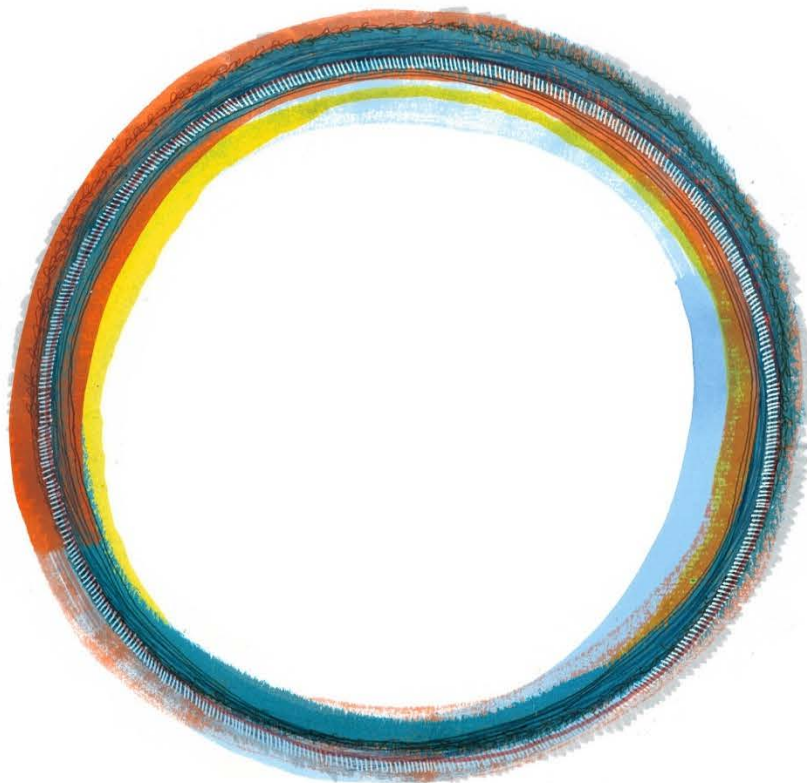


The Collaboratory

A co-creative stakeholder engagement process for solving complex problems



Edited by Katrin Muff

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This paper explores the systemic conditions that appear to have supported the emergent evolution of Initiatives of Change (IofC), a global community and movement that has endured over some eight decades. Each year members converge in Caux, high above Montreux in Switzerland to catalyse dialogue and inspire action to address issues affecting people in communities across the world. The chapter offers insights into how IofC creates and holds a community space; and integrates the spirit and practice of “quiet time” into a community-building process enabling transformation at personal, group and systemic levels.

Being Touched

In August 2010, after a sodden journey across rain-filled skies and mist-covered, mountainous terrain, I found myself entering The Mountain House to contribute to a conference called “Leading Change for a Sustainable World”. This majestic building – once a salubrious hotel for the wealthy – is set high above Montreux, Switzerland in a tiny hamlet called Caux. As I walked into the large, rather dark entrance hall I felt something... I sensed that in this place, I had a place. By the end of those first 10 days, I had heard many people talk of the ‘spirit of Caux’ – something that was felt yet was hard to define. I knew that, like me, they too had been touched. Certainly, there was a quality of being and engaging in this place that we sensed, appreciated and to which we were drawn but which we could not explain.

Initiatives of Change (IofC)

My first encounter with IofC, happened to be in my professional capacity as a leadership consultant, facilitator and coach. Arriving in time for Afternoon Tea, I was greeted by Cain¹ at the door and was escorted to the terrace. Three things took my breath away: the rear spectacle of The Mountain House; the view overlooking Lac Lemman with its dual Swiss and French panorama and the visible diversity of people – clearly coming from multiple continents. Cain gave me my first introduction to IofC and Caux, talking about Frank Buchman (the founding catalyst); a practice of ‘Quiet Time’ to access inner guidance and using four ‘Absolute Standards’ to guide personal decisions and action; and finally, that this was not just a conference, it was a way of living, sharing and being in community – and as such, everyone who attends is invited to join a ‘Community Group’. He told me that each group undertakes several work-shifts during the conference – taking it in turns to cook, serve or clean up after meals. My theme for the week ahead was to be about leadership and ‘response-ability’ and I noted the connection between what I was to explore and the pattern of ‘responsibility and service’ that seemed to be embedded in the design and practice of what happened here in the Mountain House.

