK’?

The question raised is whether the LCL framework is adequate to ever-shifting or moving aspect of life? We need to be cautious in thinking about this – to seek not exact definitions, but approximate adequacy, the most practically useful model, parsimony at the right level. The LCL is not just a different list, but a different *kind* of list. The most critical question about it is the practice that the model hopefully enables – how to encourage life emerging. It helps us to look for which of the elements or ‘causes’ is ‘alive’ (really present, able to be enhanced), to focus there and work with that, helping it grow, expand, ‘igniting’ life in the other elements at the same time. The operationalization of LCL looks at **what IS** there and how can this be supplemented.

We may think here of the idea of *bophelo* [Sesotho: *a holistic view of the human person as comprehended only in relation to family, community, society, the earth itself, and those who have gone before*], or of the Xhosa/Zulu phrase *Umntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu* (‘a person is a person through other people’). This concentric circle looks a lot like the socio-ecological model. We can also assume, because the elements or ‘causes’ are closely interrelated, that working on one creates room for another to grow, expand. It is a theory that is not hard to operationalize, once one knows what to look for.

The ensuing discussion picked up randomly on the various elements of ‘causes’ of the LCL model (a later discussion raised a question about using the idea of a ‘model,’ perhaps too static a metaphor). This included a reminder that we need to think of hope not just as ‘anticipatory action,’ but also as ‘riskable expectation,’ in which short-term hope (optimism?) is corrected by a long-term perspective. It also matters what one hopes for. For example, in the early 20th Century, Afrikaners in South Africa fought for liberation from British imperial rule, in the process bringing to Afrikaner people a sense of coherence, hope, connection, agency and intergenerativity that matches the LCL approach. Yet later, once in power, precisely that which bound them together enabled them to exclude others and support a system that is notorious for the ‘death’ (and real deaths) that it produced.

This prompted a question about the place of ‘decency’ (moral existence?) or ‘religion’ in the LCL approach. It also raised the point again, of the need to discriminate realistically between the destructive (or shadow) and generative sides of the LCL ‘causes.’

We then turned to the meta-dimensional aspects of the LCL model, such as spirit, imagination, play, faith and the like, that lie behind all ‘causes.’ These are aspects that shape and inform the causes but are not causes per se; they are integrated into or embedded in every cause. Here we asked about the role and importance of ‘wisdom,’ or differently, the virtues that inform the use of the LCL model (especially if it is not to be merely another functionalist view of the real). Wisdom or discernment are important variables; wisdom is transmitted across generations and can refer to social intelligence or emotional intelligence. Wisdom, it was suggested, is an extended virtue, often gathered by osmosis—which reintroduces the issue of ‘time.’ Here we might turn to the ‘life arts’ rather than ‘life sciences.’ It is also worth noting that research on ‘wisdom’ is happening [*what kind of research is it, and where might we find it?*]

There is a possible link in this discussion to James Scott’s understanding of *metis*—the wisdom of practical life held by ‘ordinary’ people that often exceeds, complements or even undoes professional knowledge or science), and to our understanding of *poiesis* as integrative work.

Other terms that popped up in similar fashion. For example, where does ‘compassion’ fit in? Or empathy? Is compassion meta-dimensional? Perhaps, Mohamed suggested, referring to Bulhan’s thought on the psychology of oppression (the effects on an oppressed person’s space, time, energy, mobility, bonding and identity)⁵ but reversing it, we may suggest that compassion, especially in contexts of oppression, is about reclaiming all of these dimensions of human psychology without resorting to hate and vengeance. This is akin to the 5 fruits of the spirit: humility, kindness, gentleness, compassion and fairness. One may think of mindfulness, trust, caring, love, and caring similarly. Note here the possible value of Martin Seligman and positive psychology in the Values in Action Strengths Survey. Similarly, where does one locate religion/faith? What is spiritual, what religious, what is the distinction?

A question was raised about whether, in the light of these points, the LCL lens is really not just another way of re-imagining the idea of ‘comprehensive well-being’ (CWB), about which a considerable body of work exists? Does LCL blow this out of the water? What is the difference? Gary noted that the list of things that CWB normally consists of are best seen as the fruits, whereas LCL can be seen as the tree that produces those fruits. As Ken added, one can imagine how it is possible to evaluate, say, a child’s life in relation to how it exhibits these LCLs.

A further question has to do with the place in the LCL model of the material world – the thing that economists worry about. Or those concerned with ecology. There has to be some link to the life we are living and the material resources we depend upon and their sustainability. The model is almost too human centred, with insufficient clarity about its connection to earth/materiality. LCL could be a lens on accountability for Earth.

