

Reflections

The SoL Journal
on Knowledge, Learning, and Change



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Putting Theory into Action: The Evolution and Practice of Structural Dynamics

PART 1

David Kantor
with Deborah Wallace

PART 2

Sarah Hill and Tony Melville

Learning to Learn: Knowledge As a System of Questions

Michael Ballé, Jacques Chaize,
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Putting Theory into Action: The Evolution and Practice of Structural Dynamics

David Kantor with Deborah Wallace;
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This article gives a unique glimpse into both the development and the application of a key body of work by one of today's most important organizational theorists and practitioners. In Part One, David Kantor explains the evolution of his theory of Structural Dynamics, a model of how communication works—or doesn't work—in human systems. He also details how what he calls "communicative competency" can lead to more effective conversations—a key to creating healthy family and organizational systems. In Part Two, Sarah Hill and Tony Melville describe the application of Structural Dynamics to a client situation. These two complementary perspectives provide a window into the profound possibilities offered by translating Kantor's theory into practice.

Learning to Learn: Knowledge As a System of Questions

Michael Ballé, Jacques Chaize, and Daniel Jones

What is it about the Toyota Production System (TPS) that has allowed Toyota to achieve high levels of performance over time, despite occasional setbacks? The authors have found that instead of being a system of *best practices*, the TPS is a system of *interconnected questions*. As such, in TPS, knowledge does not involve applying a cookie-cutter method to get a desired result but rather posing the right questions to ultimately improve the system as a whole. The authors examine Toyota's five-step cycle for problem finding, framing, and solving. They show that as employees develop their problem-finding capabilities and problem-solving skills, they individually and then collectively enhance the organization's judgment in the long run.

Is Your Town in Transition?

Jessica Stites

Over the past decade, more than 1,000 municipalities in 43 countries have chosen to define themselves as "Transition Towns." Frustrated by the slow pace of change in response to challenges such as peak oil, climate change, and economic instability, people in these places have undertaken grassroots initiatives to build the resilience of their communities to survive sudden shortfalls of necessities such as food, oil, water, or money. These preparations take many forms, some infrastructural—such as establishing solar energy programs—and others interpersonal—like creating groups that encourage people to help each other in times of need. At its core, the Transition Movement seeks to build the "social technologies" required to achieve long-term sustainability.

The Triple Focus: Rethinking Mainstream Education

Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge

In *The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education*, Peter Senge and Daniel Goleman examine the cognitive and emotional tools that young children need to navigate and thrive in today's environment. The authors identify three skill sets essential for navigating this world of increasing distractions and decreasing face-to-face communications: focusing on self, tuning in to other people, and understanding the larger world and how systems interact. This excerpt focuses on the third skill set and makes a strong case for capitalizing on the connections and synergies between Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and systems thinking. The notion of transforming and replacing the traditional pedagogy that anchors our current curriculum with systems-based learning has already taken hold with impressive results that have surprised even the authors.

EXECUTIVE DIGEST 14.1

Reflections on the 2014 SoL Global Forum

Gitte Larsen and Vicky Schubert

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accelerate the metamorphosis of our organizations, firms, and society?” In this two-part article, Gitte Larsen, a newcomer to the Global SoL community, and Vicky Schubert, a long-time SoL contributor, share highlights from—and personal reflections on—the event. Their insightful commentary paints a picture of a community of people who are making the internal shifts necessary to lead profound changes in all those external systems that connect us.

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Part I: My SoL Global Forum Moments

GITTE LARSEN



Gitte Larsen

I was looking forward to participating in the SoL Global Forum in Paris this spring, not least because I’ve been invited to take part in the upcoming Danish SoL community by Steen Buchreitz, who’s a new member of the Board of the Global Association of SoL Communities (GASC) (see “Global Association of SoL Communities”). I was curious about the event, the content and form, and the international participants, and I was eager to learn more about what it means to be a member of SoL. I’m a first-timer to the SoL Global Forum, so you might consider me an outsider, an intruder, or just a traveler sharing some of my personal highlights and reflections from this event.

