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## LILA Theme 2018-2019: Collective Mindfulness: Shaping the Human Systems in Organizations.

In dynamic environments, how might we create the conditions that improve the quality of interactions in order to nurture collective sensemaking and collective action? What are the states of dynamic organizations as they evolve and change? Exploring collective mindfulness—defined “as the collective capability to discern discriminatory detail about emerging issues and to act swiftly in response to these details (Weick, Vogus & Sutcliffe) might provide some answers. This year, LILA turns its attention to understanding how to nourish the organization and the systems whose future we hope to shape. Systems which are first and foremost human ones. With this perspective, we take into account that a key to organizational change involves not only rethinking the shape of the organizational chart, or reimaging the spaces where we work, but also in tending to what makes us human: the personal, the aesthetic, the narrative, the emotional, and most crucially, the relational.

Conceptualizing organizations as social systems invites us to envision the human networks that exist within that system. When the interactions within the social systems are working well, the organization moves as a collective. However, when they are out of sync - blocked from interacting with each other, it can seem as though a dynamic organism has come to a dead halt.

Drawing on the fields of cognitive psychology, neurocognitive science, collective mind theory and organizational science we will explore questions such as what are the mechanisms that support collective mindfulness? How might we shape the social systems to create thriving ecologies? How might the macro and micro narratives come into conversation to further strategic paths? How can collective mindful organizing amplify the desired states? We will engage the theme through these three topics.

### The Relational: Understanding Collective Mindfulness (October 16 – 17, 2018)

We interact with the world every day on multiple levels. So why is it that some of the interactions are more fruitful than others? How is it that we come together with a common understanding and move together collectively? The answer may partially lie in the concept of collective mindfulness. Organizations that practice collective mindfulness constantly scan their environment (both internally and externally) and intentionally surface assumptions, while at the same time develop the capacity for action. It is through the relational interconnectedness at multiple levels that collective mindfulness emerges. Research has shown that mindfulness at the individual level has a positive impact on wellbeing both psychologically and physically. At the organizational level, collective mindfulness leads to increased engagement, productivity and innovation in “human systems. Interestingly these effects were found not only in stable environments but also in complex and dynamic environments. So how might we nourish this collective mindfulness? This session will look at questions such as what are the characteristics of collective mindfulness, how does collective mindfulness emerge, can one measure collective mindfulness, how does collective mindfulness shape the social practices, what type of collective mindfulness leads to collective action and what are the dangers of collective mindfulness?

### The Personal: Understanding Identity and Micro-Narratives (February 5-6, 2019)

If we are to engage with collective mindfulness, an important area of inquiry might be to get a better understanding of how individual identity plays into both driving collective mindfulness and is influenced by the context in which the individuals find themselves. Individuals and groups engage in sensemaking and sensegiving activities as a way of reinforcing, reinventing or renegotiating identities. Narratives are a mechanism through which this identity shaping process is revealed and hold clues about what is going on

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within the organization as individuals construct, interpret, and act within their own narratives. They also reveal what is happening outside of the organization – in the marketplace that might impact the life of the organization. While stories have a beginning, middle and end, narratives are unfolding and implicate an evolving identity both at the individual and organizational level.

In this session, we will investigate the interplay between identity and narratives as a way to better understand how to engage in adaptive sensemaking that leads to collective mindfulness. We will look at questions such as how narratives are constructed? How do they influence the system and are influenced by the system? What are the identity related tensions that surface in narratives and how can one shape them? How might we foster collective curiosity that engages individuals to question assumptions, learn and act mindfully?

### The Emotional: Understanding the sources of organizational vitality (April 10-11, 2019)

Our exploration of organizations as human systems would not be complete if we didn't consider the emotional life of organizations. We wonder, what are the leverage points that contribute to a state of organizational vitality? Vitality might be loosely defined as an environment where creativity and innovation thrive (Stacey,1996). Conditions that affect vitality include such elements as how information flows and who has access to it, the quality of the relationships that exist in the organization, how much diversity exists and is encouraged and how ready the organization is to challenge the status quo. These elements contribute to organizational performance by influencing the emotional life and avoiding the typical fragmentation that can happen when there is a lack of collective mindfulness. An organizations vitality can signal its ability to respond to necessary changes so that it thrives rather than stagnates.

In this session we will explore such questions as how do you identify these leverage points which can move an organization into a virtuous cycle of vitality? What are the leadership behaviors and organizational practices that lead to organizational vitality? How does the emotional life of an organization contribute to collective mindfulness? What does a mindful learning organization look like?

### 13<sup>th</sup> Annual LILA Summit: Collective Mindfulness: Shaping the human systems in organizations (June 2018)

As we bring our exploration of the theme to a close we will revisit some of the framing questions that we outlined at the start of the year and pause to reflect on what we have learned so far. We will invite past and present LILA members and faculty to round out the conversation.