SHIFTING PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS:

A JOURNEY TOWARDS HEALTH

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An Action Research Report

in

The Department of

Applied Human Sciences

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts in

Human Systems Intervention

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

AUGUST 2019

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

This action research report prepared

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Entitled: SHIFTING PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS: A JOURNEY TOWARDS HEALTH

and submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Human Systems Intervention)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality as approved by the research advisor.

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AUGUST 2019

Acknowledgements

Though this paper is credited to me as an individual, in truth it is a collective accomplishment. Throughout my life, I have been blessed by generous and loving family, friends, and teachers who have inspired and enticed me to embrace life as a learning journey. Completing this degree fulfills my own decades-long dream of returning to my hometown of Montréal, to pursue graduate education. I hope it also honours and pays tribute to them.

Thank you in particular to my father, John Gerty, for his constant and unwavering belief in me and my dreams. Gratitude to my mother, Theresa Gerty, who, starting in elementary school, taught me how to stand up for myself and others – and also how to write and edit a paper. Endless love to my partner, Louise Kelaher, for proposing this amazing adventure, and then doing whatever was necessary to make it happen. Thank you for keeping me incredibly well fed and watered, for shovelling those treacherous front steps, for making me laugh every day, and for living your best life right alongside me. You, dear one, are love in action. Deep appreciation to my best friend and co-conspirator, Diana Cullen, for 25+ years of challenging each other, pushing through our fears, rocking the dance floor, and resisting the patriarchy. Look at where we are, Di-baby! Finally, thank you to Alex MacLennan, whose personal generosity, keen strategic mind, and critical yet compassionate guidance helped me cross this finish line.

This journey was supported, shaped, and strengthened by my powerful and razor-sharp academic supervisor, Rosemary Reilly; my dedicated, creative, and inspiring field supervisor, Alicia Pace; my HSI kindred spirit and now forever-friend, Cat Somrani; and the lessons, laughter, tears, and learning I shared with the exceptional souls of the 2019 HSI cohort.

I am humbled by, and so very grateful for, the experience of knowing you all.

"There's always more than what you're seeing."

- The Wyrd Sisters

"There is no knowing *for a fact*.

The only dependable things are humility and looking."

- Richard Powers

Shifting Personal and Organizational Patterns: A Journey Towards Health

On a foggy day at the southern tip of Vancouver Island, I sit in my office and look out the window. The desk overflows with books and papers, and my mind reverberates with ideas and concepts from two years of learning. I feel grateful, privileged, and slightly overwhelmed, as I contemplate the task ahead: to integrate and share the depth and richness of my 698 experience. Clarity feels elusive, and questions abound. Where shall I focus my attention and reflection within such a rich terrain? How to find my authentic voice and make a contribution to my chosen field? Daunted, I spend several hours ruminating. And then, slowly, the fog outside my window lifts, the clouds part to reveal blue sky, and my thoughts begin to take form.

This paper stems from my final graduate project, in which I planned and carried out a process consultation intervention to foster an improvement in a human system. I first describe several key theories that underpin this paper, including process consultation and action research. I then introduce a reflexive stance by sharing the story of a personal health crisis that unfolded in my life alongside this project, and which informed my experience of this project. Next, I briefly introduce my client, a Canadian charitable organization and artist-run centre, before I describe and reflect on the project using the framework of Peter Block's (2011) five consulting stages. Finally, I return to my personal story, and describe what I learned from the parallels between my individual health journey and my client's journey to systemic health. I conclude by sharing lessons learned through this project.

Theoretical Context

Human Systems Intervention (HSI) is a multidisciplinary field that sits at the nexus of adult learning, group dynamics, organizational development, and systems change. As a long-time

activist and social justice advocate, I was drawn to HSI because it is founded in the belief that "change in human systems has… to do with mobilizing members of a social system around a shared need for collective action" (Conklin, Kyle, & Robertson, 2012, p. 162). At this critical moment in our world, practitioners of HSI attempt to better understand how individuals and groups of people function, learn, and change – so they can intervene in a helpful way.

Process consultation is a cornerstone theory within the HSI program, and the methodology upon which this graduate project is based. Coined by Edgar Schein, process consultation is based on the central assumption that "*one can only help a human system to help itself"* (1999*,* p. 1, emphasis in original). In contrast to expert consultation, process consultation is a highly participatory and collaborative approach to helping individuals, groups, organizations, and communities define, plan, and implement change efforts – while also fostering their collective capacity to learn and strengthen their system. According to Schein, this requires

> the creation of a relationship with the client that permits the client to perceive, understand, and act on the process events that occur in the client's internal and external environment in order to improve the situation *as defined by the client*. (1999, p. 20, italics added)

This paper also integrates Kurt Lewin's change management theories and action research methodology to explore learning and change dynamics. Lewin was a pioneer of social and organizational psychology, and one of the first theorists to write about "group dynamics" and "organizational development" (1947). He viewed organizations as complex systems, within which human behaviour exists in a "quasi-stationary equilibrium." From Lewin's perspective, individual behaviour is largely a function of the "field," or group environment, in which some forces act to maintain the status quo, whereas other forces promote change (Foster, 2010).

Lewin's change model incorporated a "systems dynamics framework, with causal loops fostering permanence of a change" (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015, p. 160). From this perspective, any small change in a human system necessarily impacts the rest of the system, through iterative, reinforcing feedback loops that operate in a complex way (Meadows & Wright, 2008). Lewin (1946) coined the term "action research" to describe the parallel processes of taking action and doing research, while linking the two together through ongoing critical reflection (see Appendix A). According to Lewin (1947), any successful change process in a human system involves three phases:

- *Unfreezing* involves destabilizing a state of "quasi-stationary" equilibrium, thereby creating awareness of the need for change.
- *Changing* or *moving* occurs when driving and constraining forces in the system shift sufficiently for equilibrium to begin moving away from the status quo.
- *Refreezing* secures a new state of equilibrium that stabilizes the change and prevents movement back toward the status quo.

Rather than a linear process, Lewin saw action research as "a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action" (1946, p. 38). This iterative approach to learning and change is infused throughout this paper.

My Story

Before delving into the client system, I first acknowledge the role and influence of my own experience, assumptions, and learning on this project and paper. As an action researcher, I recognize that my thoughts, actions and findings cannot be neutral, but rather are, "inextricably and unavoidably historically, politically, and contextually bound" (Fontana & Frey, 2008, p. 115). In other words, as an intervener, I am necessarily influenced by who I am and what I

believe. Indeed, feminist theorists have long asserted that, "ways of knowing are situated and political and…researchers [should] strive to locate themselves in their research in order to offer a fuller context for their arguments" (Cullen, 2015, p. 7-8). By taking a reflexive stance in this paper, I aim to further cultivate "a detailed awareness of [my] self, [my] characteristic reactions and behaviour, and implications of these for the social systemic change processes [I am] leading" (Taylor, de Guerre, Gavin, & Kass, 2002*,* p. 363-364). In this paper, I place particular focus on the parallels between a health crisis in my own life and my client's journey towards systemic health. In this section, I briefly introduce my own story as context for subsequent reflection.

After completing the first year of HSI in June 2018, I returned to my home province of British Columbia, eager to find a 698 client. My initial learning goals were to deepen my participatory approach to consulting, confront conflict and power dynamics, and strengthen my reflective practice. These three aspects would challenge me to move beyond my comfort zone and into learning. During this period, I felt hopeful – but also increasingly tired, and oddly shaky. I knew the end of this degree was in sight, and I resolved to press on. By early October though, I could not ignore the constant tremor in my hands and legs. I decided I needed to see a doctor, and after doing so, I was diagnosed with an autoimmune condition called Graves Disease.

I had received my mid-40's wake-up call in the form of a serious, but treatable, chronic health condition. The exact cause was unknown, but potential triggers included stress, diet, and toxins. This did not surprise me: I had long struggled with recurring periods of busyness and over-commitment. In our first meeting, my naturopath proclaimed, "You need a lifestyle change. But you know that, right?" I did, of course. It was just so inconvenient! The specialist prescribed medication, and advised I clear my calendar for several months to help my acute symptoms ease and my body recover. And so, I gave myself permission to put this project on hold and take care

of myself. For as Rosemary Reilly stated, “When you are an instrument of change, you need to be in tune” (personal communication, November 7, 2019).

During these months of rest, I integrated a new focus into my learning goals. I would be deeply committed to this experience and offer my best work – but in a different way than I had in the past. This would require me to disrupt some long-standing beliefs and habits that had often resulted in my working as hard (or harder!) than the various clients I supported. For this final project, I would cultivate ease, flow, and acceptance as I supported the client to truly do *their* work. I resolved to listen to my body and honour what it needed, rather than ignore and/or negotiate with it. Gradually, I realized this health crisis was a critical opportunity for me to practice nurturing my health and wellbeing while *also* engaging fully as a consultant in this project. For, as Espejo states, “It is when breaks happen that opportunities for different futures emerge” (2003, p. 58). As my health slowly began to improve, these four learning goals created a solid foundation on which to renew my search for a client.

The Client System

In March 2019, I was introduced to a Canadian charitable organization and artist-run centre I will call by the pseudonym “ArtLab,” to honour our confidentiality agreement. ArtLab was founded as a collective in the 1970s, one of many such groups that were created around North America at that time. Inspired by countercultural movements and leading-edge media art practices, from its inception, the ArtLab collective rejected internal hierarchies in favour of shared leadership, power, and decision-making.

ArtLab’s original mandate was to facilitate international information exchange through a public video exchange library. The organization’s innovative mission, culture, and programs quickly gained attention and led to a strong local and international reputation. Through the

ensuing years, it has evolved and reinvented itself to stay relevant in changing times. In particular, the emergence and rapid growth of digital media in the 1990s prompted significant internal reflection, debate, and changes to the organization's approach and programming.