It can be argued that the whole model rests on a view of ‘relational accountability,’ and that earth/body/materiality are in fact intrinsic, inseparable from the ‘causes.’ Perhaps, then, it would help,

⁵ Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, 1985. *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, New York: Springer, 1985.

for example, to add additional ‘bubbles’ or extensions to a cause such as ‘connection,’ to people on the one hand, and to the earth on the other. Alternatively, this needs to be considered in meta-dimensional terms, recognizing that behind the model, not pictured, is the human being/community in her/his/its materiality.

Perhaps, then, we should be talking not about ‘causes’ but about ‘enhancers’ of life – like an electrician connecting things so the energy can flow. One is there as a catalyst – one hasn’t ‘caused’ anything. It is emergent; organic processes are released. This would be a profoundly democratic view. It also suggests the value of making visible, of studying ‘sacred moments’ – ‘extraordinary’ moments, moments that transcend time and space – those crucial motivating moments that hold people together, that hold them ‘towards’ an enhanced life. In this regard, ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ does not seem to be linear in the LCL model. Anna’s story shows how one ‘cause’ feeds another or enhances it. They are not linear, but fractal, overlapping at different levels. And through reciprocity between the provider and seeker of care, they produce perceived growth and transformation in the provider too.

Gary, in reinforcing these points (and pushing for the significance of the LCL model for ‘fields of practice,’ going beyond the intimate or the personal), recapped again the story of the janitors at Wake Forest Baptist Health, and the shift from an outsourcing model that was being proposed and presented, to one in which the janitors are turned one day a week into community care workers, based on their intimate knowledge of their local communities and of the hospital at the same time. He noted that this creates a win-win situation and, in turn, a hugely different ethos in the hospital as well. This is LCL at work at institutional level: agency is the focus, connection the key, blessing or intergenerativity and greater coherence an outcome, hope enhanced.

To which Francis responded: ‘Speaking as an economist, there is infinite capacity for investing in human capital. That’s a life lyric.’

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Day 2: ‘Taking the temperature’

[What are participants thinking after a day of discussion? – Unattributed comments.]

Are we building a model or building a set of processes that enhance or help live life to its fullest potential? Is this a dynamic system? As it stands, it’s hard to see. Where are the patterns? Why think of a ‘model’ instead of getting the intentionality right, moving to what it is useful for today? Doesn’t the idea of a ‘model’ constrain things too much? Also, isn’t this particular model too ‘comfortable’? Where is its critical edge? How does one relate it to gendered, racialised, bigoted discourses, etc.? How does it incorporate ambiguity, contradiction? What about questions of power, seen or unseen? Where does it leave professionalism, the work of scientists, and so on? It should not just be ‘philosophy.’

To these questions: the LCL model should be understood as descriptive, not prescriptive – not a recipe, but an approximation of what is actually going on. It needs de-romanticizing, in the direction of ‘being the change you want to be’ – a journey, or struggle, not a ‘happy’ declaration. The causes are not wholly discrete but more like the blurred, flowing boundaries of water colour painting—still a picture,

though. And what goes on (in life) often occurs between the boundaries of the causes, where they intersect—say, connection with coherence. So LCL should be thought of as *a way of releasing the combined power of these ‘causes’ and as the whole*, rather than in terms of specific, separate causes or ‘measures.’ Using this view, say, in a healthcare context, would help the doctor *and* the patient at the same time. It’s best understood as a *way of seeing/being*, rather than a state of affairs.

If it is a ‘reorientation of seeing/being,’ and given that we still need to explain what ‘life’ is (in relation to context, the human condition), then maybe we should refer to ‘pathways to life.’ Each pathway is *triggered* by something. The question then becomes: What are the triggers? What animates each pathway? That’s the key part of the LCL, and to drill down into that would add substantial weight to it. How does one move from the rich idea (LCL) to how one specifies research, practice, etc.?

Then it would be better to see the LCL more as a *lens* than a ‘model,’ one that brings certain things into focus, let’s one know where to look, helps one see what is *already* there. One could think (badly mixing metaphors) of the five causes as poles in a tent that keep the whole from collapsing – the key (and minimum necessary) points that secure it without which it will not stand. It helps keep some of the complexity in view, and helps keep us from collapsing it into a simplistic solution.