Seeds sown

In those first moments Cain introduced me verbally and practically to what is at the heart of IofC. I heard his words but did not consciously take in that he was modelling a spirit of service. I had been side-tracked, noticing my own internal resistance to taking part in the work-shifts – I heard my inner, unpalatable voice of arrogance claiming to myself that ‘MY service will be what I contribute in my conference sessions’. It did not take long to come face to face with my false pride and to realize that, in this context, I was more student than teacher.

In trying to understand what was happening around me, I found myself drawing upon an area of study in complexity sciences called ‘Simple Rules’². These refer to behaviours/ exchanges that emerge amongst

¹ Cain Ormondroyd works as a barrister and is a practicing Christian. He has been involved with IofC over seven years as a conference participant and volunteer organiser

² Reynolds, C. W. (1987) Flocks, herds, and schools: A distributed behavioral model in computer graphics, 21(4) (SIGGRAPH '87 Conference Proceedings) pages 25-34.

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individuals in a human system which then produce 'patterns' or 'culture' e.g. 'the Spirit of Caux'. In 2012, I started engaging others in naming obvious 'seed' behaviours that were happening around us which seemed to express the spirit of Caux. The behaviours – as they are expressed in the next few pages – are the outcome of over six years' refinement by countless others in IofC.

The first was centre-staged in Cain's first exchange with me:

Use Honesty, Unselfishness, Love and Purity to guide decisions: *these four 'absolute standards' are the core of daily practice of those in the IofC fellowship. We only get sight of these through individuals sharing personal stories demonstrating how they have faced deep challenges using these standards as a moral compass. Life-time volunteers like Jean Brown³ continue to source action on the ground that transforms countless lives. She recognised that conflicts in communities were often perpetuated through the stories told by women – by mothers and grandmothers. She realised that they had a key part to play in healing and reconciliation. Today, Creators of Peace⁴ is the most well-established programme of IofC supporting women across the world to heal wounds within families and divided communities. Iman, in her passionate determination to sow the seeds of peace is, against all odds, finding a way to run Peace Circles in Damascus, Syria⁵.*

Valuing Difference

Every year in Caux, an extraordinarily diverse mix of human beings converge – literally every continent is represented; multiple nationalities, religions, ethnicities; people with little or great material wealth; those with and without formal status; intergenerational; multi-lingual – and the list goes on. As human beings, we are hard-wired to categorize, judge, seek alliances with those who are similar, with a tendency to separate from those who are not like us. Daniel Kahnemann⁶, in his book 'Thinking, Fast and Slow' illuminates the process in our brains – that thinking 'fast' is our default reaction to what happens around us. 'Slow' thinking faculties require conscious, effortful attention. So, to get beyond our hard-wired categorizing minds which make us vulnerable to unconscious bias⁷, we need to slow down enough to challenge ourselves to open up to each other. People in IofC are no less mortal than the rest of us, yet countless individuals have embraced courage and forgiveness over fear and shame; let go of hatred in favour of healing; relinquished blame in favour of compassion and righteousness in favour of love; chose connection over conflict. How? They:

Turn judgement into curiosity: *IofC gatherings are designed to encourage deep listening and inquiry between people who might ordinarily be adversaries. Space is given for individuals to share without interruption. Those listening are encouraged to open their hearts and minds to each other's humanity – to act with love, honesty, unselfishness and purity of intention – to forgive and make restitution for one's own wrongdoings. Caux made it possible for Irène Laure, a lifelong socialist, labour leader and French Resistance fighter in WWII to admit her consuming hatred of the German people and to seek forgiveness from them. In the post-apartheid years in South Africa, this context made it possible for Ginn Fourie to forgive and befriend Letlapa Mphahlele, the man whose orders had her daughter killed⁸.*

³ Jean Brown: an Australian, has worked for over 45 years as a full time volunteer with Initiatives of Change, much of that time in India and more recently in Africa. She has been involved in reconciliation initiatives, in training - for 10 years with her husband on the faculty of the Action For Life leadership programme - and as an International Coordinator of Creators of Peace, is the author of the Creators of Peace Circle, a methodology now used in 40 countries to engage women in peace creating.

⁴ Creators of Peace: to find out more <http://www.iofc.org/creators-of-peace>

⁵ Jean Brown supporting Iman to run Peace Circles in Syria: <http://www.iofc.org/circles-syria-%E2%80%93-creators-peace-circles-heart-damascus?bc=node/21827>; and follow this next link to find out more about Iman's story <http://www.the3rdimagazine.co.uk/2014/01/women-who-mean-business/>

⁶ Kahneman (2011)

⁷ Professor John Powell, University of California, diversity researcher, unconscious bias - speaker at the Healing Histories conference in Caux, Summer 2013

⁸ In this film, Ginn and Letlapa bear testament to what becomes possible: 'Beyond Forgiving', Producer and Director: Imad N. Karam: <http://www.iofc.org/beyond-forgiving-documentary-wins-golden-award-inspiration>

Think global, act local, start with oneself

lofC, originally called Moral Re-armament (MRA), took shape in the early to mid-1900's in an era which included the rise of communism and two World wars⁹. MRA's embryonic beginnings were evangelist, centred around Frank Buchman, a Lutheran Minister of German heritage, born in the US. He wanted to change the world.