Alongside these changes, ArtLab's organizational culture and structure also shifted over time. For the first two decades, there was little differentiation between board and staff; collective members moved fluidly between the two. By the mid-90s, roles became more distinct, and separate departments began to emerge – though collaboration and frequent movement occurred across these new boundaries. The 2000s were a decade of change, with ArtLab coming close to closing its doors several times. In 2008, the board appointed a long-standing staff member to the role of Managing Director, in order to facilitate greater internal coordination. In 2015, this leader suddenly left the organization, and ArtLab went through a phase of significant staff transition before hiring the current General Manager in 2016.

Today, ArtLab is governed by an eleven-person board of directors, and staffed by eight permanent employees who work an average of 25 hours a week. Together, this team offers a broad range of programs and services to artists and the public, under four program areas: Distribution and Outreach, Technical Services, Archives, and Education. Some individuals have been involved in the organization (on and off) since the 1980s, while others joined in the last year or two. They are a diverse group in terms of age, race, and gender identity. The organization also engages a significant contingent of volunteers (some of which are past collective members) and hires part-time contract staff from time to time.

Phase One: Entry and Contracting

I was introduced to ArtLab by a consulting colleague of mine who had recently supported the board and staff to redesign their mission, vision, and values. This process appeared to have

reinvigorated staff and catalyzed greater clarity, shared purpose, and team cohesion. The team planned to reconvene in the fall in order to identify organization-wide priorities and streamline programs and services. In the interim, ArtLab was seeking a consultant to conduct an "HR Assessment" focused on examining and redesigning their staff structure. I had never led a structural intervention before, and felt this project might lie outside my comfort zone in the way I had initially hoped for.

My colleague thus introduced me to the contracting clients: the Board Chair and General Manager (GM). The presenting problem they described was a long-standing incongruity between ArtLab's espoused theory of collectivity and the reality of internal hierarchy. The recent strategic planning process had reconfirmed that the team's current values were aligned with some principles of collectivity – and yet many team members were not sure what being a "collective" meant in practice. Moreover, there was an increasing recognition that the current staff structure did not reflect the organization's ethics. For instance, despite their stated commitment to collectivity, the eight permanent employees were divided into four "departments" that, in practice, operated completely autonomously. The GM's witnessed little to no coordination or collaboration between departments, other than what she actively facilitated. Furthermore, each "department" consisted of only one or two staff, which meant each Director was responsible for both leading and executing the activities of a specific program area. Each week, a "management collective" consisting of the GM and the four Directors met, to discuss organization-wide concerns and make decisions. The hierarchy created by this structure was at odds with the ethos and needs of the organization, and there was growing tension within the team about what they perceived as an artificial division between the five staff members on the management collective, and the three staff members excluded from this group.

Initially, the Board Chair and GM expected an expert consultant to come in, identify solutions, and write a report recommending changes. I explained that as a process consultant, I would instead invite those implicated in the problem to better understand their shared situation, to explore possibilities, and to co-create and implement solutions together. The contracting clients had not experienced this kind of engagement before, nor had they imagined it as an option. Yet, both felt this approach would be appreciated by staff and would be a good fit with the ArtLab culture and values.

To gain a broader sense of the system and presenting problem, I next met with two long-standing members of the management collective and one newer non-management staff member. I was immediately struck by the strong language each person independently used to characterize the current structure, which included words like “unjust”, “exclusionary”, and “exploitative.” They described frustration, tension, “circular conversations”, and “stuck-ness” surrounding the management collective, which were tied to other significant issues such as roles and responsibilities, salaries and benefits, decision-making, and accountability. Each of these individuals was eager to share their views, and openly expressed both hope and futility about the possibility of change. I began to question how to clearly and effectively scope and contract for this project given this tension between readiness and resistance, in relation to so many complex, interconnected issues.

As Lewin (1947) points out, a complex set of driving and restraining forces influence any potential change effort in a human system. The first phase of a change process, unfreezing, requires “behavior that increases the receptivity of the client system to a possible change in the distribution and balance of social forces” (Zand & Sorensen, 1975, p. 534). According to Schein (1996), unfreezing requires three things: disconfirmation of the validity of the status quo, the

induction of guilt or anxiety, and the creation of psychological safety. I observed several driving forces that suggested client readiness, including expressed commitment from the GM and Board President to the project. The strong language used to describe the current structure, along with comments such as "If this doesn't get resolved, I will leave the organization," indicated a strong sense of dissatisfaction with the current staff structure and the presence of significant anxiety and guilt about its long-standing negative impacts. Clearly, something tangible was at stake, and those I had spoken to so far had all *expressed* a strong desire for change. During entry and contracting, I was struck by the seemingly high level of alignment and driving forces for change across the system. As a result, for a time, I felt somewhat confounded about why the presenting problem had not already been addressed.

Lewin (1947), however, provides a valuable insight into this conundrum, reminding me of the power that restraining forces, or resistance, have to hold current structures firmly in place. Indeed, Schein points out that "just adding a driving force toward change often produce[s] an immediate counterforce to maintain the equilibrium" (1999, p. 60). For this reason, it is easier to create change by removing restraining forces, but these are often "harder to get at because they [are] often personal psychological defenses or group norms embedded in the organizational or community culture" (Schein, 1999, p. 60). Indeed, it is easy to see that emotional experience plays a significant role in change (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015), and unfreezing is often influenced by "inner resistance to change, which is related to social habits, customs, and group dynamics" (Foster, 2010 p. 7). Highlighting the elaboration of Lewin's model by Schein, Zand and Sorensen (1975) also point out that change requires "an emotional climate that leads one to feel that ineffectiveness is undesirable but can be remedied and that facing up to it is, in the long run, more useful and satisfying than denying it" (p. 535). Though the team dynamics and

interactions seemed positive overall, I wondered how ready the client was for the changes they professed to want. Perhaps a lack of the necessary emotional climate could partially explain the patterns of "stuckness" and "circular conversations" staff had described around this issue. It was early days, however, so I kept this hypothesis in mind and also tried to resist jumping to conclusions.

During this time, I also began to realize that the contracting clients had framed the presenting problem in terms of a technical problem to be resolved: their current way of organizing staff was no longer working, and they required a new structure. My initial conversations had indicated staff might be ready and motivated to change this aspect of their team. But was this really the problem? I began to wonder what underlying relational issues were at play, and whether a structural change would actually resolve the problematic dynamics. According to Block, every client situation has two elements: the technical problem, and "the way people are interacting around that problem" (2011, p. 20). In other words, as interveners we must always attend to the organizational structures *and* the people, relationships, or process issues related to the presenting problem. I had heard fewer comments from staff about the latter thus far, which indicated there might be a lower level of awareness about (and therefore readiness to change) the *underlying* dynamics responsible for holding the current structure in place. Perhaps that was another reason why this seemingly straightforward structural issue had proven difficult to address.

During this initial exploration, I engaged in background research related to the client system and presenting problem in order to better understand the context within which this project was taking place. I first explored the world of artist-run centres: how they had formed and evolved, what new internal and external pressures they were experiencing, and their relationship

to collective and hierarchical models of organizing (Blessi, Sacco, & Pilati, 2011; Ginter, 2010; Institute for Applied Aesthetics, 2012). These readings raised many questions, and also confirmed my sense that many other arts and culture organizations are grappling with similar structural and philosophical questions. As I read about artist-run centres as "experiments in institutional change, and as structures of resistance to prevailing economic and political conditions" (Tan, 2006, p. 21), their disruptive purpose and history resonated deep within me. In the context of our current social and environmental crises, I was inspired by the potential of artist-run centres to offer a space for people to "intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for" (brown, 2017, p. 3).

Feeling connected and hopeful, I next turned my attention to new ways of organizing teams, including non-hierarchical principles and practices (Bushe, 2017; Laloux, 2014; Mont, 2017). I believed it was important to augment my formal knowledge related to the project, and also recognized the risk of slipping from research mode into expert consulting mode. With a desire to explore new organizational possibilities that could act as a driving force for change at ArtLab, I turned first to Laloux's seminal work, *Reinventing Organizations.* Here, Laloux outlines seven major stages in the development of human consciousness – and correlates each one with a specific organizational model. He then assigns a colour to each stage, creating a shorthand language to describe different kinds of worldviews and organizations. As I read about the Pluralistic-Green perspective, I recognized ArtLab's collectivist ethos. According to Laloux, people and organizations that operate from this perspective are uneasy with power and hierarchy, prefer decentralized decision-making, and strive for "bottom-up processes, gathering input from all and trying to bring opposing points of view to eventual consensus" (2014, p. 31). He also cautioned that "green is powerful as a paradigm for breaking down old structures, but often less

effective at formulating practical alternatives" (2014, p. 31). This statement harkened back to ArtLab's mission and historical roots, and also reminded me of their ongoing struggle to address problematic patterns related to organizational structure. Overall, Laloux's hope that evolving worldviews can catalyze "more powerful, more soulful, more meaningful ways to work together" (2014, p. 2) resonated with me, and reflected the underlying yearning I had heard from staff members for a more humane, connected organization. Could ArtLab evolve into a self-managing "teal" organization, one that operated effectively "without the need for either hierarchy or consensus" (2014, p. 56)? Intrigued, I began to research and explore non-hierarchical meeting and decision-making practices, in the hope these practical alternatives might turn out to be of value to this system (Slade, 2018; Kaner et al., 2007). During this time, I noted the natural tension, and often felt as though I was walking a tightrope, between planned and emergent interventions. Determined to maintain a process consulting stance while augmenting my own toolbox, I noted these as potential resources I might draw from later in the project, depending on how things evolved. For now, I resolved to "first build a relationship and only recommend other services as [I] decide jointly with [my] client that something else is needed" (Schein, 1999, p. 248).