The purpose of SoL, which is to “discover, integrate and implement theories and practices of organizational learning for systemic change and to progress towards the vision of a living system in order to co-create a more sustainable world” perfectly fits my areas of interest. Being a futurist for almost 20 years has given me a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to thinking about transformational change. My work within the fields of sustainability and leadership during the last years has only confirmed that we need our minds and our hearts, our doing and our being, and a systemic as well as a personal approach if we are to create a future worth living.

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Global Association of SoL Communities

The Global Association of SoL Communities (GASC) is formally registered in Vienna, Austria. It has 31 established and emerging SoL Community members active on six continents. The Global SoL Board meets monthly and is currently in the process of establishing minimal structures that support all the communities in collaborating for systemic change and social well-being.

New Humans, New Structures

In the opening session of the Global Forum, we heard different voices from the two panels on stage, the first representing what you might call “the elders” and after them the next generation of leaders. Besides setting the tone, these voices together touched upon many of the most important aspects of where we are today and where we need to go tomorrow. (Recordings of the sessions can be found on the [SoL Global Forum](#) website).

Alain de Vulpian, social anthropologist and co-founder of Cofremca, stated that one of the most important changes since WW2 is that people have become increasingly individualistic, independent, and open-minded, including in the emotional dimension of life. “This is the first time in the

“Internal structures of business and governmental institutions must be much more in harmony with our evolution as humans.”

—Arie de Geus

history of mankind where we nourish both the rational and the irrational, and this has a huge impact on our society,” he said, noting that we use our rationality to deal with the irrational. “We discover something new and move forward, and we constantly have the impression that we can go that extra mile. Little by little, we become smarter,

the scenarios look better, and we fine-tune our strategies on how to interact with other people to reach our goals. We find identity and meaning when we succeed in optimizing ourselves, and this fulfillment is one of the big things about our period compared to earlier stages of civilization.”

Another core aspect of transformative change that de Vulpian mentioned is communication technology, which allows people to establish links and relationships that will help them fulfill themselves and others. He concluded, “A new society is emerging, and there is a resistance among the former powers, for example, due to the traditional hierarchy, bureaucracy, and financial economy. These powers are out of sync with this new society—a society that is running better and better. Metamorphosis is underway.”

Arie de Geus, former vice president of Royal Dutch Shell, co-founder of SoL, and author of *The Living Company*, spoke next. “This forum’s program—the speakers, the title, and the focus on fundamental change—reminds me of the beginning of SoL. I was working for Shell, and when we began to look at our decision-making processes like a learning process, it opened a way to a whole new world for us. We found out that we had two kinds of learning processes. *Assimilation* was one where all the Shell leaders sat at a table and resolved the problems. They used knowledge that was already there. The other process is much more difficult, that is learning by *accommodation*. Something around you in the world is changing in a way that demands internal structures to change as well. When we started these processes, the answer wasn’t known. We had to learn to apply [them]. That brought us to the idea that organizations learn and to MIT, where we met Peter [Senge],” he said.

“A lot has changed [since then] in business and governmental institutions. Basically, people have changed, as Alain said... We moved away from command and control, and the decision-making process should thereby have become much more visible, but in many companies this is not the case. We still see command-and-control companies

today. The decision-making process in the company still has an old structure, which is further-more based in the law of most of our countries. [Corporate] law advocates for one particular party, namely the capital supplier, the shareholders who have the absolute power. This is built into the power structure of the company and the decision-making process. We have built this up since WW2, but the economic game has changed considerably. . . . We need to find ways to practice new internal structures of business and governmental institutions. They must be much more in harmony with the values that have emerged, that is, with our evolution as humans," concluded de Geus.