In 1921 he visited Oxford University, UK. Students were inspired, and out of the 'house parties' that took place, the Oxford Group was formed. In these intimate local community gatherings, people engaged in quiet time, learning to listen deeply to 'God' or to the 'still voice within', sharing what arose for them.

As he travelled the globe he developed a vast following, and MRA began hosting large-scale gatherings. Following a nearly fatal illness in 1943 he said: "*I saw Jesus. He showed me where I had been going wrong. I have been organising a movement. But a movement should be the outcome of changed lives, not the means of changing them. From now on I am going to ask God to make me into a great changemaker*"¹⁰. In recognising this, he tapped into a principle recognised in the science of complex adaptive systems: that it is through the repeated interactions of individuals that the dynamics and patterns of bigger systems are made; and that critical shifts can occur seemingly through individual actions – a phenomenon referred to as the 'Tipping Point'¹¹ which is drawn from the theory of 'self-organised criticality'¹². Buchman returned to more intimate, informal exchanges, seeing them as more effective in bringing about lasting personal transformation as the foundation for global change. MRA's commitment to 'changing the world starting with oneself' took root and many, many people embraced his synthesis as their mandate for how to live their lives. Thus Buchman and his countless followers - engaging in shared spiritual, moral, individual and collective action - co-evolved the behaviours¹³ and patterns/essence of lofC we experience today.

Quiet Time: group consciousness in practice.

It took several years of attending Caux for me to recognise three systemic features embodied in Quiet Time. Firstly, it is **simple** - which makes it potentially easily replicable.

Engage in the practice of Quiet Time: *Every morning in Caux a space is opened up for shared 'quiet time'. Sometimes an individual shares a personal story or reflection; this may be followed by a period of quiet self-reflection, after which, in small groups, individuals may be invited to contribute their insights. The invitation is to seek 'Connection, Correction and Direction' within. It is not an activity to be done at a fixed time and place. It is a 'way of being' that facilitates a deeper connection with oneself, others, the 'here-and-now' and future intent. There is no prescription, no fixed process to follow, only an invitation for individuals to do it in whatever way is best fit for them. Moments of quiet reflection are often used to open meetings, Community Groups, Creators of Peace Circles, workshops and even conference plenaries.*

Secondly, it **connects across scales** - from individual to group to global¹⁴. Sharing Quiet Time, enables individuals to extend their reflection beyond themselves. Listening to the similar and different struggles of others, connects people to each other and links their personal change to global concerns. Thirdly, it is **iterative** – enabling rapid-cycle, regular reflection supporting people's capacity to adapt to complex, shifting conditions. Quiet time invites

⁹ Boobbyer (2013)

¹⁰ His insight was profound - in the parlance of CAS (complex adaptive systems) he switched from trying to change a pattern (i.e. a movement) at the pattern level, (which is not possible); to working with the agents (individuals) and on the conditions (e.g. Quiet Time, action guided by the Four Standards) that combined give rise to those patterns. http://wiki.hsdinstitute.org/complex_adaptive_system

¹¹ Gladwell (2001),

¹² Bak (1997)

¹³ Reynolds (1987)

¹⁴ To influence systemic change, ideally we need to act on at least 3 connected levels of a wider system 'whole', 'part' and 'greater whole'

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‘connection’ to what is calling for our attention; making sense of what needs ‘correction’; and discerning what ‘direction’ or actions to take. At its best this silent, reflective exploration is not conducted as a linear process.

On the face of it, it neatly aligns it to the action-oriented complexity-attuned practice of Adaptive Action^{15, 16, 17}.

