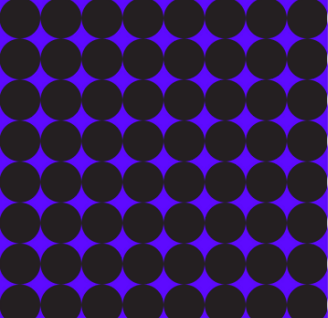
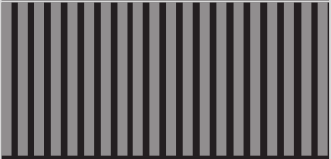
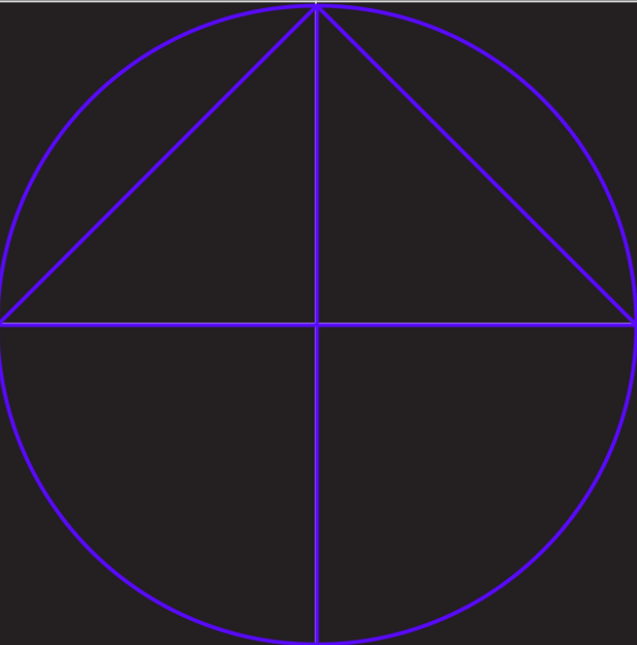
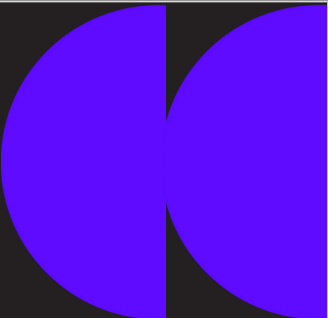


INNOVATION NORTH



Session 3 Key INsights: **DESIRABLE FUTURES**



INsights On Desirable Futures

Terry Irwin started the session by arguing that we live in systems – which we don't always see. These systems are dynamic and difficult to change. Yet major events and innovations that can disrupt the whole system.

COVID-19 was one of those disruptions. To understand COVID-19, we need to understand the systems that both enabled COVID-19 and are being destabilized by it. For example, in the context of the US, Terry made the following points about the systems in which COVID-19 is embedded:

- **Political/legal:** Highly polarized US politics impeded a rapid response to COVID-19 because people in power pitted concerns for human life against the economy.
- **Environmental:** Deforestation and urbanization has led to the search for new food sources and the opportunity for new pathogens to germinate and flourish.
- **Economy:** Businesses favour short-term shareholder value, which has undermined their desire and ability to create financial buffers and provide stability.
- **Social:** Many groups are especially vulnerable, including those in forced living conditions (nursing homes, prisons, and military bases), along with a highly vulnerable African American population.

Terry walked through the timeline that led to this current situation in the US, including the hardwired belief in individual freedoms and the “right to bear arms”, institutionalized racism, deforestation, and the financial entanglement of the healthcare system with the pharmaceutical industry.

Understanding these systems and their historical trajectory will enable organizations to help think about the innovations and cross-sectoral collaborations that can help change the system to a more desirable future.

INsights From Participant Discussion

Participants recognized that COVID-19 was different from anything they had previously experienced. There was no silver bullet – no simple solutions. For many, this was the first time that it was clear there needed to be systems solutions that required a new way of thinking. Here are some of the key ideas:

- Participants acknowledged that although COVID-19 was forcing physical distancing, it was also catalyzing new and stronger social connections, especially between business and government.

