

Life.
School.
House.

THE MODEL



Welcome to the Life.School.House Model

This model is for individuals, groups, organizations, and governments that are interested in starting Life.School.House in their community, city, or region.

This model was created after piloting LSH for 18 months in Nova Scotia, Canada. Our approach and methods are an accumulation of lessons learned and feedback collected from active hosts, participants and volunteers in our community. We encourage you to use this guide to support your work in making communities more resilient and collaborative. We are freely sharing this content and you are welcome to share it as well but we ask that you credit Life.School.House as a source and if it is a model you choose to work with, please consider making a fair contribution to our work. We strive for this to be a living document so please send us a note about how you are using it and what could be added/ improved.

Please be in touch if you are curious about the ways we could support you and your community:
elementalcommunities@gmail.com

What is Life.School.House?

The vision of LSH is to create a world where people feel less isolated and more connected through the act of shared learning experiences.

Life.School.House is a model that can be used to launch a network of folk schools offering barter-based workshops in residential spaces. Once established the network is designed to support the hosts who lead these learning spaces in their communities.

Life.School.House hosts offer free space for the facilitation of folk skills classes. The barter model creates barrier free access to programs by engaging facilitators from the community who share their skills at no charge while class participants bring items to gift in exchange for the knowledge shared. Classes can cover a range of subjects from craft, tradeskills, critical thinking, life enrichment – based on the availability and experience of community facilitators. Our model is inspired and informed by the People’s Schools of the Antigonish Movement, Trade School International, Danish Folk School Model, and the Art of Hosting.

“Learning not just to earn a living, but to build a life”

Our vision for Life.School.House is to:

- Host a resurgence of trust between neighbours, reducing social isolation in our communities
- Host the preservation and advancement of the knowledge, skills, crafts and stories of our communities (in particular the skills that lead to greater personal resilience)
- Host creative and meaningful opportunities for individuals, families and groups to connect deeply
- Host positive learning and sharing environments that are accessible to all

Story and Impact

Life.School.House is building a hosted, non-traditional learning community that celebrates local wisdom, builds connections in community, and reinforces the social value of barter and exchange.

We began this project because we were feeling a growing sense of social isolation in our community. A disconnect between neighbors seemed to be increasing and was amplified in our region because of an aging population, a rise in immigration, and an increase in urbanization. In recent years we have lost many gathering points that used to be foundational in our community as church participation dropped and community centres crumbled from lack of funding. We were seeing walls going up as trust was breaking down in our ever diversifying community. It was becoming increasingly rare to borrow a cup of sugar from a neighbor. We were feeling the impacts, both mental and physical.

Life.School.House was born from a belief that together we can shift this tide and we welcome anyone seeking solutions to join us in this movement.

In 2018, Life.School.House started as simply as possible. Zero funding, no structure. We simply wanted more safe spaces in our community for people to come together to learn and spend time together, and to experience the 'sharing' or 'gifting economy'.

Story and Impact

Our first workshop was held in the living room of the creators of Life.School.House and had only four attendees but has grown into a strong, replicable model that is offered to regions around the world.

This model has been designed on a pilot that ran for 18 months during which we ran and evaluated 35 maker swaps and 98 workshops in 18 different locations across our province in spaces including homes, barns, and shared public buildings. Our pilot worked with 7 dedicated hosts in our network who regularly open up their homes for workshops in the first regional roll out. All of this accomplished on 100% volunteer, community driven power with all required class supplies being donated or brought in equal amounts by the participants (ie: a divided up list of grocery items split between attendees for cooking classes or painting materials shared by facilitators and participants).

Quality of relationships and connection determine health and happiness.

“Our relationships and how happy we are in our relationships has a powerful influence on our health. Loneliness kills. It’s as powerful as smoking or alcoholism. Close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives.”

A Harvard study of Adult Development and an ongoing body of research has proved that embracing community helps us live longer, and be happier.

We often think these things, or believe them on an intuitive level, but rarely do we reorient our lives based on this knowledge. Life.School.House is explicitly built to enhance and amplify meaningful connections with the people in our community, with the express purpose of improving health outcomes and the wellbeing of all.

WHAT VALUE DOES LSH PROVIDE TO THE PARTICIPANTS?

We asked hundreds of participants about what they received from their experience with LSH and this what they said...