Think, for example, of Gary’s work on what he calls ‘heavy lifting congregations.’⁶ What keeps often raggedy, poorly organized organizations continue decade after decade, doing good things? How do they keep on going on? These are the congregations that *already* exhibit powerful agency, connection, coherence, intergenerativity and hope. Using the LCL lens, one now sees something to work with. The pattern that the LCL framework provides helps to see that; more, it also helps one to expect surprises [*This must imply a ‘dynamic’ view on LCL—an expectation that its ‘parts’ are moving, in motion, interacting with each other in partly predictable, partly unpredictable ways—the ‘causes’ are themselves dynamic, that is, identifications of living processes.*] Then one is looking at *potential* – at what can emerge from people, communities, etc.—seeing LCL less as a set pattern and more as a dynamic model (analogous, say, to the dynamic model of urbanization in economics).

[*Sana re-drew the LCL ‘causes’ as a Venn diagramme, the five elements overlapping each other rather than circular, with the centre defined as ‘potential.’*] One could think of the ‘causes’ as ‘facets’ in a diamond, different angles on the same reality, but this metaphor might also be too constraining, containing that which breaks the bounds of any particular form. Perhaps it is best seen as a transdisciplinary framework rather than a ‘predictive model.’

Does it then also work as a theory of change? Could releasing the LCLs lead to transformation? If so, it would be important to spell out the assumptions about change that undergird it. What are they? Is its research a form of social action? [*These questions relate to an earlier one about the ‘moral’ foundations of the LCL framework.*] Reciprocity and the human spirit, meta-dimensions, are key. Can one make more explicit the meta-dimensions, especially distinguishing between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ life?

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⁶ Gunderson, Gary R. 1997. *Deeply woven roots: improving the quality of life in your community*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Day 2: Probing individual ‘causes’

[Focusing on the ‘causes’ and ‘evidence’ that supports them, including ‘measurement.’]

Why are we trying to measure what can’t be measured? Would that not be reductionist, uninspiring? Suggested we should not dichotomize research/practice. Research, including measurement, can be a kind of action. *Mis-measuring* our lives is what often happens, leaving out that which often makes a huge difference, e.g. the intangibles. The metaphor of ‘pathways’ for understanding the dynamic nature of the causes and of life per se is better than thinking of LCL in terms of a matrix or static typology. This suggests that we need to look at the ‘connectors’ between the ‘causes,’ e.g. between coherence and connection, at what happens there. It offers an organizing framework for making sense of what is happening that is working in terms of moving individuals, organizations or institutions toward integration or wholeness.

To move this forward, one would have to be more precise and systematic, including the meta-dimensional aspects. Otherwise the ‘shift’ in seeing/being won’t happen. It has to be operationalized while preserving the rich, lively complexity of the LCL approach. Maybe then it is worth rethinking the purpose of the LCL view? Thinking of the book *Decolonizing Methodologies*,⁷ perhaps we need to choose between ‘science’ and ‘action’—not meaning that there is a dichotomy between them, but rather a choice about what one engages in. *[This parallels the old distinction between theory and praxis; if it is not a dichotomy, what is it? A dialectic? If so, is one then not always moving between knowledge and action, inseparably?]*

We do need to distinguish between research that is life-giving and that which is not. Who can help us with this? Are we talking to multiple stakeholders – notably, the powerful – but, also the marginalized? What does it mean to work with this model in and across different spaces or terrains? And what and where are the ‘generative spaces’? This is a grand vision here conceptually, and practically too, but still, evidence (including stories and the like) is essential to applying the framework. As I hear it, the issue is to look for where life is manifesting itself, and then to analyze that, using evidence. For example, Francis noted, consider ‘the thousands of small agricultural enterprises, doing a million things’ – let’s look at *this* kind of reality using the LCL lens, asking ourselves: ‘*What haven’t we accounted for?*’

In positive psychology, several studies exist of such exemplars, e.g. the Peace Corps. Which reminds us that we need to see that institutions are a form of life in themselves. Francis suggests looking at exemplary schools (like extracting the elements of positive deviancy) that would be causal of life, and doing key informant interviews to see how this framework applies to successful institutions. For example, why does that school at Orange Farm (a challenging place in South Africa) work? Partly because of the Headmaster; but what are we missing that is just as crucial? It seems the LCL lens might have something to offer here.

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⁷ Linda Tuhiwai, 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (Second Edition)*, London: Zed Books.

On Coherence

Ken, who corresponded with Antonovsky ('salutogenesis') towards the end of his life, notes that he added to the idea of 'coherence' the idea of 'manageability.' Another way of looking at coherence is in terms of 'integration' and 'wholeness.' Might one say that coherence holds everything else together? Here it was suggested that we look at it as a practitioner might, in terms of how it works – for example, if one can't 'fix' a lack of coherence, can one turn to one of the other causes with some expectation that it will also produce greater coherence?