Peter Senge, senior lecturer at MIT, co-founder of SoL, author of *The Fifth Discipline*, and co-author of *The Necessary Revolution* and *Presence*, spoke next. "I would like to ask what it means to be a coordinated global society. Alain talked about the 'western-centrism' of our thinking. We have a classic western dualism: Rationality versus emotions, and the versus part is really the heart of our western culture. The deepest level of change is cultural, not biological."

Peter mentioned the three divides we need to bridge that Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer defined in their book *Leading from the Emerging Future*: The ecological divide (between self and nature), the social divide (between self and other), and the spiritual divide (between self and self). "The separation of human and nature has been unfolding for many thousands of years, and the agricultural revolution was where it happened rather than the industrial age. We lost our connection with the living world. It has been a long journey of separation, and it will take us generations to re-establish, but it's important to understand this journey ahead," said Senge.

Next-Generation Leaders

Three next-generation leaders on a panel then talked about doing more with less, community power, happiness, values, and attitudes. Some of their comments were:

"We should treat life as an experiment. It's too late to be pessimistic!"

—Next-generation panel participant

"We will be the first ones to do more with much less. Inequality is spreading, and we have no illusion of progress as we have known it so far. We have to reinvent it. But young people are optimistic about the future. We should not be afraid, but really enjoy and appreciate learning by doing. Failure is a key to success."

"We should treat life as an experiment. It's too late to be pessimistic! Technology, computers, social networks haven't scaled the wealth, but we grew up with [them], and we have to find the right balance between technology and humanity"

"Ideas have no value until they are tested and implemented. We believe in the circular, where we work, implement, and learn, and then start over



again. We believe in being open to the outcome and not attached to a specific result.”

And finally, “What brings all these things together? Happiness is something that everyone strives for—let’s take it seriously! Today the educational system only prepares us for financial success.”

A Sneak Peak into Other Plenum Sessions

Here are highlights from three other talks that profoundly affected me:

Marie-Eve Marchand is a professional coach and founder of two programs at the University of Laval. She helps leaders to lead in creativity, from the heart as well as the mind, and she led the plenum meditations during the Global Forum. Title of presentation: “Self Transformation: A Prerequisite for Transforming the World.”

In her talk, Marchand said, “What does it mean to transform consciousness? There is no certainty, but it includes a need to be mindful in a world where we do not know the answers and where there’s no right solution. We need to be open-minded and use the intelligence of the heart or the brain cells at the heart level. I remember back in 2000, I was leading a group meditation and someone looked through the windows in the doors and said, ‘They all sit there looking totally spaced out!’ There wasn’t a lot of research about the effect of meditation back then. Today, articles are published daily, and we are a lot more familiar with the vocabulary.”

Marchand also touched upon the development of consciousness as a dynamic process, change within the same order of consciousness versus transformation of the order itself, orders of consciousness in adulthood, and intentional transformation. “Can we transform intentionally when we are not in crisis?” she asked. Her answer was, “Yes, if we want to.”





Marchand explained that in the higher orders of consciousness comes a simplicity, and that certain qualities are then inherent to the order itself, e.g., openness of heart linked to evolution. She also stated the convergence of many theories happening at this moment, including Spiral Dynamics and Kegan’s fifth order, which is labeled “we-consciousness.” The practices for intentional self-transformation toward this fifth order are meditation; yoga; a community of persons sharing; inspiring books, films, or presentations; spending time with wise persons; volunteer work; time in nature; and time.

The inner dispositions that support transformation are a firm intention, deep listening, humility,











4 Principles and 10 Commandments

The members of the next-generation leaders panel presented a shared vision for metamorphosis with four key principles and 10 commandments:

The Four Principles of Youth Empowerment

-  **No sense is nonsense.**
-  **Less is more.**
-  **We are all worth being listened to.**
-  **Fear is nothing to stop you.**

The Ten Commandments for Metamorphosis

-  **Every day is a new day**
-  **Sustainability**
-  **Multiculturality**
-  **Education**
-  **Technology**
-  **Lean process**
-  **Engagement**
-  **Commitment to values**
-  **Community and networks**
-  **Hip & cool !**

self compassion, self observation, and the courage to face our own resistance.