90% said enjoyment and happiness.

“My very first makers swap, an emotional and incredibly fulfilling experience for the mind, soul, and body”

“I took a photo at a Makers Swap. Everyone in the photo (10+) was in conversation and smiling.”

“It gives a real sense of intrinsic worth to the work of people and to people themselves. Every craft/art/design is valued.”

89% said sense of community / neighbourliness.

“They are very welcoming and hospitable. The comfort and intimacy of being hosted in someone’s home, the trust shared by hosts and attendees, these qualities are unique to Life.School.House.”

“It has a great sense of community! Also, because it’s a barter based system, I’ve been able to learn various skills that interest me (pottery for example) that I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to, had my only option been to pay full price for classes.”

87% said creativity and idea sharing.

“It feels casual yet welcoming. It’s inspiring to see people in our community express their creativeness. It fosters pride and a feeling of accomplishment.”

“the sense of I am someone with knowledge I can share”

“I had always wanted to learn to make sourdough, but didn’t know where to begin. Life.School.House gave me the opportunity to learn, and at a cost that was within my means.”

75.4% said meeting new people, social connection and friendship.

“For me it was a great way to meet the community I live in.”

“How welcomed I felt due to recently moving to the area. Felt like home”

“One of the biggest confidence boosts of the year for me.”

The Danish Connection

*“Experiments are not
to be transplanted but
must be reinvented”*

— PAULO FREIRE

The most well-known model of folkschoolling, “Højskolerne” or “Folk High Schools” has a 175 year history in Denmark and is well supported financially and through legislated policy in this country. Inspired by the writings and work of N.F.S Grundvig, a pastor, poet, author, teacher, and politician who lived and worked in Copenhagen between 1783 and 1872, folk high schools in Denmark offer predominantly residential programming for youth ages 18-25. These schools offer a variety of approaches with a shared focus on building active democratic citizens who are critical thinkers and engaged community participants. Participants often go on to University and careers in politics or community development locally and internationally. While our work is informed by the Danish tradition of folkschools LifeSchoolHouse is a socially innovative rethinking of the model that allows for a lean start up in regions where the financial and political support is different or non-existent. This means there are fundamental differences between these two models.

COMPARISON

	Danish Folk High Schools	Life.School.House
Politics	Dedicated to the preservation of Democracy through direct action and teaching/ experiential learning about critical thinking	Providing popular education to establish a foundation of trust and understanding between citizens in a shared community. Not formally politically aligned
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential schools for youth ages 18-25 • Traditionally semester - or year-long programming • Majority of attendees must be Danish • Often involves regional or international travel experiences to facilitate cross-cultural understanding • Must offer a minimum of 21 hours of instruction weekly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-permanent space for classes, held in the communities they serve • Short classes or series of classes held on evenings or weekends • Open to all residents & visitors • Engages cross-cultural facilitators to bring cultural aspects of diversity and inclusion into the programming
Economics	Funded through government subsidy and student tuition	Funded through philanthropic contribution and barter within community
Philosophy	Skill development not just to build a living, but to build a life.	Hosted spaces for shared learning to deepen trusted connections in neighborhood
Facilitation	Dedicated part and full time facilitators, many of whom live onsite and teach based on lived or professional experience	Exclusively casual, volunteer facilitation from community members who teach based on lived or professional experience.

The Hosting Approach

Our work takes the form of a folk school but at its core it is fundamentally a support system for a community of “hosts”. In our barrier-free learning community our hosts can invite people from across age, gender, culture, language, to enter into real relationships through the act of learning together. The model is cooperative in its design, with many hands making light work and while the hosts are the community organizers at the roots of this work, the model requires a regional coordinator who hosts the ‘host community’. In this way the network grows through peer and organizational support.

Watching this community grow we have identified that there are many actors at play: the participants and the facilitators are the most obvious contributors to the work but the differentiating factor between LSH and a workshop in any other venue has proven to be the role of the host. Life.School.House hosts are the lifeblood of the work of community development in this project as their role is dedicated to creating the conditions necessary for the connections between attendees to form and thrive.

The Life.School.House model relies on shared responsibilities of these four main contributors: coordinator, hosts, facilitators, and participants. The table below outlines the different participants in the LSH platform and a brief description of their role.