- Participants also noted that they were relying less on traditional approaches to strategy, such as planning and forecasting, and more likely to use scenario planning. Further, the future scenarios that they are developing recognized the tight relationship between human health, environmental health, and economic resilience.
- Even though COVID-19 was forcing short-term crisis responses, it was also encouraging long-term thinking. Participants, which represent businesses, government and NGOs, were thinking more deliberately about a common goal for society as a whole, which includes not only responses to pandemics but also to climate change.
- Participants are also working hard to address the deficiencies in the current system, trying to figure out what is not working (such as unnecessary travel). They want to avoid going back to business-as-usual and making the past mistakes.

INsights From Breakout Discussion Groups

Breakout 1

- The COVID-19 crisis calls for greater collaboration, as no single organization has all the answers.
- Communication barriers are coming down within and between sectors, allowing for greater integration.
- Companies are reflecting on their contribution to society, and working with competitors and governments for the public good.
- COVID-19 presents new opportunities for needs-based innovation, as social norms shift and companies rethink business as usual.
- The future must not simply recreate the past, but rather move towards a world that is more sustainable and desirable for all.

Breakout 2

- COVID-19 has created a new sense of interconnection, as companies work with competitors and share IP in order to save lives.
- The pandemic response has led to better integration between sectors, as there is more information-sharing between federal agencies, industry leaders, and other players.
- The pandemic has exposed weaknesses in Canada's supply chain and a lack of manufacturing capacity.
- Changes in teleworking, transportation, and family life are radically reshaping business as usual.

- New business models are emerging as companies are forced to rethink their traditional offerings.
- COVID-19 provides an opportunity to address other systemic issues and improve future resilience.

Breakout 3

- COVID-19 has led to a new appreciation for the public good, as governments and companies collaborate on solutions.
- Companies are setting aside competitive pressures to co-manufacture critical supplies.
- There is a renewed respect for the role of healthcare workers and other critical services.
- The crisis has demonstrated clear connections between public health and the natural environment, as the emergence of viruses is closely linked to habitat destruction.
- Companies must ensure that they consider human well-being and support the mental and physical health of their staff.
- The crisis proves that traditional notions of economic value must also include social and environmental values.

Breakout 4

- Similar to Groups 1 and 3, this session identified a new focus on collaboration within and between sectors, as companies work with competitors towards a common goal.
- Social media has allowed for better linkages between citizens and politicians.
- COVID-19 has demonstrated the stark difference between a citizen and a consumer, and that human well-being must always be the number one priority.
- COVID-19 is also a catalyst for innovation, as businesses upgrade their processes to suit a new digital environment.
- In this innovation, however, we must create a future that works for all and make sure that changes benefit everyone.

Breakout 5

- The COVID-19 crisis has taught us that rapid change is possible in a short-time frame, which may be a useful precedent for motivating change in response to other global problems.
- COVID-19 has helped people understand how the individual person affects the whole, increasing the awareness of system-wide effects.

- Even in a widespread transition to remote work, there is new appreciation for the physical services which provide necessary healthcare and food delivery.
- In the transition to a digital world, with pervasive automation and teleworking, there is a need to consider the people who are left out of this future.

Breakout 6

- Like Group 3, this session agreed that COVID-19 has helped people and organizations see themselves as part of wider social and environmental systems.
- The crisis has exposed the clear trade-off between economic productivity and the health of the natural environment.
- We must resist all pressures to return to business as usual, and ensure that our economic recovery does not come at the expense of ecosystems and human well-being.
- COVID-19 has shown that our existing system is fragile, and demonstrated that we must move towards a future that is inclusive, resilient, and regenerative.

Breakout 7

- Like Group 3, this session agreed that COVID-19 has helped people and organizations see themselves as part of wider social and environmental systems.
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- We must resist all pressures to return to business as usual, and ensure that our economic recovery does not come at the expense of ecosystems and human well-being.
- COVID-19 has shown that our existing system is fragile, and demonstrated that we must move towards a future that is inclusive, resilient, and regenerative.

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