Table: Quiet Time and Adaptive Action

Quiet Time:	Generic Activity	3 Questions/Adaptive Action:
CONNECTION: Reflecting on one’s life, actions, impact in the world	Noticing what is present internally, externally; whole, part, greater whole	WHAT? Looking for ‘patterns’ and what holds them in place
CORRECTION: Exploring what repair/restitution one could make	Making sense of what is present; exploring options for action	SO, WHAT? Explore meaning within and across system scales
DIRECTION: Taking action and following through on commitments	Deciding what to do + doing it – observe impact; ➔ Connection/ ‘What?’	NOW WHAT? Taking action - whole, part, greater whole – going for simple, scale-able, replicable

However, process-bound ‘methods’ (as in the table above) by their nature, tend to lead people into simplistic linear thinking which detracts from their accessing the unpredictable, uncontrollable, rather more complex nature of revelatory experience. Simply engaging in a time of quiet and following steps by rote, does not deliver transformative change. The lofC approach to Quiet Time invites people to apply four ‘Standards’ or values (Honesty, Unselfishness, Love and Purity of intention) to their personal reflections and decision-making to:

Engage in honest conversation: lofC’s philosophy suggests that looking at our own lives honestly, equips us for personal change. Using the Four Standards brings an internal check to our thoughts, feelings and actions – in a conference plenary, Mike revealed how he had been judging a colleague for his actions. Instead of speaking to him, he had distanced himself. In sharing his story, he moved himself forward; choosing to reconnect, apologise and open an honest conversation with his colleague. Having others bear witness to our personal stories and struggles is an act in which we entrust others to care for us. This opens us up to potential personal transformation. It is no easy process, but when held in the context of a bigger community committed to the shared ‘practice’, each is supported to step beyond the fear that obstructs honest sharing, to reach across the divide of judgment that keeps people apart.

Irène Laure, Ginn Fourie, Letlapa Mphahlele, Mike and many more, bear testament to the transformation that is possible when we dare to speak honestly and to listen with open hearts as others do the same. Long-standing members of lofC draw on their personal faith to deepen their honest conversations with themselves. Increasingly, others (e.g. those participating in lofC-UK’s REAL Programme) are drawn to using Presence-in-Action¹⁸ within their Quiet Time practice. This contemporary, secular, approach upholds the spiritual underpinning of lofC and equips people to embrace and navigate the volatile, complex, unpredictable, ambiguous nonlinear nature of their inner and outer realms with honesty, compassion and integrity.

Changing the World in Community

Buchman was committed to changing the world and he believed that this depended on individuals committed to personal change, coming together in service to each other and a greater cause. The patterns of being supported and challenged in ‘community’ were established in Buchman’s time and continue today: Creators of Peace women meet in small circles to share and transcend personal stories of conflict, tragedy, loss. Participants at Caux conferences join a ‘community group’ and meet to serve, reflect, connect and share. In all settings,

¹⁵ Borton (1970)

¹⁶ Driscoll (Driscoll, 1994; Driscoll & Teh, 2001), a practice guided by these 3 simple questions: What? So, What? Now what?

¹⁷ Eoyang & Holladay (2013)

¹⁸ Gardiner (2013/18; 2014; 2016; 2017b; 2017a; 2018; PhD pending publication)

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individuals are encouraged to practise deep listening without interruption; to hear all voices and to practice turning judgment into curiosity.

Buchman acted systemically whether or not he knew it. He recognised the importance of thinking globally, acting locally and **making it personal**. In the aftermath of the Second World War, he played a central role in convening crucial dialogues in Caux, between people who previously had been enemies. He championed the notion that a Europe united against war would not become reality if Germany were not included in post-war conversations. To this day, extraordinary healing between peoples in conflict, continues to take place in the cultural ‘container’ of Caux:

Care for others, the planet and myself: Service is central to all lofC gatherings. Everyone shares in running the house. Community Groups at Caux conferences bring individuals together during which their time is divided between reflecting, connecting and serving others in the house. Here individuals get to share the power of meaningful collaborative endeavour; actively experiencing trust-building between strangers and across differences whilst also benefiting from the care of others. The fellowship’s more recent challenge has been recognising the need for individuals to also take care of themselves. lofC is about making the world a fairer, safer, sustainable place for all. After attending the ‘Leading Change for a Sustainable World’ Conference in 2009, Yahaya left a lucrative job in Belgium to return to Nigeria. He was inspired to take action on desertification and the increasing conflicts over land, fuel and water – all exacerbated by deforestation. In 2013 a large team of lofC volunteers headed to South Sudan to train local peace-makers across regions within this newest of nations.

In lofC, inspired action is birthed and unlikely coalitions are forged in service to something greater than any individual in the mix.