The Hosting Approach

COORDINATOR: The coordinator is the backbone of the LSH network. This person helps grow the LSH community in their region by hosting and supporting the hosts as well as the online community of participants and friends. Based on experience we recommend funding this position rather than relying on volunteer contribution for this role as the Coordinator is invested fully in the development and support of the network and critical to its success.

welcoming environment for the participants and workshop facilitators.

HOSTS:

These are community members who offer their space (house, barn, yard, garage, etc) to host workshops, and are responsible for creating a

FACILITATORS:

These are amateur or professional facilitators - anyone in the community who is willing to share their skills, knowledge, or craft in a workshop.

PARTICIPANTS:

These are the participants who join workshops for a variety of reasons including to connect with others, feel a sense of community,

learn new skills, and save money.

The Hosting Approach

In our institutions, communities and families, hosting gives us ways of working and leading that acknowledges the essential truth of our interconnectedness, and helps us to engage and more fully benefit from the diversity of perspectives and backgrounds in a group. Effective hosting surfaces and connects shared values and purpose. Without a host creating a brave container for people to meet and engage with each other, our interactions in a class environment can become transactional and never develop into real relationship and connection.

LSH hosts are often intuitive community leaders who are able to step smoothly into the role of connectors and caretakers in the community with training and support from the LSH Hosts Network, led by the regional coordinator. All LSH hosts work to gather facilitators and learners from across divides who have talents, interests and a willingness to share.

Using the LSH model, our hosts are supported to lead with and demonstrate the trust that builds resilience and interdependence in community. Their willingness to open their homes or lead action in shared spaces in the community sets an example of trust that permeates the whole community of practice. The hosts focus their work on reducing the barriers that may be preventing people from truly connecting with others in their community, which varies community to community. This is why the hosts are embedded in community and have flexibility to adapt the model to the needs of their participants. This is important but sometimes tough work and therefore the role of the coordinator can be very impactful. A “host for the hosts” creates connections in the network of hosts for peer support and in many cases provides formal teacher/facilitator training, and shares emerging community development techniques to support the hosts in their work.

On Leadership

BY MARGARET WHEATLEY

In fact, in this day and age, when problems are increasingly complex, and there simply are not simple answers, and there is no simple cause and effect any longer, I cannot imagine how stressful it is to be the leader and to pretend that you have the answer.

So, what I see in life-affirming leaders is that they are willing to say to people "I do not know the answer, but together we will figure it out."

So, they are also leaders who rely on other people's intelligence.

And a life affirming leader is one who knows how to rely on and use the intelligence that exists everywhere in the community, or the school or the organization.

And so these leaders act as hosts, as stewards of other people's creativity and other people's intelligence.

And when I say host, I mean a leader these days needs to be one who convenes people, who convenes diversity, who convenes all viewpoints in processes where our intelligence can come forth.

So these kinds of leaders do not give us the answers, but they help gather us together so that together we can discover the answers.

Practical Matters

From this point forward we will direct our material to supporting new Coordinators in their role. Any growing Life.School.House network requires a Coordinator to get started – you can do it and we can help!

Coordinator Role - Establishing a Support Platform

As the Coordinator, you are the support platform that allows Life.School.House to thrive – a true “host of hosts”. A well supported network of hosts will be ready to flourish in their communities. You are a facilitator, enabler, and problem solver. This is a role whose key responsibilities include getting your own Life.School.House started, and then maintaining and supporting the platform as it grows.

The ripple effect: We like to think of the work of the Coordinator as a drop in a bucket of water; it may be a small action, but it will ripple into waves. The actions of one Coordinator can support an entire ecosystem of barter-based community driven action and connection.

This document outlines the basic steps for the Coordinator to start and grow LSH in your community.

GETTING STARTED:

1. Organizing the first workshops
2. Getting the word out
3. Setting up the online community space
4. Finding host

MAINTAINING & SUPPORTING:

5. Working towards a decentralized network
6. Money matters
7. Evaluating Impact

Getting Started

ORGANIZING YOUR FIRST WORKSHOPS

When you are building your network of hosts you will need to set an example of how to live the Life.School.House model.

The best way to get LSH started and get the word out, is to simply run a workshop.

Taking Action Gets the Momentum Going – You don't need to have the whole support system set up to get your LSH started – and we wouldn't recommend it! Get started by organizing your first workshop. See how it feels in your own community. Find a friend who is willing to share a skill that has broad appeal (we find anything related to food will often have a large draw), and remember that hosting AND facilitating are separate and demanding roles.