At the end of this phase, I contracted to work with the eight permanent staff members, including the General Manager, to examine their current ways of working together in the context of organizational values, and to move towards greater alignment between the two (see Appendix B). I was mindful that many complex, interconnected issues had already surfaced, and a full structural redesign was unrealistic by the end of June. In order to manage expectations while also aiming for tangible results, we agreed our objective would be to surface some concrete changes that could be implemented right away, either during the project itself or over the summer, while

laying the groundwork for continued work in the fall. Keeping in mind the process consultation philosophy that "*problems will stay solved longer and be solved more effectively if the organization learns to solve these problems itself*" (Schein, 1999, p. 9-10, italics in original), we also agreed to co-create a forward-looking process that would increase the team's sense of clarity, agency, and capacity to navigate change together.

The project activities required dedicated time and space away from the urgency of daily tasks, as staff had limited capacity and availability to convene as a group. To make the most of our time together, I planned to gather data in advance through one on one interviews. The client agreed to three four-hour gatherings in mid-May and early June, followed by an evaluation process. After almost two months of listening, learning, and planning, the project activities could officially begin!

Reflection and Learning

As an action researcher, my explicit aim is not only to support the client to change their beliefs, practices, and systems, but also to re-educate and change myself (Raelin, 2009*)*. Recognizing that "as a researcher…you ought to mull over what your work cultivates and cuts off in you, what brings you to it, what you are looking for, and thus likely to find" (Tamas, 2009, p. 616*)*, I now offer my reflection and learning during this phase of the project. From the beginning, I felt energized by and aligned with the ArtLab mission, vision, and values. Words like "equitable," "non-normative," "experimental," "emergent," "self-organization," and "inclusive" invigorated and inspired me. My sense of resonance with the system and its members grew steadily as I interacted with each new staff person, dove into related research, and began to explore questions and possibilities. Initially, I hardly noticed these feelings and reactions. Perhaps, after many years of working with non-profit and social change organizations, I simply

took this alignment for granted. Slowly, however, I began to realize that my excitement about ArtLab and its work was related to my background as a social justice activist and self-taught artist. Quite unintentionally, I had entered a client system whose espoused values strongly aligned with my personal ethos and ethics.

At first, I told myself this was an asset. Surely it was helpful to be somewhat familiar with, and supportive of, my client's philosophy and approach? Over time, however, I began to question how my alignment with and excitement about ArtLab was impacting my work with them. In retrospect, I am aware that I quickly and unwittingly made several false assumptions about the client based on these limited initial impressions. For instance, I interpreted their espoused values and counter-cultural ethos to mean they would embrace and quickly evolve into a cutting-edge organizational structure and culture. I also presumed they would be willing and able to spend significant time and energy reinventing the internal workings of their organization. In essence, I unconsciously saw them as organizational and human systems geeks like me! Moreover, I assumed they would be ready – and even eager – to change themselves and their day-to-day world by diving into a transformational learning experience similar to my first year of the HSI program. Gradually, through interactions and disconfirming experiences with the client, I became more aware of these various mistaken assumptions. At first it was disheartening to notice my own significant biases and perceptual distortions – and identify the worldviews and mental models they stemmed from. By their very nature, my own blind spots are invisible to me – so how was I to reveal them to myself? As the project unfolded, however, I became intrigued by and grateful for the opportunity to engage in an ongoing, iterative process of "reflect[ing] upon and alter[ing] the assumptions embedded in [my] behavior and reasoning patterns" (Raelin, 2009, p. 22). For, as Schein says, "the only way I can discover my own inner reality is to learn to

distinguish what I know from what I assume I know, from what I truly do not know" (1999, p. 243). Ultimately, I realized that relentlessly investigating and challenging my own views helps me be a better consultant – and also helps me know myself, and the world, more fully.

Alongside this project work, I was also contemplating what would be required to face up to the need for change in my own life, in relation to my health and wellbeing. The emergence of acute symptoms and my subsequent diagnosis had acted as powerful driving forces for change, destabilizing (or "unfreezing") the equilibrium of my body, and my life. It seemed likely my work habits and lifestyle were factors in my illness, which prompted me to question much of what I thought I knew about myself. I needed to make some major changes. And yet, as the acute symptoms of my condition eased, I also sensed the presence of internal resistance and the significant risk of denying this truth and slipping back into business-as-usual. In this phase, I could certainly empathize with the experience of *professing* to want change, while simultaneously feeling defiant. I resolved to keep this in mind as I moved into discovery and dialogue with the client.

Phase Two: Discovery and Dialogue

According to Block, the second phase of any consulting project is designed to "develop an independent and fresh way of looking at what is going on and to create a process that leads to client commitment, ownership, and action" (2011, p. 159). This phase began when the General Manager officially launched the project and I subsequently scheduled six one on one interviews, as two staff members (who worked two days/week) had opted not to participate.

My previous conversations had gently started the process of unfreezing since "...the very act of asking questions and actively seeking answers can be viewed as a kind of intervention into a situation or problem and will inevitably bring about changes in those individuals involved"

(Berg, 2004, p. 198). During discovery, I aimed to further explore the need for change at ArtLab, so staff could continue, "to unfreeze old behaviours and attitudes and become open to new ideas" (Medley & Akan, 2008, p. 487). Initially, I was confident the eleven interview questions (see Appendix C) I had drafted were the "right" ones, but as the interviews approached, I became less sure. Slowly, I realized I was operating from a belief that "the consultant is *expected to know* what question to ask, what percentages of positive or negative answers constitute a problem, and what patterns of answers identify areas of potential difficulty in the organization" (Schein, 1999, p. 12, italics added). Inspired by ArtLab's values, and aware of how little I knew about this complex system, I challenged myself to resist the pull towards clarity and control, and to cultivate curiosity about the "sharedness of meaning" that would emerge from the interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008, p. 139).

I, therefore, simplified the original list of questions down to six (see Appendix C) that would "cover particular areas, but leave room to follow feedback idiosyncratically so as to explore more particular meanings" (Burck, 2005, p. 240). This would allow me to experiment with the grounded theory approach, wherein "the data analysis of the first interviews [is used] to modify the interview format in order to explore certain concepts in more depth" (Burck, 2005, p. 244). I entered the discovery interviews with a strong intention to stay open, suspend assumptions, and resist drawing conclusions. I wanted to be "alert for responses that suggest new angles to explore, that may turn out to be more important than anything [I] had in mind before the interview" (Whyte, 1997, p. 25). Ultimately, I wanted to honour the process consultation approach (Schein, 1999) by involving each person in the ongoing, collaborative process of identifying the problem and deciding together what to actively work on.

As the interviews approached, I kept in mind that the creation of psychological safety was necessary for the unfreezing process (Schein, 1996). I had met most team members in person already, and they had been keen to talk. Still, I began each interview by asking what the interviewee knew about the project, offering to clarify or answer any questions they had, and reminding them their responses would be anonymous. I then invited each interviewee to describe the current challenges at ArtLab, and to explore their aspirations for the team. Some comments indicated my previous conversations had already catalyzed some small shifts across the system, in that new connections, conversations, and ideas were already percolating. For instance, one person shared their sense that "things are pre-cooking." Another expressed their belief that "understanding our mutual frustrations and joys is the only way we can move forward," while a third began to offer concrete ideas for restructuring, including "breaking down the notion of departments altogether." Comments like this indicated staff were preparing to embark on a change journey.

I also quickly noted several challenging patterns. For instance, when I asked the first two interviewees to reflect on their *internal* staff structure, they instead talked about the organization's *external* activities, programming and members. There was also a repeated sense that, though they were committed to providing artists with a space that reflected their new organizational values, these were too aspirational for staff to be able to adopt internally. Comments such as, "I don't know how experimental we could allow our structure to be and keep the place running" and "I'm not going to volunteer a bunch of my time to figure this out," as well as "I'm getting more anxious about this project as it gets more real" further indicated underlying concern and potential resistance to the project objectives.

These dynamics reminded me that, "resistance often comes out indirectly with passive or questioning behavior during the data collection" (Block, 2011, p. 42). Though in some ways it was uncomfortable to hear these objections, as I didn't fully understand them, I also felt it was a positive sign that staff participants were openly expressing their concerns at this early stage of the project. I tried to listen closely, suspend my own fears and judgements, and recognize each specific comment as valuable wisdom and insight into the system. Though the responses were somewhat messy and inconvenient, and therefore not necessarily what I *wanted* to hear, I knew it was critical to acknowledge and honour what each person shared. Indeed, resistance is often an expression of "the fact that people need to be creatively involved in how their work gets done… to exercis[e] their inalienable freedom to create for themselves" (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998, p. 4). Rather than trying to control the process, I instead reduced the interview questions even further (see Appendix C), so as to provide less structure and have more space to follow whatever topics were most resonant for each interviewee.

During this phase of data collection, I became increasingly curious about the patterns that were emerging and their root causes. At first, I thought they simply indicated fear or reluctance to confront the misalignment between staff structure and values. Soon, however, I began to wonder whether we had not yet framed the problem in a way that truly resonated with staff. Perhaps the initial focus on organizational values was misplaced. This could explain why the interview questions about values were not landing as I had anticipated. Eventually, I stumbled across the work of Emery and Purser, who clearly and succinctly elucidated an important difference between values and ideals. According to them, "we often think of ideals and values as if they were the same, *but they are not*. Ideals refer to people's ultimate strivings for perfection…Values are statements of belief that we use to guide our present behavior" (1996, p.

91, emphasis added). This statement struck a powerful chord with me. Suddenly, I remembered a recent conversation where fellow cohort members had challenged the ArtLab values as "unrealistic," "aspirational," and "overwhelming." I hadn't known how to integrate that view at the time, but perhaps it reflected one of the underlying issues. If ArtLab's new "values" were actually aspirational ideals, or strivings for perfection, it would naturally be very difficult to live them as a team on a day-to-day basis. This revealed a possibility I hadn't yet considered: that the new ArtLab values weren't designed for, or intended to be, a guide to organizational structure, culture, or behaviour. Reviewing my interview notes, I noticed that one staff member described the values of equity and inclusiveness as "broader political concerns," which reinforced this burgeoning hypothesis. I also understood, however, that the recent process of creating these new values had created a shared sense of cohesion and momentum within the team, which I was reluctant to disrupt or undo. Rather than raise this potential insight with them, I therefore simply let it inform my understanding of and interactions with the system as I moved forward.