A critical note: We all have key periods of incoherence that are part of our life journey; this should *not* necessarily be seen as bad or damaging – it could be productive, sometimes expressions of stages of a life journey. Then *hope* becomes important. *All* causes need to be informed, moreover, by 'wisdom,' not necessarily 'science.' *[One way of understanding the dynamic of LCL would be to see that a 'crisis' in any one 'cause of life' might be addressed by paying attention to another cause, giving one a way of working with the crisis. A crisis in an ability to express one's agency, for example, might be addressed by introducing either a new, coherent way of understanding oneself in one's situation (a kind of 'conversion' experience), or possibly, a set of connections that inspire one to new imaginations of how one may act.]*

Coherence also comes from the social/cultural/religious traditions that we inhabit – one's that sometimes no longer work and need to be rediscovered, sometimes in conscious, other times in unconscious ways. One question, however: What does this mean beyond individuals? At what scale does LCL address matters, how appropriate is the model? Here Mohamed recalled Chris Hani's assassination in 1993 at a critical point in South Africa's history. It could have gone one way or another, but certain key people with moral authority (particularly Mandela, Joe Slovo) brought coherence to the moment, which held the anger in place and gave it a productive focus, open up space for rebuilding the society. This is a good example of social act of coherence capable of inspiring restraint.

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On Connection

Several existing ideas feed into 'connection. They include work on 'resilience,' for which connection is critical, and in developmental psychology, also 'attachment theory,' to which LCL adds something *[What exactly does it add and how?]* Also relevant is attachment to history, transgenerational connection, which includes institutional history.

We can also link 'connection' to polity and economy through Habermas's notion of 'communicative competence' (and his analysis of the 'colonization of lifeworlds' by system logics). Another congruent idea is that of the 'healthworld,' drawn from the Sesotho notion of *bophelo*, which posits a holistic, ecological view of connection, in which every human relation (e.g. an individual one, a family system, and so on) must be viewed as functioning within a larger and larger system.⁸

⁸ See Jürgen Habermas, 1987. *The theory of communicative action vol. 2: lifeworld and system: a critique of functionalist reason*. Boston: Beacon Press); and Paul Germond & James R. Cochrane, 2010. "Healthworlds: conceptualizing landscapes of health and healing." *Sociology* no. 44 (2):307-324).

Is connection an element of LCL where one can bring the *material base of life* into the LCL view? We must relate this to the environment, to the earth itself. As noted already, the conversation is too much just about human beings – the model must serve to raise the relationship to the earth, etc. as well.

A critical question: Are we reaching too far with this? Should we not be clear that we see it as a social model? Is the model really about the LCL of ‘health,’ or of ‘well-being’ we might say, rather than of life per se? Clearly the LCL model is suited well to public health (not public ‘pathology’) – the question is if it is suited to anything more. Gary’s response: Well, it certainly helps me think about institutional life in general, and not just health.

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On intergenerativity

Intergenerativity, it was felt, is one of the more distinctive contributions of the model. In this ‘flat earth world,’ with its emphasis on immediacy or on desire, with an accompanying loss of a sense of duration, people need to stretch their time horizon, as suggested by the idea of intergenerativity. Three/four generation families are hugely important agents of life. It’s about more than just memory and time; it is also about affirmation; about historical validity that is quite important. Here Ken commented on his Chinese friend who will never do anything to dishonor his parents and forebears. One could, however, also see this as a restriction. Again, ‘*wisdom*’ is needed to distinguish between the generative and the pathological possibilities.

One way of understanding the functioning of the church or religion generally is its capacity to transmit wisdom across generations (wisdom of the organism, wisdom of the ages, institutional memory, and so on). In the recovery of the history of the oppressed this can, of course, manifest itself in very different ways across different generations. For example, second generations often manifest shame about their history. . It is critical then to distinguish, in each tradition, what is retrogressive and what is generative.

We might note that every element of the LCL ‘model’ is Janus-faced; each could be seen in terms of its negative possibilities. *[For example, coherence might include adherence to a tightly organized world-view that threatens others; or connection may point to forms of ‘belonging’ that are exclusive and hence, intrinsically oriented against ‘the other’; ‘agency’ might include the means to extract vengeance or assert domination; and so on.]* This is important, and needs to be articulated more clearly in the model. On ‘intergenerativity,’ its negative dimension might be seen in the transmission of hopelessness, trauma or despair (are there cultural differences in this regard that must be considered?).

