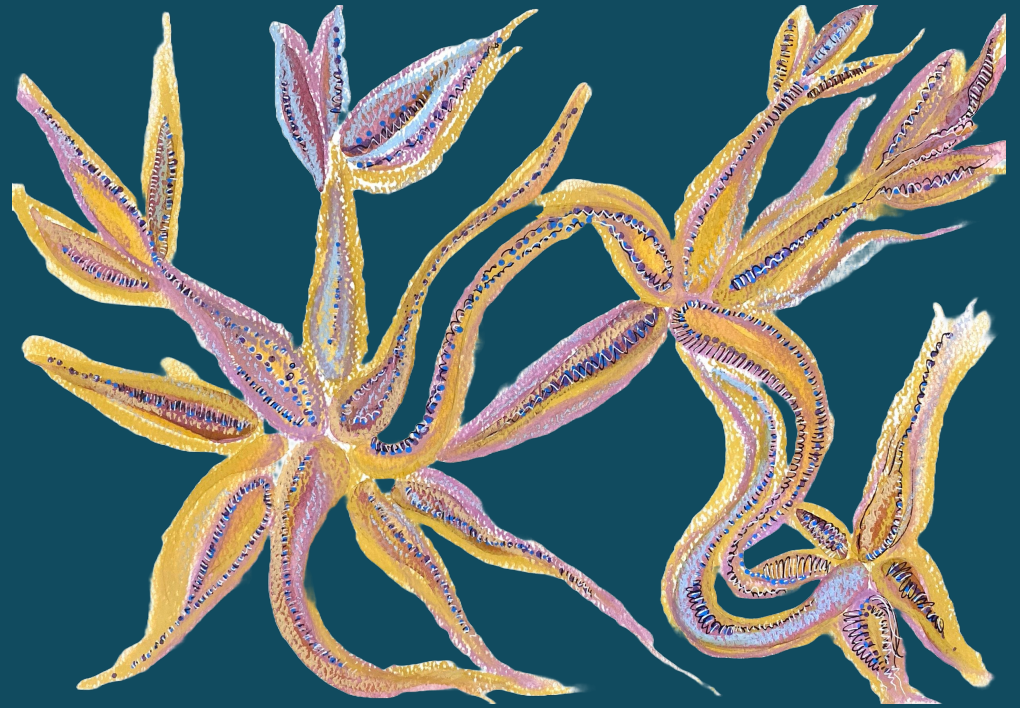


Systems Leadership

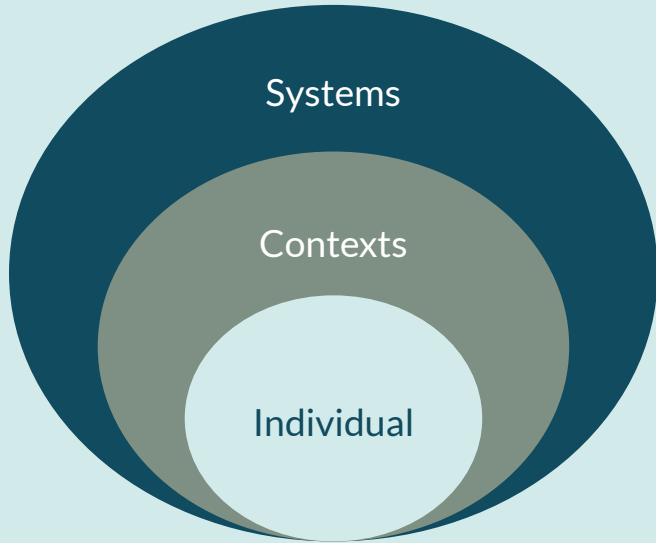
Jan 29 2024



Systems leadership as a
nested system



The systems all individuals are embedded in and contribute to



The ENABLING CONDITION between Context and Systems Leadership is the recognition of mutuality, that the success of the whole depends on the contribution of individual parts

Contexts in which individuals engage in (home, work, community, relational)

Individual characteristics, knowledge, skills, values

Systems Leadership is achieved when the collective agency and capability of the whole is enacted.

Systems leaders are carrying out their roles across contexts, a new pattern emerges in the whole of the system.