Patterns across space and time

The work started by Buchman - taken up the Oxford Group, MRA and now lofC - has changed shape and form, responding to the needs and challenges of the times. Paradoxically, what has enabled this network to endure across place and time is, in large part due to what has stayed the same. Stuff happens. Lots of stuff happens. Every summer some 6-8 conferences take place at Caux Palace (the Mountain House) in what is now called the Caux Forum. Such activity has endured, not through central control but through an enduring commitment of individuals stepping forward to:

Follow my Calling and follow through with others: lofC nurtures the ability in people to respond to their unique ‘calling’, even if others initially do not see the point: The Mountain House in Caux was bought after World War II by Swiss individuals and families to support the prevention of future wars; Foundations for Freedom, a change-makers programme connecting young Eastern Europeans began from one man’s determination. Caux conferences are sourced almost entirely by volunteers – beyond the more obvious organising teams there are numerous contributions: Jan comes each year, baking the most amazing cakes for Afternoon Tea; Elisabeth, now in her 80s, attends the entire summer, each day creating the most exquisite flower arrangements throughout the house; she passes on her gift to young trainees to continue the service. Volunteers travel from the furthest reaches of the world at the start and end of the summer to ‘open’ and ‘close’ the Mountain House. All are humbling examples of the myriad personal contributions that enable lofC to continue to play its part in changing lives and changing the world.

How does all this continue? There is a helpful HSD model called STAR¹⁹ which points to four conditions that help a group to be creative, collaborative, productive and generative (i.e. able to do useful work, repeatedly): each individual’s purpose and passion aligned to a shared **Reason for being (R)** i.e. purpose; a focus on doing **Authentic work (A)** e.g. running a purposeful conference; having a mix of people with **Similarities and differences (S)**; and effective **Talking and Listening (T)**. Without coherence across these four points, useful endeavour rarely

¹⁹ These four dimensions form the points of the STAR model (Zimmerman, 2006; 2011; 2013)

gets started; or if it does, is rarely sustained. Whatever the cause that generates an impetus, it has to matter enough to everyone concerned to stay committed, engaged.

lofC is a living paradox. The more I have engaged with it, the more I see that it is unquestionably a powerhouse fellowship engaged in change for good in the world. Yet, the focus and extent of its activities are unpredictable, as individuals move into action according to their own context and calls of conscience. People within, grow the know-how (consciously or intuitively) to set the conditions for meaningful action in their part of the world. They come with what they have, trusting that in sharing their intentions, what is needed will be found. They learn to sit with ambiguity and uncertainty; and to:

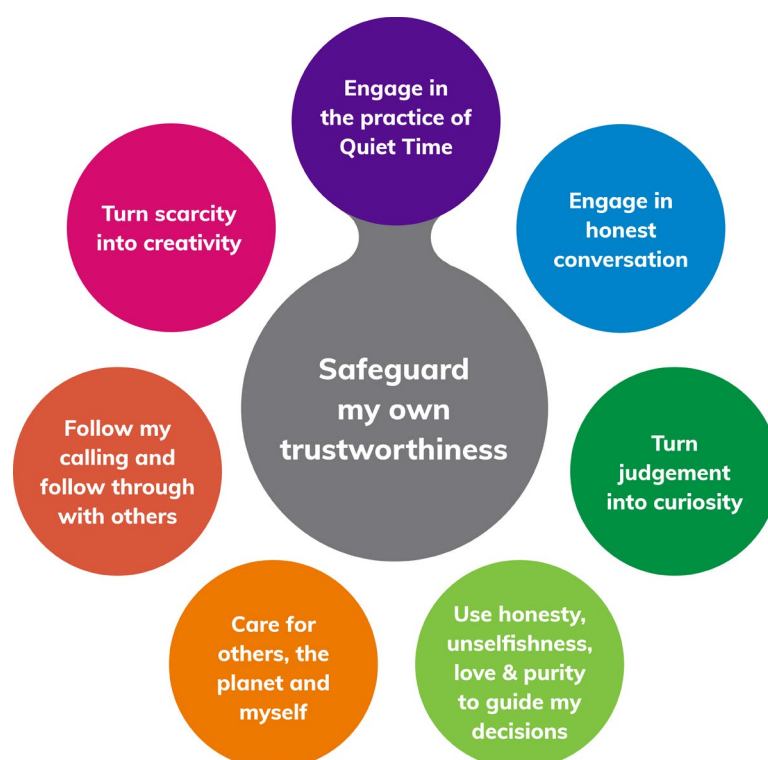
Turn scarcity into creativity: *the practices of lofC have cultivated in the fellowship, the capacity to see beyond scarcity and to source contribution in all its guises – time, effort, skills, knowledge, guidance, money, equipment, buildings etc. The House in Baranivka²⁰ started out as the dream of a group of young people in Ukraine. Many thought they were mad, yet now it is a building with a community of volunteers, seeking to live sustainably, running training programmes that inspire, equip and connect future generations.*

Action arises from need, inspiration, willingness, passion. lofC is a germinating greenhouse, cultivating in its fellowship the capacity to see beyond scarcity and to trust that if their purpose and passion is strong enough, whatever is needed will be found. lofC's lifetime volunteers are our teachers, actively playing their part in inspiring new leaders.