Reflection and Learning

I had already made some incorrect assumptions about the organization during entry and contracting, and I knew the risk of collusion was likely to increase as my level of connection and empathy with staff grew. Indeed, action research requires us

> to "take in" and understand a social system, empathically join its members and immerse oneself into that system's dynamics; yet in doing so, one is "taken in" by system dynamics and this distorts the external perspective needed to conduct effective diagnoses and interventions. (Kahn, 2004, p. 7)

As I interviewed each staff member, I tried to resist drawing conclusions and instead remain open and curious.

As I became more aware of the many interconnected, long-standing, systemic issues within ArtLab, I began to realize the gap between the team's espoused selves and their lived experience was even greater than I had first understood. Like many individuals and systems, the ArtLab team openly acknowledged and discussed some aspects of their organizational reality, whereas other aspects remained hidden from their conscious awareness (Argyris & Schön, 1976). While contracting with the client, I had tried to set clear expectations and create a realistic scope of work. And yet the more I interacted with the system, the more pressure and anxiety I began to feel internally. After reading a key strategic document that stated, "structural issues have plagued ArtLab since the 1990s!" I began to daydream about completely transforming the organization, as staff discovered their own power and agency to shift ArtLab into something truly life-giving. My aspirations were high, and yet realistically I knew we could only work on a small aspect of the whole picture. Aware of my own long-standing patterns in such situations, I remembered my intention to take care of my health by accepting and working with the client where they were. Keeping in mind adrienne maree brown's view that "change happens at a pace relevant for the people involved" (2017, p. 82), I resolved to proactively manage my expectations of this project, and of myself.

During this phase I also began to notice another powerful restraining force in relation to change: the significant constraints of time and capacity among staff. Comments like, "We're under pressure to get things done" and "We are consciously trying not to burn out" came up over and over again. This was familiar from my own experience in the non-profit sector, and at ArtLab, this was exacerbated by the part-time nature of many staff positions. I began to see how

different aspects of the client system interconnected and might create a negative feedback loop. It seemed the busier staff were, the less time they had to come together and understand each other's experiences, which created less space for creative, innovative problem solving, which kept them overcommitted and under-resourced. These unconscious group patterns and norms were a key force in constraining change – one that we would need to mitigate or remove, at least temporarily, for this project to succeed.

This dynamic was also personally familiar to me, and reminded me of my own patterns of busyness and difficulty slowing down. After my diagnosis, I had tried to interrupt this by reducing my client load, making more time to rest, and taking regular mid-day naps. These changes were helpful, and yet, I knew that they alone would not resolve the problematic dynamics that led to my ill health. What was it about my relationship to health, and the way I managed my life, that had led to this imbalance in the first place? What underlying dynamics, or root causes, were truly at issue? I knew that for transformative change to occur, I must go beyond simple behaviour changes to challenge my underlying assumptions, and ultimately adopt a whole new set of beliefs, paradigms, and mental models. From a theoretical perspective, I would need to reduce my own defensive patterns sufficiently to allow me to move from single loop learning through double loop, to embrace triple loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1976). I resolved to embrace this journey, and to also consider how these approaches might also be relevant for and in service of my client. Perhaps, in addition to addressing structural issues, this project could provide space and time for staff to connect, and to identify new ways of being together. Together, they might "form a critical mass that… [could] transform the organizational perspective and frames of reference" (Choy, 2009, p. 67). In both contexts, I recognized a focus on root causes would lead to more transformative change. In my personal life, this both intrigued

and terrified me – and it made sense my clients might feel the same way. I kept this in mind as I moved into the next phase of the project.

Phase Three: Feedback and Decision to Act

The third stage of Block's consulting model involves planning: analyzing and organizing the discovery data, effectively feeding it back to the client, handling any resistance, and deciding how to proceed (2011, p. 7). Given our compressed timeline, I began to distil what I had heard in the discovery interviews into 3-5 high level themes, supported by anonymized quotes, to share with the client system. The date of the first in-person session was approaching, and I wanted to honour staff's contributions by naming the layers of the problem clearly and simply (Block, 2011, p. 41-42).

While I initially tried to identify themes through a careful review of the data, I was also aware that "there are no standard methods, no *via regia*, to arrive at essential meanings and deeper implications of what is said in an interview" (Kvale, 1996, p. 180). This led me to reorient and rely on my intuition to make sense of all I had heard. I put the notes aside, thought about the client for several hours, and the themes literally came to me overnight. These included three strengths, and six challenges, which I summarized as follows:

- Passion for & belief in ArtLab's purpose and values
- Desire to honour your history *and* move ahead into the future
- Mutual respect and appreciation for each other's contributions
- The word "collective" is significant yet inconsistently used & not well defined
- Structural division between management collective & other staff is problematic
- Model of separate "departments" offers autonomy but limits collaboration
- Decision-making processes and roles could be clearer and more effective

- Meetings are not always meaningful or efficient
- Individuals feel constrained by limited time, resources and capacity

We would not be able to address all of these points within the scope of this project. And yet, I resisted the urge to take control and simplify for simplicity's sake. In keeping with process consulting philosophy, I wanted to continue sharing power and responsibility with the client, and to continue building their capacity to identify and solve problems. Rather than pre-determining on which theme we should focus, I decided to share all nine themes with the team and then engage them in a process of shared diagnosis and action planning.

Alongside this data analysis, I began to plan two back-to-back sessions. The purpose of the first day would be for staff to "develop a shared context of the issue/problem they are concerned with" (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. 137). The second day would support staff to move into action on a particular issue, by exploring and designing potential solutions they could test and learn from together. Together, these two days were intended to unfreeze the system by "altering the driving and resisting forces, thereby facilitating the movement of the system to a new level of equilibrium" (Zand & Sorensen, 1975, p. 534). I was unsure how much time and focus were still required to complete the unfreezing process. As noted, I had already observed several key driving forces for change, including high-level support from the GM, and a shared sense of anxiety about the current structure. If a high level of shared understanding and readiness for change already existed, I didn't want to waste time and lose potential momentum. I kept in mind, however, the caution that, "unless [we] pay attention to unfreezing, [our] later efforts to implement a solution may be futile because the organization may not have been ready for change from the outset" (Zand & Sorensen, 1975, p. 542). And I truly wasn't sure whether there was

"enough dissatisfaction with the status quo…for the change to occur" (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. 29).

Ultimately, I drew design inspiration from Search Conference and Preferred Futuring methodologies, two system-wide strategic change processes which enable diverse groups to envision the future they want, and then develop strategies to get there (Emery & Purser, 1996; Lippett, 1998). I was drawn to these approaches because they both recognize the increasingly complex environmental context for organizations, and offer ways for groups of people to actively plan "their own collective future directions" (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. 60). In particular, I wanted to incorporate elements that catalyzed creative energy and vision for the future of ArtLab, alongside practical tools to support action planning and implementation. For a few days, I was so focused on these formats that my design became rigid and somewhat mechanical. Thanks to feedback from my brilliant field supervisor, Alicia Pace, I realized this before the session itself and "liberated myself" to infuse my own creative touch. I came into the first session with a sense of calm, hope, and curiosity about what would unfold.

The morning of the feedback session, I set chairs up in a circle, taped visual materials to the walls, set creative cards out on a side table, and waited with anticipation for the team to arrive. The group energy was calm and somewhat subdued. For the first creative activity, I invited each person to draw a metaphor that represented, in some way, their desired future for the team. There were audible sighs, giggles, and apologies as they each drew a picture, and took turns sharing and explaining it to the others. After everyone had spoken, I asked them to reflect on what they had heard. Key themes that emerged in common included "responsive," "experimental," "agency," "coordination," "collaboration," "shared purpose," and "interconnected parts within a whole."

We let that simmer for a moment before moving into a second creative activity. I asked each person to draw a second metaphor – this time, one that represented the current state of the team. This was intended to "increase awareness of the variety of experiences contained in the system" (Bushe & Marshak, 2009*,* p. 360). This time, several individuals apologized for their drawing skills, or for not having fully captured the meaning of their metaphor. Still, they slowly created individual pictures and prepared to share them with each other. A powerful round of truth-telling and attentive listening followed. One individual, who was not part of the management collective, shed tears as she described feeling like an "outsider," who was desperately trying to find a way "in" to the team. Another depicted a horse quickly chasing a speeding cart downhill. Afterwards, staff reflected on what they had heard, and identified key themes including "isolation," "disconnection," "working blind," and "colliding expectations." The contrast between the team's desired future and current state was stark, and the room was quiet as individuals took in what they had heard from each other.

Slowly, a dialogue between staff members naturally emerged, as they inquired about each other's experiences and shared their unique, yet connected, perspectives. The level of care and compassion for each other was obvious, as was their motivation and curiosity to better understand each other. As the dialogue took shape and grew, I heard many "soulful things, like respectful relationships, goodwill, and hope" (Laloux, 2014 p. 147), alongside the themes I had heard during discovery. This was, in fact, what I had hoped for – by inviting the team to share and reflect on their own desires and current experiences, connection and clarity would naturally emerge. I unveiled the themes, read through them, and asked, "Does this look like you?" Overwhelmingly, the answer was yes. This information was not totally new or surprising to them, but this was the first time they had seen and examined it in its totality.