Coming back to connection, coherence and thinking about the effects of globalization; if, as seems to be happening on a significant scale, this means cutting oneself off from one’s roots, then it is a big loss. It is worth noting here research on ‘transnational religion and migration’ that points to the documented ways in which people are re-fashioning, or reconstructing, what ‘coherence,’ ‘connection,’ and so on mean, along lines that are not necessarily locally or territorially defined any longer. Globalization may be producing new patterns we have yet to fully grasp. Among those things that are

shifting is language itself, as people move, learn ‘foreign’ languages, or take on languages that their parents do not know. Here we confront the way in which ‘hybrid identities’ are increasingly how people are developing.

We may note that there is a fair amount of literature on institutional culture/memory. This also raises a question about tradition and ‘rituals’ – what happens to ritual, an important part of human being, and how is it incorporated into the LCL lens? It also reminds one of the well-known ‘memory box’ projects for AIDS orphans. Thinking of that suggests we also need to link an understanding of ‘affirmation’ to the idea of intergenerativity.⁹

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On hope

Hope refers to not being restrained by the actual. Yet it is not just wishful thinking or immature faith. Recalling an earlier comment that hope includes ‘memory of the future,’ and ‘riskable expectation,’ and being careful that we don’t see it is too ‘happy,’ hope should also include some sense of ‘purpose.’ It matters a great deal what one hopes for. It is worth noting that the best predictor of behavior is anticipation. One crucial aspect of this concept is that it overcomes the idea that we are thoroughly determined by genes, socialization, etc.

As before, it can also work negatively, be destructive at certain points, when perhaps ‘enduring’ rather than hope is more crucial. We could then ask what the link of hope is to ‘patience,’ or ‘waiting,’ hanging on with durability, a kind of ‘stickiness.’ Similarly, entities such as institutions and guilds often tend, in their need for self-preservation, to extrapolate from what they know already—controlled by the actual—and thus limit their ability to focus on new possibilities.

A question: where does creativity fit into this? One suggestion is that creativity is not specific to hope, but meta-dimensional, rooted in a foundational ‘creative freedom’ of the human being and in the human person’s imaginative power.

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On agency

Bill Foege said that ‘Doing is a kind of thinking, thinking is a kind of doing.’ In either case, agency is *the* critical aspect. Its flip-side is anomie/apathy/resignation. (Gary commented on how AIDS orphans in Africa mostly survived but some flourished. Predictions for their flourishing/surviving would be statistically low, but their agency, or expectation that they could make things happen, that they could do something, helped them overcome the shadow of hopelessness/helplessness. Andy shared the story of Mayor Corey Booker who, when paralyzed with inaction in a crisis in his tough town of Newark, had a little old lady just say to him, “Do something.” And that bolted him back to understanding his agency.)

Agency can be understood not just as personal or individual, however, but also as a social power, even divine (prayer may be the act that creates a field of connection, which creates the space for

⁹ Ken recommended looking at Alan Waterman’s work on ‘constrained individuals.’ [reference needed?]

acting).¹⁰ Beyond the individual, ‘connection’ creates agency in itself: a web of people, a movement, or community of practice.

A question: Does agency imply success? No, it is agnostic with regard to success. Does it link to the issue of power? Agency can be exercised in destructive ways—think of Hitler’s genocide. So (again), we must distinguish between generative or life-giving vs. non-generative agency/acting. (It is worth noting how, in recent occupational therapy literature, a strong focus on the power to act is present.)

Agency is also found in the exercise of imagination. Think of children who are orphans – do they have a way forward? Through imagination, one can help break through what seems to be stuck. Or consider incarceration – agency is still there. Prisoners of war exercise agency through imagination, as do those who are terminally ill. The current US Health Systems Learning Group focus on community benefits goes well beyond the legal requirements (to wonder how to link health services to community transformation), and this imagination, or expanded vision, offers the participating organizations a lot more agency than they had anticipated. Sometimes organizations/individuals are stuck (in particular paradigms, in despair, or whatever), when imaginative ways of acting/thinking are needed to propel them into new space and regenerated action.

This may be where discernment comes into play. Can one separate ‘wisdom’ from ‘agency’? The end of life is a good example – when agency is not what the future is about. If agency is a form of control over one’s life, what when there is too much left to control? Wisdom needs to inform agency. Perhaps, Andy suggested, we need to reintroduce the idea of authenticity here.

