Theme 2: PLACEMAKING - Designing Organizational Attractors

Although location and place are sometimes used interchangeably, "location describes a particular point on the surface of the earth. Place on the other hand, refers to the physical and human characteristics of a spot on the map.   In other words, location focuses on where: place focuses on what it is like there." National Geographic

As we have learned from the past few years, life as we once knew it has changed. The global pandemic, social injustices, ecological concerns, and humanitarian conflicts have profoundly affected us and propelled us to reconsider the *"why"* and the *"how"* of many aspects of our lives. In our work lives, we have been experimenting and innovating with new forms of work. While our past conceptualization of work included a physical location as an anchor as well as leadership models that reflected more hierarchical organizations and cultural norms that constrained individual identity, new forms of working are emerging and evolving. During times like these – times of transformation - leaders must find ways to create possibilities. This requires leaders to disassemble current structures of various kinds (physical, cultural, digital, and more), experiment with temporary structures, and reassemble a new set of attractors that in turn shape organizational practices.

During this year's exploration we will look at how "places" of various kinds can support or undermine organizational engagement, thriving, and learning. We will pursue the design of organizations that are inclusive, innovative, and learning-rich places no matter what the structure of work looks like. We will explore questions such as: What are the conditions that create positive placemaking at work? What has been and should be today and tomorrow the purpose of place? How do we bring (and keep) people together regardless of our geographical dispersion, our organizational structure, and its shifts? How does culture persist when we have a distributed workforce? What does "making work visible " mean in a distributed context so we can learn from others?

October 2022: Trading Places – Placemaking for Hybrid Worlds

We feel attracted to places that make us feel vibrant, joyful, connected and playful (among other characteristics). The various styles of place or placemaking constitute "attractors," drawing people into various patterns of behavior. How can we understand what brings people together in ways that provide a sense of place broadly understood, coordinating action, and creating a sense of a collective? This is challenging even in situations where things are stable, and more so when we are facing a series of transitions that come in unpredictable waves and where interventions have unintended consequences. What happens when the physical and social structures we have relied on are called into question? Perhaps we can look to several fields of research including design, dynamic systems, psychology, anthropology, and history to inform our understanding on how to design organizations for the future. To start off our

exploration for the year, we will get a lay of the landscape and aim to explore questions such as: What kinds of placemaking does an "attractor" perspective suggest or sometimes warn against? How is this helpful as we think about designing for the future of work? What can we learn from past transitions that might inform the way in which we manage today's significant transitions? For example, the transition from analogue to digital learning, or from apprenticeship to industrialized models and beyond? How might we treat digital assets as enduring artifacts rather than as transitionary objects? What are the puzzles and paradoxes reflected in our current ways of placemaking that we need to navigate because they no longer serve us? How can we design places that provide a sense of orientation, engagement, and fulfillment that attracts talent?

February 2023: There's a Place for Us – Placemaking Through Culture and Leadership

What enables culture to survive and transform itself at times of substantial change in the environment? What are the cultural attractors that enable this type of transformation?
We might perhaps look to nomadic cultures for inspiration. While traditional nomads travel in search of locations that will enable them to thrive, they maintain their roots through a sense of connection (to people, to purpose and to physical locales.) What if we changed our construct of work to include characteristics of nomadic tribes? Through strong attractors, nomadic cultures aren't tied to a specific locations or even physical artifacts, but rather persist through a common purpose, social norms, shared values, and patterns of communication – an intensely cooperative structural model and a strongly held understanding that scouting out and adapting to different environments will enable them to thrive today and in the future. While nomadic cultures are geographically based, they serve as an interesting example of how cultural attractors can help us think about designing our organizations of the future for the new nomads of today. Particularly during times of uncertainty and transition, a leader's role is to nurture the surfacing of organizing structures that facilitate collaborative and coordinated action. Based on our understanding of attractors from the October gathering, this session will aim to explore questions such as: What are the characteristics of placemaking through culture and leadership? What are the kinds of places that engage us, that bind us, and that connect us? Why and how does a culture persist despite a lack of a structural physical place? What do cultural and leadership attractors look like in the hybrid space? How are organizational purposes shaped by the space and place organizations occupy?

April 2023: Growing Places - Placemaking for Learning and Thriving

What would it look like if we placed learning and thriving at the core of our practices? As Amy Edmondson states, *"Learning requires us to honor what we know today, while also letting go in order to develop new insights for tomorrow. Teaming depends on strong individual contributions, while being willing to subsume individual needs and preferences for collective gain."* This statement reflects so much of what we have been experiencing over the last few years; and yet, it is so hard to achieve! Over the years, learning has relied on artifacts that are tangible physical objects either constructed by creators and consumed by learners, or for

evidence that learning has taken place. However, in professional work, knowledge is co-created and encoded in what people do. When work is done in a hybrid environment, how do we enable, surface, and share this "knowing in being" (Garber 2019), so it can transform the way we know and interact with colleagues? Enabling this type of learning and sensemaking is central to designing organizations for the future. In this session we aim to explore questions such as: How might our placemaking foster new ways of knowing and acting? How does learning from others become visible in a broad sense, especially when working remotely?   What are some active learning strategies that can be developed around learning artifacts for the hybrid world? How do we share and integrate learning, and develop organizational practices in a hybrid world? How do we learn for the future while working in the present?

June 2023: 17th Annual LILA Summit – PLACEMAKING: Designing Organizational Attractors
After having spent the year gaining a better understanding of Placemaking, we will round up our exploration by consolidating our insights, surfacing practical applications, and strengthening the connections with the larger LILA community.