After her talk, Marchand invited us to share with a person next to us our response to the question: “What is transforming in me at this time of my life, and which challenges do I face?”

Adam Kahane is a partner with Reos Partners in Canada, and he advocates storytelling to initiate social change. Title of presentation: “Power and Love to Manage Complexity.”

Kahane began, “I help people move forward on the most important issues—health, food, development—on all continents and with multiple actors (activists, academic, etc.). This is trial and error, and the social transformation of Power and Love is the essence of what I have learned from the last 20 years of work. We sometimes get stuck when trying to move things, and as Peter Senge and Otto Scharmer talk about, this is the nature of complex systems: These are systems we cannot change alone, but where we have to work with strangers and opponents. I have asked myself, How we can deal with this situation? When I observe myself and the people I work with, there are two basic ways or cycles of social transformation, and that is Power and Love. Both of them have two flip sides, a generative and a degenerative action.”

After Kahane had explained the two sides of Power and Love, he stated that there is symmetry between Power and Love. “Remember Martin Luther King. Power without Love is recklessness and abusive, and Love without Power is sentimental. And this is the central crisis of our time, and it’s about our capacity to act. Power and Love are primarily associated in their generative aspect, and they are only generative when they are combined—that is the guiding formula,” he said.

The success lies in moving between Power and Love before going into the generative action of either one or the other. Adam said, “It’s like walking on two feet, and we need both the left and the right. Both Power and Love are required. They are

not the same, but at an abstract level they are two faces of the same thing, and we need to learn to work with both of these social transformation drivers. We should not try to weaken the one that is stronger, and we should not try to achieve a static balance, as there is only the dynamic relation—like walking. Only in this way, by learning to work with both these drives or aspects, can we achieve mastery in dealing with a complex challenge—and thereby get un-struck,” he said.

“Can we transform intentionally when we are not in crisis?”

—Marie-Eve Marchand

Lord David Owen, member of the House of Lords in the UK and former secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, studies the “hubris syndrome” and its impact on decision-making. The title of his presentation: “The hubris syndrome, an obstacle to the transformation of organizations.”

Lord Owen, who has a medical education as background, talked about mental illness among US presidents and went through the symptoms of the hubris syndrome. He raised the important question of the health of any leader in politics and business. “How can the boards of companies check this?” he asked. In many cases, illness, including mental illness, is kept confidential between a personal doctor and the patient, partly due to the fear of the press. Lord Owen stated that when it concerns crucial decision makers like presidents, we should have independent doctors to make public statements.

The hubris syndrome shows that someone’s mental stability changes when he or she is in power. “Power is a heavy drug,” Lord Owen said and referred to a classic General Motors study that showed how powerful people distance themselves from reality and how the decision makers no longer live in the same world as the organization they lead.

The Symptoms of the Hubris Syndrome

Proposed criteria for hubris syndrome and their correspondence to features of cluster B personality disorders in DSM-IV.

1. A narcissistic propensity to see their world primarily as an arena in which to exercise power and seek glory (NPD.6)
2. A predisposition to take actions which seem likely to cast the individual in a good light—i.e., in order to enhance image (NPD.1)
3. A disproportionate concern with image and presentation (NPD.3)
4. A messianic manner of talking about current activities and a tendency to exaltation (NPD.2)
5. An identification with the nation or organization to the extent that the individual regards his/her outlook and interests as identical (Unique)
6. A tendency to speak in the third person or use the royal “we” (Unique)
7. Excessive confidence in the individual’s own judgment and contempt for the advice or criticism of others (NPD.9)
8. Exaggerated self-belief, bordering on a sense of omnipotence, in what they personally can achieve (NPD.1 and 2 combined)
9. A belief that rather than being accountable to the mundane court of colleagues or public opinion, the court to which they answer is: History or God (NPD.3)
10. An unshakable belief that in that court they will be vindicated (Unique)
11. Loss of contact with reality; often associated with progressive isolation (APD 3 and 5)
12. Restlessness, recklessness, and impulsiveness (Unique)
13. A tendency to allow their “broad vision,” about the moral rectitude of a proposed course, to obviate the need to consider practicality, cost, or outcomes (Unique)
14. Hubristic incompetence, where things go wrong because too much self-confidence has led the leader not to worry about the nuts and bolts of policy (HPD.5)