(Here there followed a discussion of agency as a fundamental expression of human being, based on our capacity as sentient beings to exercise creative freedom and, with it – because we may use this freedom for any ends! – the demand it places upon us to take responsibility for how we act. This also recalls Ricoeur’s notion of freedom as rooted in ‘the power to act.’) To this, Gary responded: Agency is not a philosophical ethical matter, it’s deeper – it’s ‘how life works,’ and in one sense, it’s blind. Life finds a way. *[Does this perhaps suggest that we need to distinguish between ‘emergence’ and ‘agency’? If it is ‘blind,’ hence unintended consciously, primarily a life-force, is it really agency in any human sense?]*

How one chooses anything, is a use of energy of some kind, and we can connect it to agency. Deciding to be silent, for example, is itself an expression of agency. Choosing not to act is a choice of freedom too. Letting go is often a form of agency; knowing when to stop (not do for a moment) and breathe and hold off on movement is a type of agency (reflection, meditation, discernment). In this sense, agency doesn’t just mean action, but being silent and allowing yourself to exert agency by not choosing or doing for a time. Perhaps it is best to see agency as that which derives from that capacity, the ability to do, or not to do, this or that. It relates to a realization of potentiality, and it includes choosing to slow down, or to open up space.

Emotions/thoughts as well as behavior, are part of agency, in ways that fight back against death or forces/preoccupation with death. We keep talking as if about some end, but it is a process, not a

¹⁰ Refer here to Albert Bandura’s work, for example, in *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* (1986, Prentice-Hall).

condition. *[Could one say a 'life dynamic'?*] More than that, rather than focusing too much on an urgency about 'making something happen,' let's think instead about *releasing* what's already there.

The idea that 'life will find a way' makes some anxious: Can we really take this for granted? Perhaps one may think of it as 'taking off the constraints' (on what is already going on) rather than in terms of pushing people. Agency has to be allowed too; once you allow it, once you trust that it is in fact there, it will emerge. That points to the importance of an enabling environment.

So we are back to freedom? *[This raises again the idea that creative freedom, and the expression of that freedom in an act—whether thinking or doing, making something happen or waiting in patience, speaking or deciding to be silent—is fundamental to human being.]*

To think of LCL as referring to *enabling* causes is helpful—then agency *is* action. Further, if creative freedom is linked to agency in this way, the reverse also holds, that a disabling environment diminishes agency. *[We are then back with the possibility, often really experienced, of apathy, anomie, resignation, fatalism—all expressing a situation where agency has been depleted, with negative consequences.]*

Are we then talking about the 'leading *effects* of life'??

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DAY 3: BRIEF COMMENTS ON META-DIMENSIONAL IDEAS

Could one treat 'potentiality' as a meta-dimension? Are we aiming for enhanced life potential as a fundamental change process? As part of the "methodology" of exploring LCLs, do we look for triggers for enhanced life potential? Do we ask people to articulate a life vision on goals, or simply ask them where they see their life going? What about the language we use here? Do we use spirit or creative freedom and, if so, what about spirituality (stemming from a higher sense of core values)? Reaching out to something bigger than self? Transcendence? In discussing Life Potential, we invoke the notion of authenticity and optimal functioning or becoming versus who we are or where we came from. What is a measure of Life potential? Thriving or flourishing life? How do we operationally define this?

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On Spirit

'Spirit' has another set of meanings than 'spirituality' – it has the sense of something transcendent, articulates a core set of virtues. And implies 'wisdom'—we *must* identify what this means if we are to speak of spirit in relation to action: action for what, to what ends? There certainly is a strong value framework behind LCL that needs to be more evident.

Is 'compassion,' for example, a meta-dimension? Could not life itself be meta-dimensional, when thinking about enhancing life? And what, if you like, are its 'vital signs'? Is there a specific *kind* of life we

are talking about? Is it, again, ‘the authentic life’? What does ‘authentic’ mean? It sounds like it’s ‘just there’ to grab, a kind of essence out there. Perhaps it is ‘what we are becoming’? And what we receive? Living a life one values? It is worth looking at the issues by visualizing the contrast between ‘Life/Death.’

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On ‘Cause’

What is a cause? We must define that more clearly. We must be clear that there is a shadow side of all the causes. Are we looking at things that ‘enhance’ life rather than ‘cause’ life? Are we only really observing life, which has its own momentum, then lifting up and making visible what we see?

Isn’t the use of the term ‘cause’ problematic? (Here attention was called to the distinction made in the preparatory document between causes and effects, the latter being all that we see, the former what we retrospectively attribute to what we see). Here too, Sana’s illustration was recalled that has the ‘causes’ more like an overlapping Venn picture, with ‘life’ at the centre—this captures the key point about the LCL model ‘shining a lens’ on life, differently.