Listening to the team, I realized how little time they had previously spent connecting with each other about their desires and experiences at ArtLab. It seemed to me that, regardless of all the design and preparation I had done in advance, the day was – at its core – an opportunity for this group to come together and better understand how each of them perceived and understood their shared world. Staff spoke candidly about these issues, and listened empathetically to one other, for the first time ever. Painful experiences and issues that had long been ignored, or covertly held "under the table" (Marshak, 2006) were surfaced. Through the process, individuals discovered their shared interests and desires, and began to explore and understand their differences more deeply. This experience reflected the power of dialogic OD practice, which is defined as

> a conscious intent to engage the whole system in dialog and synergistic relationships in such a way that: mental models are surfaced; new knowledge, structures, processes, practices, and stories are collaboratively created and shared; and diverse stakeholder voices and perspectives are heard. (Bushe & Marshak, 2009, p. 361)

I had originally planned to move towards convergence and action that afternoon (Kaner at al., 2007), but decided to postpone that to the next day and prioritize the dialogue that was an important prequel to the next stage of decision-making and change.

As their shared understanding grew, I was reminded of the importance of language and discourse in creating meaning in organizations. I noticed the power of the emergent dialogue, and remembered Lewin's view that "the key to resolving social conflict [is] to facilitate learning and so enable individuals to understand and restructure their perceptions of the world around them" (Burnes, 2004, p. 981). Indeed, as they talked, staff members were shifting the conceptual

frameworks from which they had been operating (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Ultimately, the emergent dialogue during the feedback session served as the final stage of the unfreezing process by illuminating a shared sense of the team's current situation and desired future. This allowed staff to be ready to make a decision to act. As the day ended, each person expressed appreciation for the opportunity to gather together and hear each other's experiences. We would meet again the next day, and I acknowledged them for their courage, compassion, and hard work thus far.

As I set up for the session the next morning, the General Manager approached me. She had a dilemma she wanted to discuss. I listened with curiosity as she shared that several weeks earlier, she had applied for another job. There was a good chance she would be the successful candidate, and it was likely she would resign from ArtLab the following week. She assured me this was not connected to this project, but rather due to a leadership opportunity she could not turn down. The question was: should she tell the team now, or wait until she knew for sure? I recognized there was no "right" answer, so drawing on my experience as a coach, I asked what she would feel most comfortable with, and what she thought was best for the group. She was concerned the team would feel let down or "duped" if she participated in this experience and then gave her resignation the following week. On the other hand, she did not yet know whether she had gotten the job and didn't want to destabilize the team unnecessarily. I encouraged her to trust her judgement, and she decided to keep this potential news to herself for now. We committed to both keep this in mind throughout the day, and to encourage the team to make decisions that were best for the organization, regardless of the specific individuals involved.

We began with reflections on the day before, and spent time listening to each person's thoughts and questions. People expressed a range of feelings and perspectives, including a

continued need to better understand each other and a desire to move forward. Grounded in a strong foundation of dialogue, and sensing readiness for action, I asked the group if they were prepared to shift into a structured keep/drop or change/create activity (Emery & Purser, 1996). Hearing a decisive yes, I first asked each person to write on post it notes all the things they wanted to "keep" about the current structure. In other words, what was already working that they wanted to maintain or continue? The energy in the room surged as items like "mutual respect," "meetings that expose me to other departments," and "cake time"[1] were added to the board. Next, I invited them to document what they wanted to "change or drop." Here, the words "management collective" appeared multiple times, alongside items like "inequality of labour practices/privileges" and "programming belonging to specific departments exclusively." Finally, I encouraged them to brainstorm what they might "create." This prompted ideas such as "collaborative programming," "new meeting structures," and "more budget."

We then paused to reflect on what had come forward. With all they had heard and discussed so far, where did they want to spend their time and energy for the rest of this project? To find out, I proposed a simple dotmocracy (Diceman, 2018), where each person could put two dots beside the "theme" they most wanted to address. Seven dots quickly appeared beside the "management collective," with a smattering of others across the flip charts. This key moment was the first visible, public, decision-making process – and it strongly indicated a shared desire to change this long-standing structure. To confirm, I asked whether they wanted to work directly on this issue, and the answer was a resounding yes! The team had made a decision to act

[1] Cake time refers to the team's monthly ritual of sharing and eating cake together, thanks to an individual donor who specifically supports and encourages this practice.

together, and I sensed feelings of relief and validation – along with some trepidation about what would come next.

Reflection and Learning

During this phase of the project, I realized I had made another small but important assumption about the characteristics and culture of ArtLab. Because this was a group of artists, I assumed they would appreciate and embrace creative activities like drawing and metaphor. In fact, when I introduced this activity, I realized I had made a mistake. Groans emerged, energy was low, and several people expressed how difficult it was for them. Indeed, the drawings themselves were less free flowing and detailed than many I have seen with other groups. It turns out, I learned, artists don't always like creative activities – especially when they lie outside of their skill set or chosen modality. They went through the processes anyhow, and gained some value from them, but in retrospect I would have approached and framed these sections differently had I not been operating from a faulty mental model about "naturally creative" artists.

As I reviewed the discovery data, I also realized I had made a second inaccurate assumption. In the initial stages of the project, I made frequent references to the ArtLab "team," and to staff "team members" in both my spoken language and written documents. Reflecting on what I had heard, I slowly began to realize ArtLab staff members were not, in fact, a "team" in the way I had assumed. In fact, there were multiple comments indicating not only did the staff not see themselves as a team, they didn't feel they had *time* to be a team. I was stunned as I realized I had unconsciously imposed my own mental model of "team" onto the client system, and assumed it reflected their reality. In fact, I had presumed a level of connection, integration, and interdependence that, I now realized, did not actually exist. I decided to shift my language, and to challenge and disrupt this mental model as it arose through the remainder of the project. In

my mind, I began to reframe the project goal away from "how can we bring the team structure into alignment with organizational values" towards "how do we shift from independent departments to a high-performing, collaborative team?"

Surfacing these two false assumptions caused me to question what other unconscious blind spots I still carried – and how they were affecting my work with the client. Returning to Schein (1999) reminded me that

> …the consultant must be able to perceive what he or she does not really know, and that process has to be an *active searching out of one's areas of ignorance* because we are so filled with preconceptions, defenses, tacit assumptions, hypotheses, stereotypes, and expectations. (p. 11, italics in original)

With this mind, I resolved to become ever more relentlessly focused on self-observation and reflexivity, in hopes of embodying the approach of cultural scholar Erin Wunker: "First, we situate ourselves. Then we widen the scope of our looking. Then we situate ourselves again. And repeat" (2017, p. 41).

Finally, my most significant learning in this phase was related to the power of situated cognition and dialogic processes. From this perspective, cognition is seen as "an adaptation of the individual's consciousness to social and cultural interactions" (Reilly & Mcbrearty, 2010, p. 238). In other words, "individuals, in interaction with each other, help create what we later come to recognize as real" (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015, p. 164). Witnessing the staff dialogue made me realize they were even more siloed and separated than I realized, and the sheer act of bringing them together for connection and reflection represented a powerful intervention into the system. Staff members were hungry to simply talk with each other, to understand each other's

experiences, and to have time together to talk directly about issues impacting the system and each other. As Bushe and Marshak (2014) explain, dialogic organizational development processes offer an opportunity for groups to disrupt their existing social construction of reality, change their core narratives, and create generative images that provide new and compelling alternatives for thinking and acting. Though I knew this in theory, I witnessed it come alive in real time during this phase of the project.

Alongside my project reflections and learning, I was also in the process of exploring the mental models and behaviours that had precipitated my illness with my partner, two close friends, and my health care team. These conversations had helped me to more deeply understand, and to begin to shift some long-standing patterns. Experiencing the power of learning in relationship in my own life reinforced and highlighted its potential value in the client system – and vice versa. I was also beginning to learn what it was to truly rest and take care of myself – not as a response to exhaustion or acute symptoms, but rather as a proactive practice. Slowly, I adopted simple behaviour changes and also began to consider new potential beliefs and mental models about the nature of my own life, work, and health. Reaching beyond single loop learning for more transformative kinds of change was new and uncomfortable. I resolved to continue making space and time for reflection in both contexts, and to find ways to support ArtLab staff to continue once the project wrapped up.

Phase Four: Engagement and Implementation

According to Block, the engagement and implementation phase involves "carrying out the planning of phase 3" (2011, p. 7). This phase began mid-way through the second in-person session, and continued until our final session three weeks later.

The process of making a decision to address the issue of the management collective built a sense of convergence and momentum, and also surfaced doubt and anxiety. As one person stated, "Just because we agree the management collective should change doesn't mean we know how to change it, or what to do instead." We were entering Lewin's second step: changing, which involves "conceptualizing a problem, acquiring information about relevant forces, locating or developing alternative solutions, and choosing a course of action" (Zand & Sorensen, 1975, p. 535). This step necessarily involves emergence, a term used to define "things that are unpredictable, which seem to result from the interactions between elements, and are outside any one agent's control" (Westley, Patton, & Zimmerman, 2006, p. 128). Indeed, Lewin recognized that any attempt to predict a specific outcome from planned change would be very difficult, even foolhardy, because of the complexity of the forces involved. This view has been validated and further elucidated by contemporary research on chaos, complexity, and complex adaptive systems. From this perspective, human systems are highly unpredictable, and "slight variances, things so small as to be indiscernible, can amplify into completely unexpected results" (Wheatley, 2006, p. 120). This suggests any small change in one area necessarily impacts the rest of the system, through iterative, reinforcing feedback loops involving "multiple sequences, timing, pacing, and rhythms…[that] influence each other in complex ways" (Bartunek & Woodland, 2015, p. 171). No simple, linear causality or absolute answers exist in such complex adaptive systems, and yet they *are* self-managing and learning (Dooley, 1997). For, as adrienne maree brown (2017) states, "*what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system*" (p. 53, emphasis in original).