Identifying lofC's Seed Behaviours

These behaviours are in and of lofC and I, as a relative newcomer, started naming them, making the implicit, explicit. Why? Because I could. Because I held myself as a part of lofC. Because I believed they could support people, new and old within lofC to better articulate, share and guide others to grasp the essence of what it means to be involved. I hoped this would become a mutual process of sharing, education, clarification. If I had unilaterally 'conjured up' a list based on what I thought people 'should' be doing, there would have been no recognition of them nor resonance within the system; and very likely there would have been significant resistance - there was not. This is a crucial point for anyone wanting to use Seed Behaviours (aka Simple Rules²¹) to support systemic change.

I started the seed behaviour experiment in



²⁰ The mission of the 'House in Baranivka': a meeting place that is aimed at the harmonious development of individuals and the creation of a community of like-minded people who will work to improve society <http://www.baranivka.org/en>

²¹ In identifying Simple Rules, the focus is on ACTUAL behaviours in groups. Each Behaviour starts with a verb, is framed in the positive, is general enough to apply across scales in the 'system'; and specific enough to be interpreted and applied to anyone in any role in that system. This approach is radically different to conventional 'culture change' interventions, which involve naming 'desired/ espoused' values which bear no relation to the dynamics actually playing out within an organisation. The consequent gap between reality and desire, is often too vast for the system to make the transition. The change effort fails, succeeding only in wasting time and money.

2012 and received some very encouraging feedback from a life-time Elder²². By 2013, I realised that I had started something which, at that time, only I could carry forward, if it was to have any chance of benefitting lofC. Each year since, involving more and more people within lofC, these behaviours have been fine-tuned; with a final reworking in 2015-16 with a group of people participating in a training programme I initiated in lofC-UK: *Regenerating Engagement and Learning (REAL) within and beyond lofC*.

Safeguard my own trustworthiness: this was articulated during the first REAL workshop in April 2015. The group talked about personal trustworthiness being central to the work of individuals in lofC - in building deeply trusting relationships, often over many years, as a prelude to healing and reconciliation with peoples across divides. It was recognised that the other named behaviours supported each individual to develop and deepen their own personal trustworthiness and that this trustworthiness ripples out across the fellowship as a whole. Without lofC's collective trustworthiness, it would not be held in such high regard by the Swiss government, the United Nations and other governments and institutions. Together people in the fellowship have grown this collective trustworthiness over decades and individually each of us – in a single incongruent act - has the power to break it.

These behaviours in their current form, resonate strongly with many in the fellowship. They are a 'new expression' of lofC's enduring way of being and living in the world – a kind of bridge, offering a more tangible resource for newcomers and old to share, experiment with and understand the dynamics of the spirit of Caux. Increasingly, these are being shared during Caux conferences.

Beyond narrative and description: A systemic explanation

No seed behaviour stands alone; together they combine to generate the repeating patterns that people experience as 'the spirit of Caux/lofC'. The causality is non-linear – in other words, all are needed and there is no way to determine a direct casual connection between particular behaviours and events/happenings. In the sciences that explore complex adaptive systems (CAS), repeating patterns are called 'Fractal'²³. The conditions that generate fractal patterns are simple, repeatable and scale-able. In other words, when the same conditions are applied repeatedly in other or all parts of a given system (e.g. individual/group/organization/community/nation), a recognizably similar pattern will emerge. This is why strangers can go from Caux to visit lofC groups in Japan or Uganda or UK or India and KNOW they are amidst the lofC fellowship. What happens at Caux plays out in smaller scale in lofC groups, families and communities across the world.

Fractal patterns occur in any human system that has expanded and endured across geographical space and time. Take, for example, Alcoholics Anonymous which grew from the same Buchman / Oxford Group roots. Anyone who is a member of both, would recognize some similarities as well as some seemingly crucial differences. They both share the principle of small circle gatherings, sharing personal stories and struggles; and the focus for both is on personal transformation, honest exchange and a commitment to love and empathy over judgment. There are other similarities and fundamental differences, yet both have endured over a similar time-period. Being able to see and understand the meta-principles that are at play in both – and indeed in any other large-scale human system – makes it more possible to influence the depth and spread of a movement. This is about 'scale' and 'replication' i.e. vertical and horizontal growth. Being able to see, understand and take systemic action from this perspective requires a shift in thinking – a paradigm shift.