Coming back to ‘imagination,’ it helps us to go beyond what is, and it also lies underneath all we perceive. It feeds and drives the ‘causes’, or is driven by them. Is imagination really a meta-dimension? One of the crucial things here is the quality of ‘seeing’—the model is really about a *different way of seeing*. It helps us identify and support things we would otherwise not see.

If ‘cause’ needs to be operationalized, then so too does ‘life’! We need to be able to test, identify and probe it as well, if we are to mean anything concrete. Yes, so here’s a practical question from Mohamed: how would one write this up for his research director, in relation to a review of his institute that is soon to take place? How could this lens shift what the university looks for in assessing what the institute does? What would you find? How would you document the findings? That process would most certainly be an intervention unto itself. Is it something one could take to the head of the university to shift the university’s self-understanding? Gary certainly believes, from some experience too, that the model lends itself to this kind of analysis, and can be used to describe the vitality of organizations. It provides a *life*-diagnosis!

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Returning to the idea of meta-dimensions, how do we look at or make visible reciprocity and flow (say, between provider and seeker of services, or provider/patient)? Releasing constraints and restraints may often be the role of the provider, to allow agency of the seeker. What about play, values, virtues, compassion or wisdom/discernment? What about transcendence or the Sacred and sacred moments?

DAY 3: WHAT POTENTIAL DOES THE LCL ‘MODEL’ HAVE?

[This takes the form of accredited comments]

Francis Wilson: Let me begin by describing the context of my comments. Recently I organized and led a major conference in South Africa on poverty and inequality, diverse stakeholders from all sectors of society present. Poverty and inequality are signs of death. We have set up a 3-year strategy to determine what we can do to counteract this double-scourge, and I am now completing a rough guide to what came out of this conference. Now into my life comes LCLI. This *could* be a lens to help us understand some of the amazing signs of life emerging in the country about which we heard at this conference, including helping us understand the people who are themselves ‘instruments’ of life. A really interesting research programme would be to think about how to turn this LCL model to scale, how to mobilize it in such contexts. LCL might indeed be an appropriate lens to understand what makes it all tick.

Jill Olivier: I can’t help beginning my comments with where I have felt irritated—when ‘grandiose theory’ gets drawn into the discussion. I don’t really respond to the idea of challenging paradigms. Aren’t we in the end just talking about that which enhances *health and well-being*? So how do we look at *that* differently? To build evidence for this all (the model) is just overwhelming. Is there a point in trying to do that?

Gary Gunderson: I don’t see any conflict between these dimensions. LCL theory really anticipates the complexity and adaptive nature of the real. It’s a model in service of a movement.

Teresa Cutts: Much of the thinking we need starts at local levels and blossoms upwards still.

Ken Pargament: I’m a bit skeptical, but if I think of moving this, then I would say, find some kind of academically based institution for fostering this – where there are faculty/students, an academic home, etc., for maximizing this. Use this to jump-start the LCLI: demo projects, etc. [Does it have to be geographically specific, or more like ARHAP—a wider collaborative?]

Jill: That would suggest years are needed to develop the model, and no attempt should be made to tie it down now.

Gary: Well, there is already energy around this table, and there is more to come around tables we will still call. It doesn’t need to be in one space.

Ken: True, but bringing students in would still be key.

Andy McCarroll: (Using his diagram of a pair of columns comparing ‘Life/Death.’) This comparison suggests to me how to act: ‘Look for the potential where it is, and work to unblock that which inhibits it!’ Here we should not forget the idea of ‘assets,’ of untapped potentiality that is at rest and can be leveraged. When the items that one would put under the ‘death’ column become and end in themselves (including an end for how institutions act), then one loses the true end of life – the enhancement of generative potentiality. Incidentally, my name for my anti-model is ‘*theartologos*’ (a combination of the divine, the aesthetic and the rational).

TC: I see the LCL model really as *fractal* – each point interacts with every other, and at different levels. I don’t want to lose how this ‘way of seeing’ (LCL) helps people recognize what they are doing—that’s sacred. I agree with Francis about connection to the earth/body, it must be there. I also want to

see this all linked to the leadership qualities that we think are congruent as well! The LCLI must take this up!

Ken: One can do more to define the wise principles that can help others ‘model’ this approach. This will take thought and a clear process. To listen to GG and JC – it rolls off their tongues, and it’s great, but do not assume we all *have* that insight already. Help us discover it.

Jill: I see it as a top-down versus a bottom-up process. Be humble about it, don’t try to undermine what others are really doing—there’s something about the tone that is wrong.