APD = Anti-Social Personality Disorder
 HPD = Histrionic Personality Disorder
 NPD = Narcissistic Personality Disorder

© Lord David Owen

Silence, Space, and Leadership

Wrapping up the three days happened over a couple of hours, including a last meeting up in basecamps (small groups of 3–5 people that met a couple of times each day), a silent walk around the graphic facilitation posters, more questions, some reflections from the participants, plus closing words from Peter Senge (see “Take Aways”). The closing session also including well-deserved applause for all the organizers and helpers.

“Silence is an untapped potential. Even though we all have a lot to say, let us sit in silence for some minutes,” said Senge. After the silence, he continued, “I realized that I enjoyed the pauses and the meditations the most, and that this is a new awareness in my life, which is so filled with doing at the expense of being. The space for change is not created through our actions.”

Closing the Global Forum, Peter also said, “There is an ambiguity about being present. When we share our story, have conversations, turn together, something happens. It starts by two dancers that are having a conversation, and then 10 are. At some point, something shifted. Yesterday, in the middle of the day, when we sat in the circle, what was that? You talk and you talk and talk until the talk starts. This could be at any time in your life. It arises naturally and is spontaneous among us. Notice when the talk starts.”

Less Is More: A Personal Reflection

At the Global Forum I once again confirmed that Mother Earth needs our care and collaboration now if we—the people, the human race—are to have a home in the future. It’s the only place for us to live and thrive, but we seem to be somehow out of tune with the universal tone, internally as well as externally.

It’s not only people or our internal world that has changed a lot during the last century and decades. In particular, population growth and exponential economic growth has had an enormous impact on societal development. To illustrate the scale of this change, almost 80% of total global

economic output over the last 2,000 years has been produced since 1900, and a quarter of this output has taken place since the year 2000 (source: Angus Maddison; UN; *The Economist*). World population has risen from 1.822 billion in 1910 to more than 7 billion now, and the estimates are for 10 billion people in 2100. Given these projections, some scientists think that there is only a 50% chance that the human species will survive the 21st century.

For many of us, it is hard to believe in this “fastest, best, cheapest” society. Every morning, we “put on” the rationality of a growth-oriented capitalism invented in and for the past. It is so well established that we don’t even think about it; we just accept that this is the way the world is and works. It’s not only how we act; it is who we are. And yet, as Alain de Vulpian spoke about, new economies and more enlightened human beings are emerging all over the world. But emancipation isn’t enough. We also need to take the step to the next level of consciousness, as Marie-Eve Marchand spoke about. Too few leaders know what they want to do with their leadership besides improve Key Performance Indicators. Many more leaders need to personally make a new choice to serve not only the past and present, but also the future, the next generations, the whole.

I’ve always been inspired by Buckminster Fuller, a visionary madman and a futurist, who was born in the last century (1895–1983). He went to Harvard and was expelled twice, first for spending all his money partying, and then for his irresponsibility and lack of interest. By his own appraisal, he was a non-conforming misfit, and he lived a poor and unhappy life. But in 1927, at the age of 32, he decided to do his “own thinking.” What gave him the courage was that he believed he’d been right about the unsustainable state of society even when society didn’t know it yet. By coining the term “Spaceship Earth,” he invented a new perspective, long before we all saw the Blue Planet from the moon. He was able to go beyond the thinking of his time and declared that we are called to be architects of our own future, not

Take Aways

Peter Senge led the forum’s closing session by hearing from different people, and he said: “The goal is to start to get a feeling of moving collectively. So, what do you take away from this forum?” Here is a selection of the one-liners from the floor:

- Knowing that I’m not alone.
- Position of gratitude.
- I think I only want to share my breath [*sound of breath*].
- Cannot stop thinking about people who are not here and the fact than I’m here.
- Came with big problems and go back with solutions. Thank you, it was nice and loving.
- Feel the power of this community, and it takes time and energy to create a better world, so we need to know we’re together.
- Talking about the things that could go wrong, I found a lot of goodness here.
- The metaphor about the caterpillar becoming a butterfly showed up at any stage of the journey.
- There are 30-40 people that I would like to meet again and work together with.
- I lost my iPhone, but this is me here in touch, in my own space, and I’ll enjoy the silence for a while.
- We are building a common structure for humanity.
- Deep emotions currently, three days of connection.
- Many names come to mind, embodying presence and warmth.
- Missed talking about the shadow side and the critical feedback.
- I was challenged by a friend to start from the inside, and during these days I experienced what that is.
- I trust life now.
- Very grateful to be part of something bigger, and I leave feeling more powerful, daring to care, taking this energy back into my everyday life.
- Met my light and my shadow, both part of the life.



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We can and we do create the future every day—and the future must always be with us in the present.

its victims. “Bucky,” as he was called, believed in humanity’s ability to create a future worth living.

More and more people are seeking and longing for a more coherent and sustainable lifestyle, personally and professionally. A growing percentage of the world’s population also experiences a more or less desperate need for resilience in the short run due to lack of income, water, food, medicine, and energy, or due to natural disasters. Our common challenges are many—and there are no experts. More and more people are realizing that the necessary and fundamental change, the metamorphosis, cannot be done by individuals but only in co-creative circles, networks, and

communities. We need a whole new perspective, not only on decision making and institutional organizing, but on what it means to be human.

Samsoe, the renewable energy island in Denmark, is a great example of a community-based transformation to renewable energy, including wind power, solar plants, bio-fuel, and energy reductions. The lesson learned, both from Samsoe and similar projects all over the world, is that what makes the difference is local ownership (e.g., 90% of the windmills are owned by the local islanders), the involvement of local citizens in the decision-making processes (including addressing the “what’s in it for me” question), and the joining together around a common goal, or “community” (community+common=community). Samsoe’s present vision is to become independent from fossil fuels by 2030. Citizens around the world have to make new paths to reach these kinds of goals.

The challenges ahead are massive. And the changes in the external environment demand changes in our internal environment as well. We cannot change the outside world without also changing our inside world, our worldview, our mindset. We have learned that becoming materially richer (after a certain level) does not make us happier. What we are about to learn is how we can do more with less. How can we become humans of the future? Are we resilient enough to survive, and if we are, what is the future we want?

We can and we do create the future every day—and the future must always be with us in the present. A sustainable society will not grow out of the past, but out of doing more with less—out of space, silence, curiosity, compassion, trust, and courage. Let’s go! ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gitte Larsen, MA Pol. Sc., is a futurist and the editor and director of *Editions* and House of Futures. She is author of numerous articles about the future, co-author of four books, and a board member of Centre for Sustainability and Resilience in Denmark. gitte@houseoffutures.dk

Part 2: Inside the Cocoon—Witnessing the Metamorphosis of a Global Learning Community

VICKY SCHUBERT



Vicky Schubert

While Gitte Larsen may be new to SoL, she expresses in her reflection two beliefs that give her instant membership in this global learning community. The first is that “we can and do create the future every day,” and the second is that the transformation called for in this evolutionary moment can only be realized in “co-creative circles, networks, and communities.”

It was with equal conviction in those two ideas that I attended the Global Forum in Paris not as a newcomer like Gitte, but as a returner, eager to contribute and to see what Global SoL had become in the decade since I had helped organize the first two Global Forums in Helsinki and Vienna. What I found was a community actively welcoming metamorphosis, as suggested in the theme of the meeting—focusing not so much on what we have become as on what we are becoming—and pulsing with life as seen in the many action research initiatives its members are pursuing.