²² Keisuke Nakayama: was a full-time worker of lofC (then MRA) 1963-1970. He got a job and remained in the auto industry as a staff interpreter and executive secretary in the years 1970-92, in a US-Japan joint venture. From 1992-2006 he served as head of Asia-Center in Odawara, originally affiliated with MRA/lofC near Tokyo. Since 2007, he has served as director of International lofC Association of Japan. He has served as one of the Elders of lofC international. He sought me out and commended the Seed Behaviours as the most tangible articulation of the 'spirit of Caux' he had seen. His validation spurred me on in 2013.

²³ Gouyet (1996). Definition: Fractal - "the same from near as from far"

Beyond Newton

There is a tendency in conventional management and organizational development approaches to think in terms of ‘Vision’, ‘strategic direction’, ‘blue-print’ or ‘best practice’. Such notions are predicated on Newtonian thinking which assumes the ability to control and predict with some certainty. Such thinking often leads to misguided ‘solutions’ that involve detailed, systematic (linear) processes or checklists/templates that define required inputs and explicit outputs. In CAS, such assumptions and interventions may, under limited circumstances be a good fit; yet frequently prove to be a waste of time or worse, deeply disruptive. Every CAS is unique, with different members, contexts and an infinite number of unknowable and interdependent variables. When we accept that reality is this complex, we do not waste effort, time or money on seeking THE best way because we know there could be many possibilities. We understand that there is no single best way or direction or solution other than that which is fit to context, community and purpose. IofC has endured because it has honoured the primacy of each individual to follow what moves them to action – to shift from ‘fast’ to ‘slow’ thinking – to engage in the practice of Quiet Time aided by what those of us in IofC’s REAL programme refer to as Presence-in-Action²⁴.

IofC – a theory of change through new lenses

IofC has changed fundamentally, no longer being a solely Christian-based fellowship; and there are core practices that remain essentially the same. On its website²⁵ you will find:

Who we are: Initiatives of Change (IofC) is a world-wide movement of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds, who are committed to the transformation of society through changes in human motives and behaviour, starting with their [sic] own

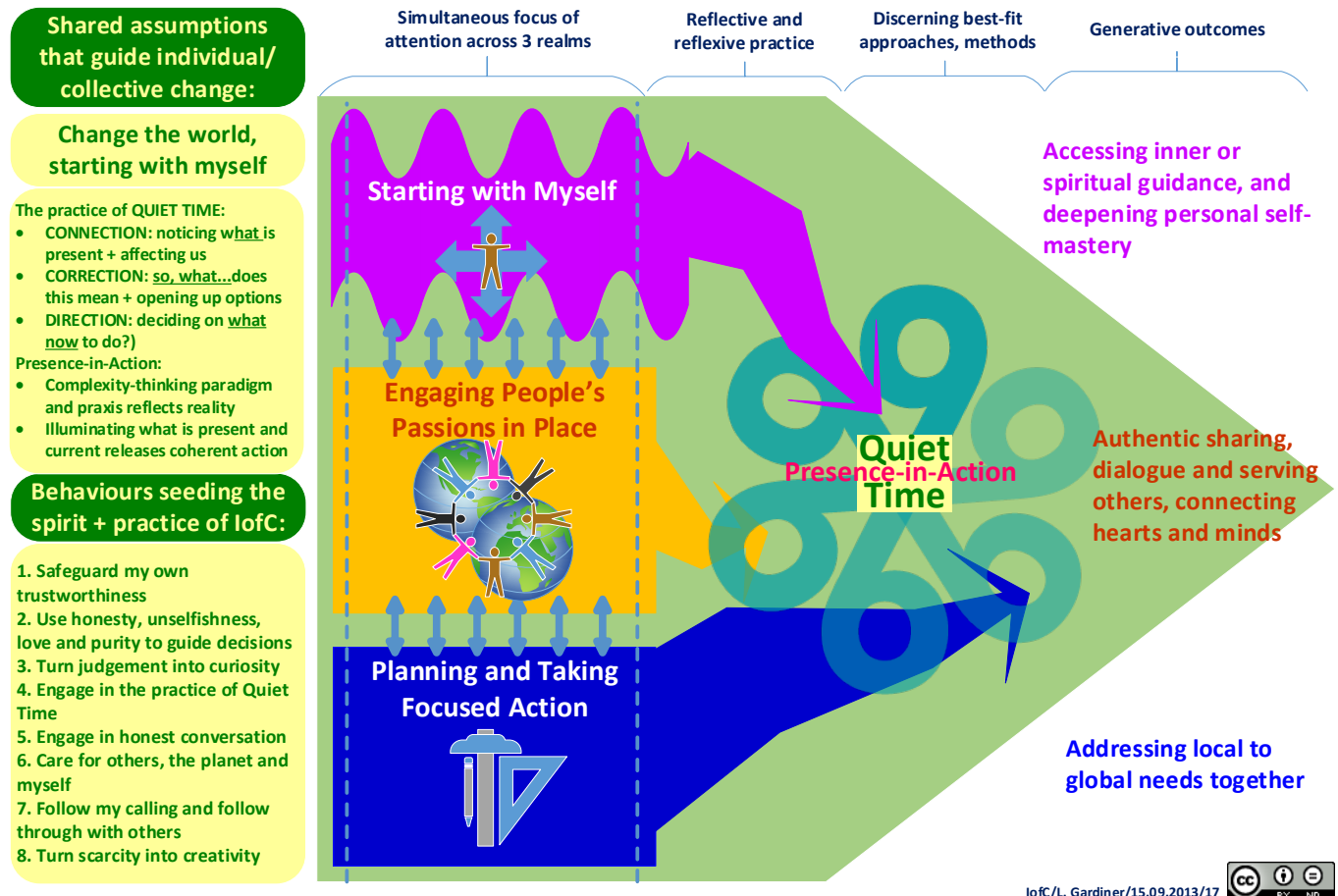
Purpose: We work to inspire, equip and connect people to address world needs, starting with themselves, in the areas of trust building, ethical leadership and sustainable living.