How to Host:

Support your facilitator by hosting the gathering with simple actions: greet people at the door and welcome them into the space. Provide basic refreshments if you can. Ensure that everyone is engaged in conversation before the class begins and that no one is left out by stepping in to conversation where necessary. Meet in a circle if possible – to reduce any hierarchy in the gathering. Open with a round of introductions and something that will encourage the participants to be a bit vulnerable and open to getting to know each other: “Tell us your name and where you think of as ‘home’” or “One thing you are looking forward to this summer,” or “what kinds of games did you like to play as a child”. For more information or to view a script for hosts please visit the Life.School.House resources section on our website at www.lifeschoolhouse.com/resources

Start small: Just invite a few friends and tell them to bring a plus one and build up from a solid first few sessions. Remember that each individual workshop realistically requires 4–8 hours of time commitment from the host to coordinate, prepare, host, and clean up.

Keep it simple: We recommend choosing topics you are familiar with and already have enough supplies to share. Pick a broadly appealing first workshop topic rather than something obscure so that you will cast a wider net for possible attendees who will then help spread the word. If you know of someone who would be willing to do a cooking class, these have always been popular. Food connects!

Move Slowly: Spend time experimenting: learn about what works to attract different demographics in your community, pick workshops that can address the barriers you feel are impacting your neighborhoods, decide how you might demonstrate the sharing economy in other aspects of your life and work.

Spread the word: Life.School.House offers website space to all new start ups but each Coordinator will set up and maintain social media space that connects best with their community. As your network grows we offer online learning for all new hosts as well as tutorials on ticket management, social media integration – don't rush though, posters in local cafes and libraries work very well during start up!

Be Consistent: This work will be much more effective if it is congruent with all other aspects of your life and work. Coordinators who are already engaged in community activism, living in search of a new economy and supporters of system change will find Life.School.House to compliment their practice.

Trust: Coordinators must also lead with an inherent trust in the goodness of people. For many, this might seem like a leap into the unknown as it runs counter to a culture of locked doors, fences and a general sense of fearing the “other” in our neighbourhoods. Opening your door and welcoming people into your personal space is an act of trust and of passive defiance of this culture of fear and distrust.

Experiment Bravely: The LSH model depends on organizing a wide variety of classes to attract diverse facilitators and participants. Some classes tend to draw more from one gender, other classes seemed to appeal to a particular age group, etc. Offer a range of topics so that your classes are representative of and welcoming for your whole community. By seeking our diversity in your attendees you will also broaden your pool of possible facilitators and you will find an infinite number of topics from a global community!

Grow at the speed of Trust: We have found that after offering a few workshops, you will find others who are interested in the model itself. They will ask questions about your approach – they will want to know how to get something similar set up in their own homes. These will become your first hosts – they will appear from the community of participants and facilitators. When they are ready to get started you will be able to help guide them through their own first workshops because you have had hands on experience hosting in your own home. In this way, the model is passed organically and develops a natural peer-to-peer mentoring community to support the network.

Hosting the Hosts: A Coordinator will be able to support two or three hosts without too much difficulty – managing the logistics of start up: getting their social media pages set up, arranging for marketing materials like business cards, lawn signs, helping them find their first facilitators, etc. Coordinators should make every effort to attend the first sessions of new hosts, to support them and to ensure a consistent experience for attendees of LifeSchoolHouse. Depending on your rate of growth you may find that you quickly need to rely on a peer-to-peer coaching model so that experienced hosts can help onboard and orient new hosts as your network grows. We chose to incorporate a Cooperative Not-for-Profit in the pilot of Life.School.House which increased our eligibility for funding but also formalized the roles of our volunteers because we built a formal board. Having resources dedicated to communications, fund development, bookkeeping, etc made the Coordinators role much more balanced. When you reach this stage we have much experience to share to assist you in your growth.

Getting Started

SETTING UP THE ONLINE COMMUNITY SPACE

The first Life.School.House started with an online monthly calendar and a list of a few upcoming classes. Set up a space where people can discover your LSH community, get event details, and register for events.

If available in your region, consider using Eventbrite (www.eventbrite.com) or another free ticket management system — Tickets are important!