In the Nutritive Soup

Like the organizations and institutions whose learning practices SoL seeks to transform, the Global Association of SoL Communities (GASC) is, of course, subject to the same prevailing conditions of uncertainty and discontinuity described by Alain de Vulpian, Arie de Gues, and Peter Senge in the Forum’s opening session.

The transformation called for in this evolutionary moment can only be realized in co-creative circles, networks, and communities.



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It is interesting to note that when Senge published *The Fifth Discipline* in 1990, the World Wide Web was just in its infancy, having been proposed in a memo by Tim Berners Lee the previous year. As SoL has grown up alongside it, the Web has catalyzed a new era of individual empowerment and networked connectivity that has irrevocably

The SoL community's commitment to self-organization and chaordic principles now seems strikingly ahead of its time and perfectly suited to the present moment.

eliminated the notion of “business as usual” for every kind of organization. The resulting environment is ripe for the kind of innovation and experimentation that SoL has represented from the start. The community’s commitment to self-organization and chaordic principles now seems strikingly ahead of its time and perfectly suited to the present moment.

But that’s not to say those principles don’t pose challenges for those who have taken the lead in crafting minimum sustainable structures for the organization. In iterative conversations and agreements that began as early as 1997, aspirational community stewards have nurtured SoL’s sometimes tumultuous progression from an academic center at MIT, to a nonprofit organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to an international network of networks with a shared vision of organizational and planetary well-being. Members of the current General Assembly report that their meeting just prior to the Global Forum was particularly productive and, at the same time, raised continuing questions. When enthusiastic change agents in Mainland China are legally precluded from incorporating as an official member of GASC, community leaders must reach beyond familiar frames of reference and stay oriented to inquiry: “How do we adapt to this different way of thinking about organization?” “How do we accommodate the legitimate co-existence of formal and informal alliances?” And so, the soup continues to bubble.

By its nature, GASC is an experiment, a concoction of becoming whose members have already done enormous good and that—now with 31 established and emerging communities active on six continents—holds the promise of exponential impact.

Some Bright Imaginal Cells

What do we know about the butterfly wings that have been taking shape in the midst of this nutritive soup? The Forum in Paris offered lots of evidence that, at the cellular level, GASC is gaining strength in ways that will lead to sustained flight.



FIGURE 1 **The Butterfly Framework**

Vibrant Communities: SoL France As Role Model

SoL France, our host community for this Global Forum, is one of the most enduring and generative communities in the global SoL network. Successfully blending practice and research, they have demonstrated a commitment to documented action learning that serves as a model for other existing and emerging SoL communities (see, for example, the 2011 special edition of *Reflections* in which they captured the lessons from their first 10 years).

Many of SoL France's strengths were embedded in the Forum design. In plenary sessions, we heard stories reflective of an integrated local/global perspective, from La Poste's reimagining of the role of the mail carrier to the World Bank's efforts to scale up innovative sanitation practices. With plenty of

time devoted to "basecamp" meet-ups and learning story sessions, peer sharing and reflection was given an equal footing with expert presentations as a context for learning. Whole-person awareness was honored throughout the event, with lots of opportunities for multiple-learning modalities, mindfulness, and movement. And the final day, devoted to cross-fertilization among participant-led projects, reinforced the place of applied research at the center of SoL's identity.

An Instinct for Knowledge Sharing

Another encouraging sign of GASC's cellular health was the generosity and curiosity of individual Forum participants. I had the privilege of offering a workshop on the Butterfly Framework of Complex Human Systems—a visual tool that serves as a kind of Global Positioning System for helping people see and navigate their systemic environ-

ments (see “The Butterfly Framework”). The Butterfly Framework is itself a product of the SoL learning community. It was developed by a small group of SoL consultants, several of them now my partners, who through exploratory conversation in 2009 discovered that they had each, in varying ways, integrated the notion of a systems perspective into their coaching practice. Compelled to advance the field by sharing their learning back to the global community, they designed a course called Coaching from a Systems Perspective, which has since been offered in several cities around the world; the workshop at the Forum was designed with the same co-creative intention.

