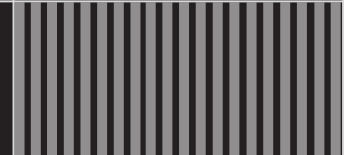
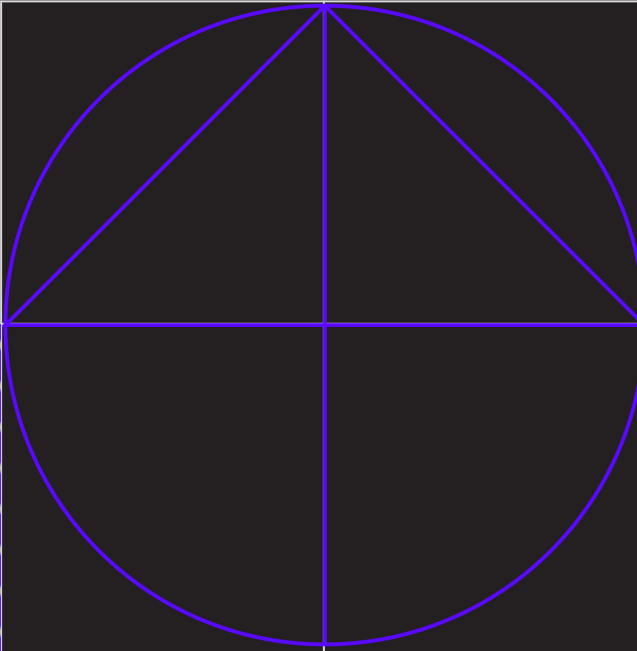
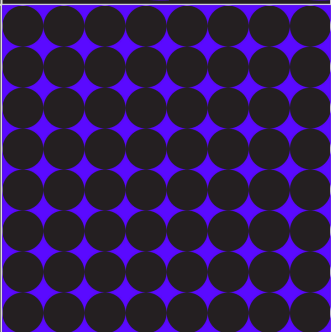
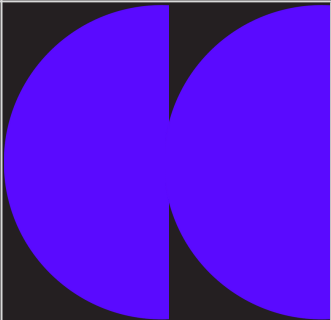


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Session 19 Briefing Note:

CULTIVATING EMERGENCE

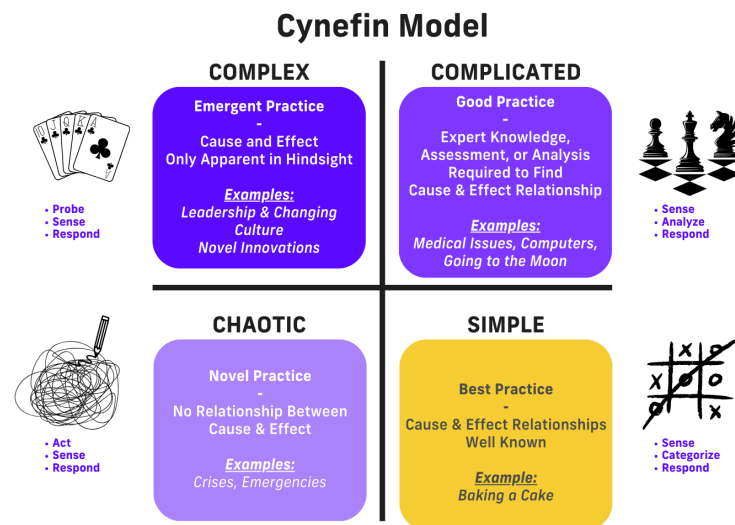


This session continues our work in the Action space of The Compass. It builds directly on our last session with Adam Kahane (Session 18, February 2024) on collaborating for systems change, where we learned about the importance of facilitators and three approaches to facilitation: vertical, horizontal, and transformative. In that session, we learned the four modes of listening – downloading, debating, dialoguing, and presencing – and that we collaborate differently with people depending on if we view them as actors, parties, or kin.

This upcoming session with Ian Prinsloo shifts the focus to how to set the stage for effective collaboration. Ian will invite us to engage in a creative process that collaborators can use when working together, enabling them to cultivate the conditions needed to create responses to novel, complex problems.

We Live In A Dynamic, Complex World

Organizations face many types of situations. Some problems are simple and easily addressed using traditional approaches and best practices. Challenges characterized as complex, complicated, or chaotic are thornier and require less straightforward responses. As discussed in prior sessions, the Cynefin framework, developed by Dave Snowden at IBM, helps us to identify four types of situations organizations often face.



Many of today's challenges – such as climate change, conflict, and income inequality – are complex and have multiple actors, rapidly evolving dynamics, and no known solutions. Complex situations call for creative responses.

Complex challenges can be characterized by one or more of the three types of complexity: dynamic, social, or generative. The intersection of all three is the most

complex situation and requires the most creativity, but it is important to recognize complexity in any situation because simplistic, linear approaches won't work.

Dynamic complexity is present when the cause-and-effect relationship is difficult to perceive because the causes and effects are spread out in time and space and effects are felt in distant parts of a system.

Social complexity exists when there are multiple actors with divergent perspectives in a system. These actors may view a problem or situation differently, making it difficult to form consensus about the definition or nature of a socially complex problem.

Generative complexity is characterized by things unfolding in unfamiliar ways. When there is no roadmap and actors are working in uncharted territory, generative complexity is present.

We all look for best practices or guidance in solving challenges. However, complex situations are always new and there are no answers. The tendency to plan-do-check-act (PDCA) just doesn't work in complex situations. Instead, we need to cultivate our ability to deal with emergence.

Cultivating Emergence To Tackle Complex Challenges

In complex situations, we and our collaborators are an ensemble. Ensembles are groups of people that move easily between a space of creation and a space of action.

Complex challenges often require creative responses, meaning we must extend beyond our current capacity or understanding. The greater the gap between what we know and the current situation, the more we must stretch our creativity.

To cultivate emergence, we don't try to control the environment. Instead, cultivate the conditions that set us up for desirable outcomes. The aim is not to force outcomes, but to foster the conditions that will yield those outcomes. This way, we pay more attention to the spaces around us – not just the outcomes, but the conditions that shape them.

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