Based on this, I had planned in advance to host an ideation and brainstorming session as we moved into the implementation phase. My hope was this approach would support staff to

"take into account all the forces at work and identify and evaluate, on a trial and error basis, all the available options" (Burnes, 2004, p. 985-986). I broke the group into two, gave them flip chart paper and markers, and tasked them with brainstorming alternatives to the management collective that would align more closely with their values and the perspectives they had heard from each other. I encouraged them to suspend judgment and reality, and to begin by generating a wide range of "blue sky" ideas. As I listened in on the groups, I realized they immediately struggled to get into ideation mode. When one person shared an idea, the others began to debate its merits and faults. In addition, one of the groups had veered off topic and was focused on external programming, including how to better engage members. This did not surprise me, given my experience during discovery, as I knew it was easier and more familiar terrain to them. After about ten minutes, I intervened, asked for their observations, and listened to them describe how challenging it was to suspend judgement and imagine truly new possibilities. I agreed, reminded them of their intention to identify possible alternatives to the management collective, and encouraged them to try again. Tentatively, they began to draw and write ideas on their flip chart paper. After 30 minutes, I asked each group to visit the other group and share their progress. This allowed the two groups to note similarities and differences between their work – and they also remarked on how difficult they continued to find this activity. Surrounded by their existing reality and mental models, it was *hard* to imagine a new reality, outside their day-to-day current structure. And we were running out of time.

Together, the team began to identify ways to move this forward before our final session. The first idea was to revise the agenda and focus of the weekly management collective meeting right away, to free up time for continued work together. The GM then offered to create a "straw dog" proposed structure based on what she had heard so far, which she would bring to the next

meeting for discussion, feedback, and refinement. Several staff acknowledged it would be helpful to have a starting point to work from, and they agreed to her offer. As we moved towards closure, people expressed mixed feelings. We had opened many topics, and though we had identified next steps, nothing was yet totally resolved. We ended on time, but with a palpable sense of unease and discomfort. At the same time, there was a clear sense of appreciation for the opportunity to come together, and for what had emerged. Comments during the closing round included sentiments like, "These sessions made me ready for the work ahead" and "These discussions brought everyone's understanding of the problem closer in sync," as well as "This was a turning point in clarifying what we want." To close, I named and acknowledged the wide range of emotions in the room – and resisted my own urge to minimize or soothe them. We had identified clear next steps, and I wanted to hold them capable of moving forward together.

The following week, as anticipated, the General Manager submitted her resignation. I knew this would be an unsettling turn of events for staff and board, and therefore was not surprised when two weeks went by without any communication. The GM eventually shared her resignation letter with me, and I noted the following sentence about our project:

> A process is underway to understand the organization's structural flaws, and I encourage the board and staff to keep the momentum and take this on as a joint responsibility… I see this as the biggest threat and crucial to the organization's health.

I was glad to hear she would stay in her role until mid-June, and would be able to see through the end of our project. She also shared that her upcoming departure provided an even higher level of motivation to enact tangible changes to set the staff, and the new General Manager, up for greater success.

The third, and final, session took place three weeks after our last gathering. In the opening round, staff shared heightened feelings of gratitude, sadness, optimism and anxiety. I acknowledged the GM's departure, and then shared this quote, "While uncertain times can be painful, they are also by definition eras of change. They're destabilizing because they're a threat to the status quo, which is also precisely why they represent an opportunity for innovation and cultural rebirth" (Holmes, 2015, p. 79). After a pause, I invited the GM to share the draft terms of reference for the new Programming Committee. Slowly, staff discussed its various aspects and implications, determined when meetings would happen, and clarified who would be involved and responsible. As they explored how this change could support more collaborative programming across departments, the group decided the meeting chair would rotate quarterly, to provide an opportunity for shared leadership, and identified who would play this role first. After an hour, they had refined the details of this new structure, other than how the new Committee would make decisions. That was on the agenda for later in the day.

We then turned our attention to a suite of other proposed structural changes that had emerged from the dissolution of the management collective. These included a new bi-weekly staff meeting, clarified lines of accountability, and revised salaries and benefits that addressed the inequity between permanent staff members. Together, these represented some significant shifts to how staff organized themselves and their work. During the next hour, staff reviewed each of these, refined the details, gained agreement, and created a timeline for what still needed to happen. By the end of the discussion, we had made significant progress towards the goals outlined in the original project scope. The work was by no means complete, but we had achieved the stated objective of the project, which was to surface and experiment with implementing some concrete changes, while laying the groundwork for continued work this fall.

We had two hours left, and two possible topics to address: decision-making models and meeting principles. We agreed there was not enough time to do both, and staff decided decision-making would be of greater benefit to them. Anticipating this, I had prepared several decision-making models for staff review and consideration: Laloux's advice seeking process (2014), Kaner's gradients of agreement (2007), and Percolab's generative decision-making process (Slade, 2018). I chose these three models because they were aligned with the type of organization ArtLab aspired to be, they were relatively current, and each provided helpful structure without being overly prescriptive. I broke the group into pairs, gave each pair one model to review, and asked them to consider if and how it could be applied or tweaked to work within the context of the Programming Committee. We would reconvene after half an hour, for each pair to share their assessment with the rest of the group.

What transpired next was fascinating. It turned out that in planning this aspect of the conversation largely on my own, I had seriously underestimated its complexity! Each pair shared their concerns and gave reasons for why the potential model they had been given wouldn't work for ArtLab. At the end of this process, we were no further ahead. The level of anxiety rose, and the conversation began to unravel. As I watched, underlying cultural and relational issues connected to power, control, and trust emerged. In retrospect, this moment exemplifies why consulting processes need to be highly collaborative – because as outsiders to a system, we ultimately know very little, and cannot see the complexity within. With less than an hour of time left together, I found myself feeling frustrated, took a deep breath, and named what I saw – the group was having a hard time making a decision about making a decision. Was this a familiar dynamic? Acknowledging it was, one person suggested they could test one of the models in their next meeting. Another immediately disagreed, saying, "We don't have time to test decision-

making models in those meetings. We have work to do!" This indicated a significant underlying mental model – that meetings are meant for valuable "real work," not relational or process work. This reminded me of my own health journey, and my personal bias for action over rest and reflection. Could this attitude help explain why the long-standing issue of the management collective had never been addressed, even though most individuals believed it needed to change? As the clock ticked down, I made several more pointed observations and interventions into the group dynamic. Ultimately, staff half-heartedly agreed to try the gradients of agreement model (Kaner at al., 2007), and we began to shift towards evaluation and closure.

Reflection and Learning

During this phase, I realized how much I have to learn as an intervener about design thinking, prototyping, and ideation. We had co-created a strong container for shared understanding and dialogue, and I mistakenly presumed these conditions would also support creative problem solving. In retrospect, I moved into brainstorming too quickly and informally – and did not spend enough time exploring or naming the actual problem. Had we done so, we might have revised the question from "What are alternatives to the management collective" to "How can we shift from five siloed departments to a collaborative team?" Reframing in this way may have generated a deeper layer of inquiry and ideation. It also may have been helpful to provide scaffolding in the form of tangible models or frameworks to consider and build on, rather than having them start from scratch. Overall, I now more fully understand how much time and deliberate planning an ideation process like this requires. It demands patience, discomfort, and the ability to accept uncertainty and "not knowing." I also recognize that, though it was a challenge in the moment, this process effectively catalyzed a successful iterative process. Over

several weeks, staff moved their ideas from initial sparks, to a straw dog proposal, to a refined version – and ultimately created a potentially viable alternative to the management collective.

During this phase of the project, I also noticed a significant dynamic of dependency on the GM, which only intensified after she resigned. In the end, the GM did the majority of the work required to identify specific structural changes and begin to implement them. In some ways, this was a helpful and appropriate role for her to play, as she was the only one not siloed within a department, and also had the resources, vision, and authority required. Indeed, the project may not have succeeded without her stepping into this level of responsibility. On the other hand, staff had committed to a participatory, collaborative process – which was now being subtly undermined. The underlying dynamic reminded me of Bion's "basic assumption dependency," which involves "the belief that unless the group is led by an authority figure, it cannot function effectively" (Kass, 2008, p. 5). As we moved into implementation, staff behaved as if "they sit long enough, the wise leader will come forth with the magic cure" (Rioch, 1970, p. 136). In the effort to attain tangible results, we may have reinforced this problematic dynamic, rather than co-creating the conditions necessary for staff to own and implement these changes once the GM left the organization. Though I was aware of this, I struggled with how to effectively intervene and interrupt the pattern. I attempted to invite and encourage more distributed leadership, but I was consistently met with objections based on lack of time and capacity. In the end, I accepted this dependency as an existing element of the system – one we were not able to shift within the scope of this project.

In the implementation phase, I also began to more fully grasp the limited nature of our work together. Though I had done my best to adjust my assumptions and expectations, unconsciously I continued to have unrealistic ideas of what we could accomplish in a brief two-

month period. As we moved to closure, I once again felt somewhat disappointed, as I realized my hopes and ambitions for ArtLab staff would only be partially realized. On one hand, I could see we had made significant progress on the original problem, which had been a long-standing sticky issue in the organization. This was important, and I believed it would have a positive impact on the staff's day-to-day experience at work. In addition, staff had experienced and acknowledged the power of spending time connecting and reflecting together. On the other hand, I questioned how much progress we had made on the real problem, and how much capacity we had built in the system. The group had not yet discovered "that the way forward lies in giving reflection on its own behavior as prominent a place as task achievement" (Amado & Ambrose, 2002, p. 153). In retrospect, I could have placed greater emphasis on reflection as an ongoing practice, and explicitly invited them to find ways to integrate it into their interactions moving forward. I also could have left them with reflective questions such as, "What will you do if/when the Programming Committee starts mimicking the management collective?" or, "How will you continue to share and learn from your experiences?" Perhaps these small interventions would have better equipped and empowered staff to address deeper issues after the project ended.