Mohamed Seedat: Could it become a course in a medical school? The whole is overwhelming sometimes. Similarly, could it become an evaluation tool, as in the proposed review of the ISHS, my institute? I think you should make a decision about where you have the most fun with this, and find a specific focus/location for it.

Anna Tharyan: Releasing the energy within the individual/community is the key in my experience. I sometimes drown in this meeting, not being a philosopher or the like. But I see that we can *change the quality* of what we are already doing in our lives, our work, and the LCL helps. I’m not sure if it’s all there, the causes, or what is fundamental, but there is something in it that helps us move forward, and I want to be part of that.

Ken: The things that account most for change in people are what are called ‘non-specific factors’ – mostly relational/human factors. The LCL lens helps us with that. I can see a model of integrative therapy, for example, that encompasses this.

Gary: One way of thinking about what the LCL model is good for is as a map for those non-specific factors into which so little investment goes. And it’s probably just as relevant in institutions, businesses, and so on.

Andy: Well, I’m becoming more comfortable with the term ‘cause’ in this context. There is also a strong appeal about a coherent, deliberate process, which the LCL approach represents.

Anna: Maybe it helps to think of the figure-ground metaphor. The ‘figure’ refers to the functional dimensions of life, the ‘ground’ to the fundamental drivers. I see the LCL model as really being about *releasing* what is already there.

Ken: Re Anna’s metaphor, the LCL really is pointing to a ‘ground’ that people do not see. I would say, then, *don’t* present the LCL as an ‘alternative’ model, as just another competitive model. It is fundamental, not alternative.

Jill: It does work as a transdisciplinary framework, where LCL is one of a cluster of related or congruent ideas.

Gary: I lean toward seeing the LCL Initiative as a ‘community of practice’ rather than a model or method.

Francis: Yes, and it is a very simple inversion of standard practice, but an absolutely critical one, in fact a very powerful one. What *could*, for example, have UCT done regarding its ‘janitors’ or service staff (thinking of how Wake is approaching the issue), instead of simply ‘outsourcing’ their jobs? [\[In later](#)

discussions outside of session, this was captured in the question: ‘What makes for a “great” institution, one that actually builds a healthier, stronger, more caring generation of leaders?]

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In Closing ...

Perhaps we should keep the LCL name/brand, but be clear that this is not about a linear cause and effect process. *[Nor does it have any positivist view of ‘cause and effect,’ which assumes we are able to gain some direct access to a ‘true’ (as opposed to ‘supposed’) cause. Rather, as noted already, the ‘causes’ in the LCL ‘model’ are attributed on the basis of an interpretation of effects we can observe, one that may be regarded as well-founded, demonstrable and adequate to the dynamics of generative human life.]* For metrics, could we look for and make visible the vital signs of life, seen through the LCL lens. Honoring, making visible the LCLs, leads to aligning and leveraging that which releases life potential and moves people toward the sacred and spiritual in a dynamic, multi-factorial process.

Flow is also a word that comes to mind, as the process releases individuals, organizations and institutions into a space that allows flourishing and creative freedom and generates productivity. We want to look at both research and practice in our LCL work. Clearly, this movement/framework can transcend simply individual approaches, to include more macro levels of human thriving, capturing the essence of many ‘relationships’ in ever bigger concentric circles (and through time).

There are existing tool sets, ideas, references that we’ve probably missed in our initial exploration of LCL. We need to identify them. But we also want to imagine the reach of these ideas beyond simply a test of concept or fleshing out a research framework. Extracting the LCLs from an exemplary organization like a school would be a great exercise. Bring in scholars and researchers at both micro and macro levels, to jumpstart the scholarship, research and practice, simultaneously, would move the field move quickly. A demonstration project could explore the vital signs of life in any number of areas/arenas/disciplines/projects. Strategies to overcome poverty and inequality (which usually focus on ‘signs of death’) would be exciting to parse through the LCL lens; extract the generative elements from those whose actions are successful, and develop interventions/strategies from this learning, to share with others. Look at doing some of these projects in very different contexts (e.g. India, Africa, USA) and look for shared learning and differences as well as commonalities through comparative studies. Conduct some basic formative research around the LCLs and start to groom/nurture a stable of students who can help us build new LCL leaders/scholars/practitioners for generations to come.

Going forward, do we develop a ground of LCL Fellows (scholars, researchers, practitioners) and do we train them through a certificate program or a masters’ level program? Would this best live at an academic medical school or an Institute? Or neither? We can dig deeper into this when a second cohort for exploring LCL convenes at Wake Forest in May 2013.

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