- Space is always a limiting factor in people's homes, and ticketing can really help regulate that.
- Having a relatively small group size is important for creating an environment of intimacy and a space for human connection. We usually advocate for 8-12 people per workshop.
- Offering a limited number of tickets creates a sense of urgency and people will sign up quickly for workshops, often filling them to capacity.
- Tickets assist your facilitators in preparing well for the workshop – you will be able to target your requests for required supplies and have a sense for how many participants to expect which can often be an intimidating aspect of facilitating a class for the first time.
- Using a ticketing system will help you track patterns over time to see what workshops work best in your region. You can then share this data with any new hosts.
- Tickets also make it easier to duplicate event info and details – saving you work when you offer future sessions of a similar nature!

“Going forward, this wisdom will continue to serve you well. Frequent common denominator everyday activities have encouraged people from many different backgrounds to meet, interact and spend time together. Activities such as cooking, making and learning have encouraged a wide range of people to spend time in the same space.”

— Made to Measure Report, 2018

Social Media

We found outreach via social media is much more effective (for many reasons) than trying to keep a website or calendar updated especially as the classes started to fill quickly. It became very difficult to keep calendars up to date and creates a lot of extra work for Coordinators.

Management of the main LifeSchoolHouse Community page for your region will be maintained by the Coordinator in whichever social media space will connect best in your region. Our model was built using facebook but this limited our growth as people moved away from this platform therefore expansion to instagram and reversion to posters in local coffee shops has ensured we reach the broadest group of participants.

As hosts are added to your community they should be assigned their own subpages off the main LifeSchoolHouse social media page for your region, and they should be encouraged to manage separate groups for their own communities independently that feed into the regional online presence. (feels like a diagram here would be helpful. Something that shows an example of a big regional FB/insta presence, subgroups representing the independent hosts and external connections to local libraries, cafes, traditional media advertising, etc) The role of the Coordinator will then be to ensure consistency in event management, managing community guidelines and other aspects of online community management. We have a LifeSchoolHouse Hosts Community on Facebook that is very active and will be able to respond to your questions about community growth and management.

This is our Flowchart for sharing events online:

Post on Eventbrite (using consistent language to explain the model of bartering to participants because this is often misunderstood at first) → Push to FB/Instagram
→ Share to Regional Groups (popular FB groups in the region, add to local mailing lists, etc)
→ Share to individual host pages → Highlight on website

Getting Started

FINDING HOSTS 101

This section outlines our learnings about finding hosts, who will be the “right” host, and their basic responsibilities.

Hosts need to have access to space. Our model relies on using residential and accessible community spaces rather than building out dedicated space - reducing the overhead costs associated with our work and actively demonstrating the trust with which we are working to shift the trend of social isolation. Coordinators should visit all new hosted space to ensure the space is suitable for a gathering of this nature. Suitability is at the discretion of the Coordinator but most often involves clean, safe space large enough to host a gathering of this size in a venue where most of the community can feel welcome.

Look for those who are already natural and experienced hosts. In most cases hosts you will add to your network will be those in community who are already demonstrating a passion for sharing what they have learned. Hosts might already have experience with hosting (eg; leche league, women’s circles, homeschool coordination, community events coordinators).

Getting Started

FINDING HOSTS 101

Hosts will have the time and energy that it takes to host a workshop, or many workshops! Often they have a supportive partner or family that allows for this generosity. Each individual workshop realistically requires 4 - 8 hours of time commitment from the host to coordinate, prepare, host, and clean up. They are value driven and have a deep desire to support and grow community and connection amongst their community,

Hosts need to have participated in a LSH workshop and / or swap with the regional coordinator.

Ideally, a new host would:

1. attend at least workshop as a participant, then
2. host a workshop in tandem with another host, and then
3. host a workshop on their own and have a debrief with another host afterwards.

In our pilot, the Coordinator helped get the first 5 hosts started and then it began to grow organically, in a decentralized way. Hosts began assisting others to become hosts in a peer-to-peer partnership.

Maintaining & Supporting

WORKING TOWARDS A DECENTRALIZED MODEL

One of LSH's core purposes is to host a resurgence of trust between neighbours - and following that spirit, LSH trusts others to continue to grow and spread the work of LSH, without having to have control over it. LSH seeks to empower hosts to host facilitators and participants to the best of their ability, and grow the network of hosts through their own networks. As much as possible, the Coordinator will host their network in a way that allows it to grow and thrive without restrictions or constraint of organizational structure. Often, hosting well means making space for others to be at their best. We are working to embody this at all levels, all the time.