During this time, I was keenly aware of how hard it is to change long-standing group patterns and structures. In my own life too, I was learning that change is a longer, deeper, slower, and harder process than I had realized. I could relate to how staff at ArtLab struggled to come up with new ideas and imagine alternative possibilities. After so many years as a busy, productive, high-achieving individual, it was hard to imagine a different way of operating. I was experiencing an iterative learning process of my own, as I experimented with new habits and practices. It was uncomfortable, challenging, and prompted mixed feelings. The results were also uneven – to create more time and space in the day, I resolved not to start my workday before

9am. But I then made exceptions for clients located on the east coast. I put a note on my website saying I would not accept new coaching clients until the fall, and then agreed to meet with someone who reached out to me with a compelling story. In this neutral zone of transition and deep transformation, I practiced letting go of my old beliefs, habits, and assumptions (Bridges, 1991). I was in the midst of "a place and time when the old habits that are no longer adaptive to the situation are extinguished, and new, better-adapted patterns of habit *begin* to take shape" (p. 70, italics mine). As the phases are intertwined and interconnected, rather than separate stages with clear boundaries, it was both natural and frustrating to have experiences of progress and regression.

Like me, ArtLab simultaneously acknowledged a need for change and resisted it. We both were tempted to revert back to our old familiar patterns, despite our express desire for new ones. Seeing these parallels allowed me to shift how I thought about organizational change processes. And seeing ArtLab's change process allowed me to shift how I thought about my own journey. It made sense that changing organizational culture and patterns of relating would be slow, and it would take a level of commitment perhaps they weren't ready for. That had also been true in my own life. At the same time, I could see that as our acute symptoms eased, we were both becoming more able and ready to address the root causes of our issues. I also recognized that "mindsets, culture, behavior, and systems are intertwined. A change in any one dimension will ripple through the other three" (Laloux, 2014, p. 228). Likewise, it was certainly possible that seemingly small changes would add up to larger impact over time.

Phase Five: Extension, Recycle or Closure

According to Block, the final phase of any consulting project is about "learning from the engagement" (2011, p. 7). In this case, extending or "recycling" the project was not an option – either for the client or myself. It was time to move towards closure and evaluate our progress.

The third step of Lewin's theory, refreezing, involves enabling "organization members to willingly accept and integrate new practices and reward systems that will reinforce the planned organizational change" (Medley & Akan, 2008, p. 488). This re-stabilization must occur in order for the results of a change effort to endure. There are many ways to support this, including new structures, norms, policies, and other mechanisms that "create and maintain forces that support the new equilibrium level" (Foster, 2010, p. 8). Interestingly, Lewin also found that "continued implementation of a change was greater among individuals who had made a public commitment to change to a group than among individuals who had not" (Zand & Sorensen, 1975, p. 535).

Like the other steps in Lewin's change model, refreezing is a complex process. Indeed, it would be a mistake to consider the change process complete just because the team agreed upon a solution. Indeed, "refreezing is favoured by evidence of success *in practice*, superior results, and positive feedback" (Zand & Sorensen, 1975, p. 542, italics added). Though staff had agreed to implement and work within this new structure, future events will continue to inform and influence their existing plans. This could strengthen their progress – or disrupt, and even derail, it. In recent years, social science researchers have further explored and identified a myriad of other factors that contribute to sustaining change over time. These include experiences of "confirmation and psychological support" (Zand & Sorensen, 1975, p. 535). This means individuals need to feel the change is effective, and also need to feel satisfied or pleased with it. Furthermore, refreezing requires "that new behavior must be, to some degree, congruent with the

rest of the behavior and personality of the learner, or it will simply set off new rounds of disconfirmation" (Schein, 1996, p. 34–35).

The first step of evaluating the project began at the end of the final session, when I reviewed the project milestones and invited staff to share candid reflections and feedback. Each person expressed genuine appreciation for the opportunity to "voice my frustrations," "talk openly," "sit and reflect together," and "slow down and create shared understanding." Comments like, "The process of becoming something else is more tolerable now," and "I feel we'll be able to continue this work," indicated a sense of hopefulness and optimism. At the same time, several comments reflected old patterns and beliefs, which indicated we had made less progress on underlying cultural dynamics. One staff person asked, "Can you come back and *do this for us* again next year?" This suggested a belief that this experience had been a rare exception – and they couldn't do it on their own. Another commented, "Not enough space exists for some of these conversations, and I feel alienated a lot of the time because of that," which implied they both valued this experience and doubted it would continue. As the session came to a close, I acknowledged the staff's hard work, dedication, and courage – and encouraged them to find ways to co-create the kind of conversations they said they wanted. I insisted, "You don't have to wait for me to come back – you can do this with each other starting tomorrow!" And yet, I wasn't convinced that would happen.

The day after our final session, I sent a survey to invite further comments and feedback about the project overall. The responses indicated staff thought the project had been useful, in that it had catalyzed some long-desired changes in the staff structure. For instance, one person said, "We have clear steps to implement the Programming Committee, which we did not have prior to this project. It is something we have been discussing at length for years, and this is a

huge step forward." Other comments revealed subtle shifts in staff perceptions and beliefs. These included, "It changed my understanding of what my job 'has to be', which I welcome!" As well, one person added, "I'm not sure I would say that I'm changing, but I got to witness myself in a helpful way." These results implied some invisible ripples had been created that could have a positive impact on team culture over time.

I next shared the raw data with my contracting clients, the GM and Board Chair, and we met for a closing conversation. Together, we took stock of what tangible and intangible shifts had occurred during the project (see Appendix D). Both the GM and Board Chair were pleased with the work we had done together, and they believed we had achieved the intended outcomes of the project. For instance, the GM stated, "We have accomplished more than I expected. In general, conceptual problems were turned into concrete issues that were effectively tackled," while the Board Chair said, "This project unquestionably moved us in the right direction." Our evaluation meeting ended on a positive note, and I felt buoyed by their genuine appreciation and positive outlook.

The feedback and evaluation process suggest some level of refreezing had happened, especially at the structural level of change. Staff had publicly committed to adopt the Programming Committee Terms of Reference, strengthened lines of accountability, and revised salaries and benefits. These had also been reviewed and ratified by the HR Committee and Board Chair, which provided an additional layer of awareness and accountability to help bridge the GM transition. A suite of additional related changes (to job descriptions, budgeting processes, and human resource policies) had been flagged for implementation in the fall. The staff had built some momentum, and they expressed excitement about the possibility of greater connection, coordination, and collaboration at the programming level. In the process, mindsets, culture, and

behaviour had also necessarily been (subtly) impacted. The tangible and interconnected nature of these changes, along with the level of engagement and support that existed at various levels of the organization, could create positive feedback loops and strengthen the refreezing process – making the structural changes more likely to last.

Reflection and Learning

Throughout the process of closing with my client, I was keenly aware of how little we knew about the ultimate impact of this project. As one participant noted, "This project will take on a different significance as time passes and we implement the structures we have set out here." In some ways, it's impossible, even now, to know what ripples will ultimately emerge within the system and its members.

That said, in less than two months, we accomplished more than I could have hoped for. I contracted for a structural intervention, where readiness existed, and successfully delivered on that. Staff co-created a suite of interconnected and mutually reinforcing structural changes, and are primed to move into new ways of working together. And yet, in many ways, we barely scratched the surface. In the last hour of our time together, a deeper layer of cultural and relational dynamics began to become visible. I began to see, and intervene more directly in, the group's patterns of interaction. Perhaps that is to be expected, for, as Block notes, "sometimes it is not until after some implementation occurs that a clear picture of the real problem emerges" (2011, p. 7). At first, this caused me to feel despondent and regretful about all the ways I could have intervened differently, achieved more, or built greater capacity in the team. And yet I knew, in some ways this is the nature of our work. When you are climbing "a mountain with no top" (James Conklin, personal communication, November 5, 2017), there is always another peak beckoning ahead. Perhaps projects such as these always feel, in some way, unfinished.

Revisiting My Story

With the project officially closed, I once again consider the connections and parallels between ArtLab and myself. In retrospect, a key insight emerges: we both had to address the acute symptoms of our situation in order to create the openness and capacity required to look at root causes.

When I first became sick, the acute symptoms impacted me in such significant ways that my full attention and energy had to be directed at resolving them. I had no ability to think further down the road, or to be more proactive. Though I knew I needed to significantly change some of my long-standing patterns, in the early stages it seemed a victory to simply get through the day. Similarly, when I think back to my first conversations with ArtLab staff, and their drawings of their "current state," I am conscious of the acute pain in the system. Strong feelings of inequity, unfairness, injustice, and exclusion that had plagued the team for a long time could no longer be ignored. These were symptomatic of underlying dynamics and root causes, and yet perhaps we had to deal with the acute symptoms in order to create readiness and willingness to begin to address deeper issues. In Lewin's language, we began an iterative process of change by leveraging the driving forces in the system, and temporarily removing enough restraining forces, to allow the group to move to a new level of quasi-equilibrium. In the process, we may have strengthened the confidence and capacity of the group to collectively acknowledge and work towards its next level of development.

These insights reframe my perception of the project completely. My aspirations on behalf of the client were so significant that for a time I felt disappointed and unsatisfied with what we actually did accomplish. And yet, in my own life, addressing the acute symptoms of my illness had been a critical first step in freeing up the energy and capacity for the deeper, more

transformational change that would require significant time and capacity. Doing so had literally been lifesaving. Reflecting on this, I suddenly recognize the tremendous value of the work we did to surface and resolve the acute pain related to structural inequity within ArtLab. Perhaps that was all we *could* do, because it was all that the system could handle at that time – and it was a prerequisite to the next layer of work. That would explain why cultural and relational dynamics began to show up more visibly in the final session – because by addressing the acute pain, we had made space to deal with more systemic, chronic issues. Walking away, I more deeply understand that transformative change takes an incredible amount of time and energy… and that incremental change can be very powerful.

Looking back, I see other links and connections between my life and the client system too. We both had ignored signals that something was wrong for some time, in order to focus on output and production – them for their programs, and me for work and graduate school. Neither of us had integrated true reflective or regenerative time for many years before getting "sick." Ultimately, the emergence of acute symptoms, pain that could no longer be ignored, forced us to stop, look at and address the problem. We both encountered a situation that made us stop and seriously re-evaluate how we functioned. We were both complex systems whose health was influenced by multiple, interconnected factors. Addressing the root causes of our symptoms would mean changing the way we operated on a very fundamental level. This was uncomfortable and difficult, which we resisted just as we welcomed it. And now we are both entering a phase where we can explore what true health and wellness looks like.