How systems leaders orient to and operate in their everyday contexts. We can see these as a set of roles they hold in the contexts they operate in.

System leaders draw from a combination of personal traits, values and beliefs, knowledge, skills and behaviours that shape and inform who they are in the world.

Individual systems leaders

System leaders draw from a combination of personal traits, values and beliefs, knowledge, skills and behaviours that shape and inform who they are in the world.

While some traits may be more innate, we all hold the capacity to develop our systems leadership within ourselves



Traits

Patience, Calm, Humble, Optimistic
Flexible, Generous, Empathetic
Open, Curious, Observant,
Reflective, Inquisitive, Courage,
Ambitious, Visionaries, Lack of ego,
Enjoys intellectual challenges,
Perseverance, Endurance

Values and Beliefs

Accepts paradox and contradictions,
Profound commitment to the health of the whole,
Long term value creation over short term fixes,
Power with, not power over, Systems are not
solved, but evolve, Diverse perspectives are
required to see the whole, We change the system
from where we stand, Decolonizing mindsets and
behaviours, Cultural humility, Social learning and
sensemaking

Skills and Behaviours

Deep listener, Engages in difficult conversations, Meditation,
Holds competing perspectives, Shares power,
Sits in ambiguity and uncertainty, Considers unintended
consequences, Can adapt behaviours to fit contexts,
Interrogates assumptions, mindsets and biases,
Considers role and agency in the system, Continuously
learning, Willingness to disrupt the status quo, Experiment
with imperfect responses to move towards better outcomes
Gets the right people in the room, Able to span boundaries and
translate, Sees and works across levels and scales
Helps the system to see itself, Creating cultural safety

Knowledge

Systems and
complexity, How to
change a system,
Systems thinking

Contexts

Contexts is about how systems leaders orient to and operate in their everyday situations. We can see these as a set of roles they hold in the multiple contexts they operate in. Contexts is where they express their commitment to improving the health of the whole system.



Contexts

Plays defense with other leaders who want to take back control

Keeps the bureaucracy at bay

Manages/minimises anxiety in the system

Addresses polarisation and inertia within the system

Fosters reflective & generative conversations

Creates safe 'containers', holds conflict and works with difference

Improves the quality of the 'relational space' you create together

Protector

Coach

Host

Roles in Contexts

Facilitator

Guide

Enabler

Feels into the pace, rhythm and readiness

Meets people right where they really are

Facilitates and empowers participatory action

Experiments with different methods and processes

Support intelligent risks and learning from experiments

Uses influence over pulling rank

Shifts the conditions through which others can collectively make progress

Surfaces mutual accountability, supports movement towards a shared purpose

Shifts focus from reactive problem solving to co-creating the future

Fosters networks and self-organising structures (rather than rely on hierarchy)

The ENABLING CONDITION between
Context and Emergent Systems
Leadership is the recognition of
mutuality, that the success of the whole
depends on the contribution of individual
parts

*“If you have come here to help me
you are wasting your time, but if
you have come because your
liberation is bound up with mine,
then let us work together.”*

~ Lilla Watson



Systems

A process-based outcome of systemic change achieved through collective (but not necessarily coordinated) activation

Systems Leadership is achieved when the collective agency and capability of the whole is enacted.

Systems leaders are carrying out their roles across contexts, a new pattern emerges in the whole of the system.



Emergent patterns and trends in Systems Leadership

Self-organizing
individuals step into roles
as they see the needs of
the system match with
their capabilities

Biodiverse
those stepping into
leadership are diverse in
identity, experience,
worldviews, ways of knowing,
being and doing

Seasonal
leadership that is
taken up as
required by the
system

Layered
taking place at
multiple scales, levels,
sub-systems, cultures,
capacities, ways of
knowing

Betwixt and between
often happening
'in-between' places and
'below the radar' without
formal recognition

Adaptive
Leadership which
continues to evolve and
change in response to
system feedback

The OUTCOME of Systems Leadership is generative, enabling its own sustainability

“Can I do something in my lifetime that can help change the way we are...”

Can I help, in a little tiny fraction, make it better here?”

~ Maya Lin



[Zac porter](#) via unsplash