Ways that we are currently working to support a decentralized model:

- Online and in person events for hosts to gather and share learning, experiences, knowledge and connect
- Hosts can bring in and coach new hosts
- Supporting peer-to-peer coaching amongst hosts
- A shared google drive for hosts and workshop facilitators (a guide for hosting, templates, lists of workshop resources, descriptions of workshops)
- FB group chat for hosts to support one another

Maintaining & Supporting

EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

This section outlines a high-level approach to thinking about our evaluation of LSH in its first year. In times of rapid change and development, organizations often turn to Developmental Evaluation to guide their work and we recommend new Coordinators consider engaging a DE professional or learning more about the tools for effective evaluation so you can better understand your successes and challenges as you grow and pivot quickly when necessary or possible. Developmental Evaluation is an extremely useful approach to monitoring the effectiveness of new activities while also providing meaningful ongoing feedback to inform how organizations need to make adaptations to its work. Specifically, our recommended framework has been designed to help:

- Identify emerging needs and strategic priorities
- Contribute to data collection in service of transparency and data sharing for the sector
- Support reporting to key stakeholders and funders

The following are suggestions for primary research questions in your first year.

1. **Feasibility:** In what ways is this approach effective in reducing social isolation in my community?
 - a. To what extent does it reduce barriers for people to participate in meaningful community exchanges, as compared to other approaches?
2. **Inclusivity:** Can a platform be built that creates large bridging networks that can benefit everyone?
 - a. Who is participating?
 - b. What is the geographic location of participants? To what extent is there a relation between proximity to workshop and makerswap venues, and rates of participation?

3. **Value creation:** Is this approach to building connections and reducing social isolation capable of creating value for individual residents, neighbourhoods and the region as a whole?
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HOW MIGHT WE SUPPORT YOU TO GROW LIFE.SCHOOL.HOUSE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

As LSH continues to flourish in our pilot in Nova Scotia, we want to support the growth of LSH networks around the world. Reach out and say hello, we would love to chat. We offer services and resources to support the growth of Life.School.House coordinators around the globe. Join the Facebook Group, follow us on Instagram, visit the website. Join our peer-to-peer learning community.

Come visit us in Nova Scotia and participate in a workshop

WE OFFER: Training, Workshops, Consulting, Mentorship for the development of new networks and hosted communities. Find out more by visiting us at www.lifeschoolhouse.com

Supporting LSH going forward:
www.gofundme.com/f/lifeschoolhouse

Turning to One Another

BY MARGARET WHEATLEY

There is no greater power than a community discovering what it cares about. Ask “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?” Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.

Assume that many others share your dreams. Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

Talk to people you know. Talk to people you don’t know. Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear. Expect to be surprised. Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what’s possible. Acknowledge that everyone is an expert in something. Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know. Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations change your world. Rely on human goodness. Stay together.



A thought to leave you with...

What if organizations really are living systems and there could be a simpler way of organizing that opens up the possibility for emergence – provided the right conditions are in place?

What would our organizations and communities look like then?

Living Systems - A Natural Approach to Organizing

Life.School.House's approach to organizing is driven by two main ideas: hosting, and self organizing. For three hundred years in the culture of the western world, since Descartes and Newton, western thinking has predominantly been influenced by rationalism. In this thinking there is an assumption that we have been able to figure things out and "be in control". We tend to view our organizations and communities as we view machines – as consisting of clearly defined parts with clearly defined roles and a predictable output.

In a complex world, this mechanistic view may not always be adequate to meet the complex problems and challenges we face. What if communities and organizations could be viewed as living systems as well?

Living systems exist everywhere in nature – bacteria forming colonies or ants coming together to form a system that is capable of creating an anthill. – Some termite nests even have air conditioning so the temperature stays the same inside the hill!

There are two exciting phenomena in nature and living systems:

1. Nature has the capability to self-organize, i.e. it does not require someone specific to direct the organization instead of all who are involved participate in what is needed to achieve a purpose.
2. Self-organization can lead to emergence = the emergence of totally new properties and qualities. 1+1 can equal 11 or something totally new and surprising.