

12th Annual LILA Summit: Perspectives & Provocations Sessions

Morning Offerings

These sessions will run concurrently. The faculty will share some of the ideas they have been working on and then engage participants in a conversation to explore their thinking and research.

Dr. Michelle Barton, Boston University: Group resilience-in-action: Engaging with emergent contexts



My research explores what it means for teams to be resilient during uncertain and adverse situations. Much of our understanding of resilience comes from studies of crisis response. Yet, for many organizations, resilience is a requirement for even day-to-day work. Heightened work demands, complex technologies and complicated global systems mean that strain, stress and organizational disruptions are often ongoing rather than episodic. I am interested, therefore, in resilience as a process – something we do, rather than something we have. In this study, we focus in particular on group resilience and how members work together to engage with emergent and adverse conditions. We explore the interpersonal dynamics of resilience in the context of expedition racing. Expedition racing is multi-disciplinary team sport (e.g., mountain biking, trekking, kayaking) involving navigation over an unmarked wilderness course, often over several days. This is a context in which adversity is omnipresent: errors, technological breakdowns, and untoward environmental conditions are both frequent and unpredictable. Our data suggest that teams enact resilience through interpersonal processes to shape, coordinate and update their engagement with the emergent context. Some questions to explore:

- Where in your organization do you see teams struggling with adversity? (i.e., aside from crises, when do we need resilience?)
- In what ways do you see teams falling apart or coming together when faced with adversity? What does it look like when this happens?
- What are the challenges to drift management in your organization? What prevents groups from managing and coordinating engagement?
- How have you seen leaders shape a group's response to adversity? How might leaders facilitate collective coping processes?

Dr. Sandy Pentland, MIT. Emergence of Collective Intelligence



Despite its importance, human collective intelligence remains enigmatic. We know what features are predictive of collective intelligence in human groups, but we do not understand the specific mechanisms that lead to the emergence of this distributed information processing ability. In contrast, there is a well-developed literature of experiments that have exposed the mechanisms of collective intelligence in nonhuman animal species. We adapt a recent experiment designed to study collective sensing in groups of fish in order to better understand the mechanisms that may underlie the emergence of collective intelligence in human groups. We find that humans in our experiments act at a high level like fish but with two additional behaviors: independent exploration and targeted copying. These distinctively human activities may partially explain the emergence of collective sensing in our task environment at group sizes and on times scales orders of magnitudes smaller than were observed in fish.

Nora Bateson (Bateson Institute): Identity

As individuals and within larger communities our notions of identity inform us as to who we are in relation to the systems we live



within. But this era is a time of upheaval, the ecosystems and social systems around the globe are in rapid transition. While change is a constant in living systems, the rate of change now is unprecedented. Who are we in this changing world? As families, as professionals, as cultures, how is our perception of ourselves changing..... and what if it doesn't?

Identity often seems to depend on belonging to a particular gender, nationality, political party, religion etc. with its attendant problems at the edges where one belonging rubs up against another. Identity is a personal matter, but it also matters in terms of society, ecosystems, and the future. Double binds of identity, and other traps of obsolete fragmentation in our thinking can be seen with greater insight through the lens of complexity and systems. As our ability to perceive the complexity of our own identity is increased, so is our ability to perceive the complexity of our world. With this perception we have much more information from which to make the important decisions, as well as much more sensitivity. Some questions to explore:

- How might we begin to describe the complexity of identity? What is the opposite of that complexity? Are we reducing ourselves and others to limited notions of self?
- By focusing on the complexity of identity, how is our understanding of other people changed?
- What possibilities for change are brought to light when we can describe the transcontextual processes that form identity?
- Who are we? And, who are we now, in this era of emergent transformation?

Afternoon Offerings

Dr. Monika Aring and Sherry Lassiter (MIT): Preparing for the future of work

Half the world's population is under 30 years of age. 89.7% live in developing countries, where many of their education and training



systems are preparing them - if at all - for yesterday's jobs. One of the underlying problems is that systems to educate and train our future workforce is broken into parts (silos of separate subjects) and there is no way to connect these separate parts back into a whole - emergence- that empowers graduates to be effective. These issues are especially meaningful at the present time, when the combination of AI, computing power and internet connectivity is transforming how we live and work. Some questions to explore:

- What is it about project-based learning that allows learners to have the experience of "the whole?"
- Given that education and training systems are likely to be very slow to change, do you see any ways to help the world's youth in developing countries leapfrog their skill development so that they can participate productively?
- What might be the value of learning in Maker spaces such as Fab Labs (1200 Maker spaces sharing a common protocol and linked to each other and MIT's Center for Bits and Atoms) where young people can make just about anything they can think of?

Bill Snyder (Civic Stewardship Initiative) Cultivating a civic learning system to achieve breakthrough outcomes



How might we organize for “participatory, empathic action learning” to achieve racial equity breakthroughs in urban communities? Since the 1970’s, we have made little progress in the U.S. towards racial equity in areas such as health, housing, education, income, and safety. Research shows that these inequities are concentrated in urban communities of color, particularly ones with low levels of “collective efficacy” and organization partnerships.

We believe it is possible to generate breakthrough solutions to persistent inequities by applying a community-based “learning systems” approach. The model draws on extensive work with communities of practice in organization and civic contexts over the last 25 years, and on 5 years of action research in under resourced Boston neighborhoods. Balancing intentional design and adaptive emergence is critical to the approach: It involves making formal commitments to subjective outcomes; aligning institutional policies and programs with culturally-embedded practices; drawing on both disciplinary expertise and “lived experience”; and organizing an inclusive community of practice to steward an evolving action-learning system.

Some questions to explore:

1. How might a robust civic learning system—compared to a conventional governance model—generate breakthrough solutions to racial inequities that have persisted for generations?
2. How might we design intentionally for adaptive, emergent solutions in low-trust, “structureless” civic contexts, where organization and community participants have radically different experiences and perspectives?
3. What insights from civic learning systems are especially useful for organizations addressing emergent challenges that are both socially and technically complex?

Janet Pogue (Gensler Associates): “How to Scale Innovation?”



Over the past 50+ years, Gensler has been transitioning from an interiors design provider to a fully-integrated research and design firm. We recently created The Gensler Research Institute within our firm as an incubator for new/emergent ideas and an opportunity for professionals to explore topics of interest and become topical experts. This is working well in terms of a bottom-up structure focused on emergent ideas. The Institute has grown from a thought leadership and professional development platform into a platform for the creation of new ideas, services, and processes to drive the growth and expansion of our business. But, how can organizations develop processes and platforms that create paths for emergent ideas to scale, take root, and re-enter the core business and culture of their organizations? In other words, how can do you scale innovation to change a business? We’ll share what Gensler is doing, gather your ideas on what’s missing, and jointly craft lessons learned.