Discovering these parallels between my life and ArtLab allowed me to better understand and ultimately make peace with what happened in the course of this project. Yes, in theory there was lots more work we *could* have done together, but in reality, what happened was the only

thing that could have. Ultimately, the process and results of this project perfectly reflect the capacity and readiness of the client system – and the intervener!

Lessons Learned

As human systems interveners, "reflective practice is one of the means of enhancing the quality of our work and of promoting our learning and development" (McGill & Brockbank, 2004, p. 93-94). In re-reading this paper, I am struck by how I have once again learned in non-linear leaps and bounds. In some ways, the lessons I learned through this project seem like things I should have already known. And yet, they have created powerful insights, embodied knowledge, and valuable implications for my future work. I offer them here with humility and hope that other students and practitioners may see themselves reflected.

At the outset, my strongest intention was to practice nurturing my health and wellbeing while also engaging fully in this project. My long-standing aspiration to create an effective balance between caring for myself and caring for my clients took on new significance and urgency with my autoimmune diagnosis. Initially, this involved listening to my body and its needs, and resisting the temptation to work harder than the client. There were many times during this project when I was tempted to do something "for" the client, and simply didn't have the energy. To my amazement, just as Schein (1996) predicted, when I held back and resisted taking responsibility, when I went "with the flow, letting the client's feelings and my own reactions guide me to next steps" (p. 39), the client often led the way. And when they didn't, I knew that was because they weren't ready. Often, they had insight or knowledge about their situation that I simply didn't have access to. Ultimately, I learned that clear boundaries and limited availability could actually serve my health *and* support the health of the client system. Moreover, I learned that, as interveners, we are reflected in everything we engage in. Rather than being irrelevant or

superfluous, our personal lives and learning can help us to make sense of our professional fields. For as Octavia Butler so aptly stated, "All that you touch you change / All that you change, changes you" (1995, p. 1). As a result of overlaying my personal circumstances onto this project, I not only more deeply understand the client system but also have new insights into my own readiness and resistance for change.

Throughout this project, I struggled to maintain a "process consultation" stance and focus on improving the situation "*as defined by the client*" (Schein, 1999, p. 20, italics added). I often struggled to mitigate my own lofty aspirations and high expectations – in order to truly accept and meet the client where they were. Partially because the ethos and mission of ArtLab resonated so deeply with my own history, I often slipped into seeing the situation through my own eyes, lost sight of the client's reality, and made assumptions that turned out to be inaccurate. These ranged from small details like thinking "Of course staff will embrace creative activities – they're artists!" to assuming ArtLab's new values statements would guide their internal culture and behaviour. Though I hope I will not repeat these *particular* mistakes, I will inevitably bring myself, my life experiences, and yes, my biases and mental models, to all future interventions. For this reason, it will be essential to continue to question what initially seems "obvious," to continually surface and interrogate my own views. As Schein (1999) says

> to overcome expectations and assumptions I must make an effort to locate within myself what I really do not know and should be asking about. It is like scanning my own inner data base and gaining access to empty compartments. (p. 243)

And then I will "unclench, pay attention, and take [my] best next step. Discerning this next step requires both imagination and non-attachment to outcome" (Kahane, 2010, p. 136). With this in

mind, I take my best next step out of this graduate program and out into the world as a human systems intervener.

Conclusion

I am deeply grateful to have found and contracted with such a committed, complex, and challenging client system. In many ways, this was exactly the 698 project I hoped for. And it was certainly the one I needed. Personally and professionally, this experience invited me out of my comfort zone and into deep waters, where I often ended up over my head. Paradoxically, I also have the sense of having only just dipped my toe into a big wide ocean. As I conclude this paper, I have the sense that incredibly rich and powerful depths lie ahead in this field, and I have plenty of time to explore them. I will do so in good company, alongside wise academics, experienced practitioners, my talented cohort, and inspiring clients. And as my time as an HSI graduate student draws to an end, I feel a sense of satisfaction and gratitude for my choice to go for a long swim in this particular body of water.

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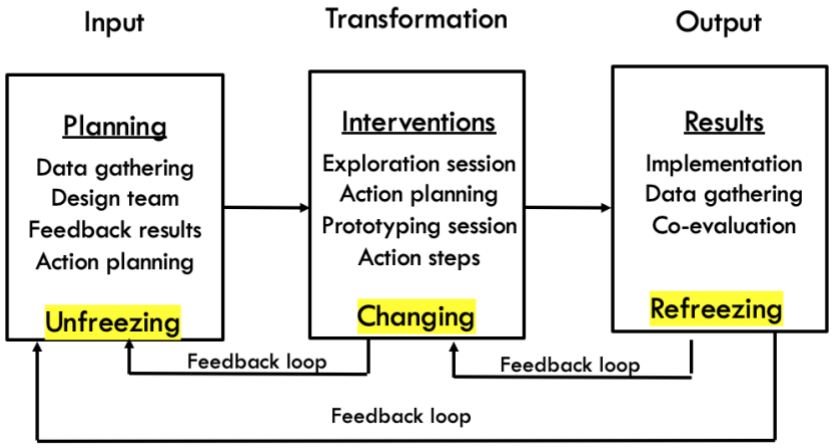
Appendix A

Action Research Model



Appendix B

One Page Consulting Brief

Project Focus and Objectives

This project will support the staff team at ArtLab to examine their current ways of working together in the context of organizational values, and to begin to move towards greater alignment between the two. The objective is to increase the team's shared understanding of their current staff structure – and empower them to begin to identify and co-create their desired future. By increasing the team's shared sense of clarity, agency, and capacity to co-create change together, this process will allow them to surface and experiment with implementing some concrete changes, while laying the groundwork for continued work this fall.

Role of the Consultant

My role in this project is that of *process* expert. As an HSI student consultant, I will take a deeply collaborative, participatory approach, wherein all individual perspectives are valued and considered essential. My role is to lead a process that will support those involved to learn more about the situation, identify current patterns, engage in open conversation and dialogue, decide how to do things differently, and identify new ways for the team to move forward together.

Guiding Principles

- I am committed to doing things *with* the client team, not *to* (or for) the client team. We share responsibility for the quality and success of this project.
- My approach is based on a belief that learning and change are interrelated; by learning about our organization, and ourselves we open up new possibilities, ideas, and solutions.
- This project is inherently flexible and emergent; we will adjust and shift our approach (re-contracting as necessary) as new information and insight becomes available.
- Team members cannot be required, pressured or coerced to participate in this project.

Activities and Timeline

<u>Phase 1: Information Gathering</u> (late April to early May)

- Launch the project; share the initial plan; invite participation in project activities
- Individuals share their experience & perspectives via virtual 1-1 conversations

<u>Phase 2: Analysis and Planning</u> (early to mid-May)

- Lynda co-designs and facilitates two half-day "feedback and exploration" sessions
- Build shared understanding, identify what to work on, prototype initial changes

<u>Phase 3: Implementation, evaluation & closure</u> (mid-May to end June)

- Testing & learning, including a second in-person session to continue learning
- At the end of phase 3, the consultant and team will co-evaluate the impact of this initiative by reflecting on the experience, sharing their learning & providing feedback.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Version One

Your Role

1. When did you first join ArtLab, and in what capacity?
2. Why have you chosen to participate in this project? What are you hoping it will make possible?

Organizational History

3. ArtLab has a rich and complex history since it was founded in the 1970's. What aspects of the history (if any) do you feel are important to carry forward and build on?
4. What aspects of the history (if any) do you feel no longer serve the organization?

Current Reality

5. How would you describe the *current* staff structure, in one sentence, to someone new to the organization?
6. What is *working well* about the way staff is currently organized?
7. Where do you see ArtLab's organizational values in action? Provide specific examples if possible.
8. What is *challenging* about the way staff is currently organized?
9. Where do you see tensions or contradictions with ArtLab's organizational values? Provide examples if possible.

Future Possibilities

10. If you could wave a magic wand, what changes would you make to the staff structure?
11. Are there new models or ways of organizing teams that you're curious about or think would be valuable to explore here at ArtLab?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Version Two

1. This project has been narrowed down to "bringing staff structure into alignment with organizational values." In your mind, what does "structure" refer to?
2. How do you see these values *reflected or modelled* in the way the staff team is currently organized or structured? (Probe: what do others do? What do you personally do?)

3. What *tensions or contradictions* do you see between these values and the way the staff team is currently organized/structured? (Probe: what do others do? What do you personally do?)
4. If you could wave a magic wand, what *changes would you make* to the way the staff team is currently organized/structured?
5. Are there any new models or ways of organizing teams that you're curious about or think would be valuable for the ArtLab team to explore?
6. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Version Three

1. How do you see these values *reflected or modelled* in the way the staff team is currently organized or structured? (Probe: what do others do? What do you personally do?)
2. What *tensions or contradictions* do you see between these values and the way the staff team is currently organized/structured? (Probe: what do others do? What do you personally do?)
3. If you could wave a magic wand, what *changes would you make* to the way the staff team is currently organized/structured?
4. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix D

Project Results

Tangible project results:

- Retired the distinction between management & non-management staff
- Addressed previously uneven benefits between permanent staff members
- Created cross-departmental Programming Committee to facilitate more collaboration
- Finalized ToR & selected first (rotating) Chair for new Programming Committee
- Agreed on new bi-weekly staff meeting
- Made changes to staff and General Manager job descriptions (impacted hiring process)
- Drafted an implementation plan led by staff, with support from HR Committee, Board Chair (& new GM)

Intangible project results:

- Experienced the value of spending time together to share openly, reflect, plan, test…
- Increased shared understanding of the challenges & impact associated with the current staff structure
- Challenged (and possibly shifted) some existing beliefs and mindsets
- Named and inquired into some larger cultural patterns
- Sense that “we can change things around here”