That appetite for connection and sharing points to the community’s growing confidence in itself as a living, complex adaptive system, open to learning from its edges.

What was most gratifying about the workshop was the way the Butterfly Framework stimulated participants to share the system navigation tools and methods they have found most effective in their work. I came away with a wall-full of possibilities for collaborative inquiry and action.

Attunement to the Edge

That appetite for connection and sharing points to another vital sign that, in Paris, seemed more robust than ever: The community’s growing confidence in itself as a living, complex adaptive system, open to learning from its edges, where it overlaps and intersects with other systems.

For example, two of the people I was most impressed with at the Forum were young researchers

who, in their separate ways, bring an interdisciplinary perspective to organizational learning. Andreas Hieronymi of St. Gallen University in Switzerland was recently recognized for his contribution to transdisciplinary research by td-net, an initiative of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, for his paper “Understanding Systems Science: A Visual and Integrative Approach.” Camille Morvan, a French post-doctoral researcher and co-founder of the award-winning cognitive science start-up Goshaba, is in the early stages of a project looking at the relationship between our hard-wired survival instincts and our capacity for collective intelligence. In general, while there is still room for improvement in intergenerational engagement, younger participants contributed significantly to the quality of the Forum, not just as learners but equally as teachers and as active representatives of complementary learning networks.

Another edge dynamic was visible in the excitement surrounding an “East Meets West” subtheme, with representatives from several Asian countries active in the Forum community, and two of them—China and India—vying to host the next Global Forum in 2016. One of the leaders of SoL’s emergence in China, Will Zhang, is partnering with SoL France on a project dubbed “New Silk Road” that aims to revive a dialogue between two ancient cultures. GASC’s vision of additional SoL communities in the East and in the global South is motivated not just by a desire to grow the community in numbers, but also to expand understanding about how organizational learning can be adapted to new and different cultural contexts.

In short, I would say that I saw in the cocoon of the Global Forum encouraging patterns of balance, resilience, flexibility, and aspiration. That makes for a beautiful butterfly in progress. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vicky Schubert is a partner in Systems Perspectives, LLC, and a member of the SoL Global Coaching Community. victoria.f.schubert@gmail.com

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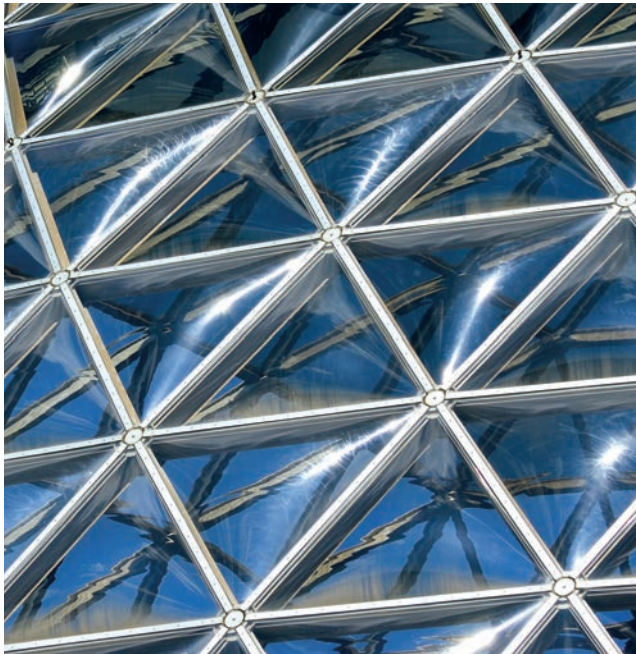
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Reflections: The SoL Journal
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+1.617.300.9530 (phone)
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