The tone and content of these statements suggest that IofC is like many other international NGOs. The words do not convey the reality of IofC. It is a diverse, complex fellowship made up of unknown numbers of individuals, informal groups and formally constituted bodies in over 60 countries across the world. It is made manifest through the heart-felt, human, humble contributions of countless people whose work is personal, purposeful and practical; undertaken in community rather than being hierarchically organized or driven by self-promoting egoists; where action is emergent accounting for ebb and flow, rather than directed control; it has been made possible through supported, volunteer contribution more than employment and payment for time and services. The emphasis has been on contextually relevant, inner-sourced, intentional (not destinational) action rather than externally commissioned, end-focused outputs. Due to national, legal and economic imperatives, this is changing. However, some things remain core: IofC is about ‘life-changers’ not ‘movement-makers’; engagement not consultation; practical, contextually-relevant action not abstract policy-making nor ‘talking about’ what others could/should do. IofC at its most effective, embraces and works with complexity of reality and not against it.

²⁴ Gardiner, PhD pending (2019)

²⁵ <https://www.iofc.org/iofc-international>

Initiatives of Change ~ A Theory of “REAL Change” through Presence-in-Action



The above diagram is my attempt to distil the exquisite simplicity of lofC from the complexity at play. Most organizations focus only on **Planning and Taking Focused Action**; some actually **Engage People** in co-creative dialogue. Few understand the concept and benefits of sourcing inspiration **Starting with Oneself** – trusting individuals to source their own work and be responsible for carrying it through. Honoring the interdependence of all three realms has enabled lofC to be effective, enduring.

No single person knows the scale and scope of lofC's work in its entirety. The focus and extent of its activities remain unpredictable and members continue to follow their own calls of conscience. This diversity and distributed leadership is its inherent systemic strength – attempts to harness, control and direct the wider fellowship (following conventional management principles) are inconsistent with its foundational principles. That MRA/lofC has endured thus far is proof enough that life-changers working together, do indeed give rise to social-change movements. lofC is not an organisation; it is a self-organizing collection of organisations, informal groups and individuals committed to changing the world, starting with themselves – focusing on what they are each called to do. In such systems, centralized leadership and control is an impossibility; the desire for it, futile; and the imposition of it would, in my view, herald lofC's end.

Beyond logic, systemic magic!

That so many diverse peoples from the poorest and richest regions of the world find their way to Caux each summer is a testament to all that is clear, focused, and coherent. That speakers, corporate and world leaders self-fund and then find themselves alongside ordinary citizens, washing dishes or cooking an evening meal together, defies logic. That these so-called ‘conferences’ take place at all, when some participants pay moderate sums and only for ‘bed and board’ whilst others pay nothing at all; that teams of volunteers step forward to

make those summer gatherings happen again and again; that all this happens, is evidence of the monumental willingness of so many to contribute whatever they have to give, to make a difference. That some volunteers travel from the furthest reaches of the world for one week to prepare the Mountain House for focused service; yet more return 8 weeks later to close it, is a humbling reminder of the myriad contributions of service that are needed to enable Caux to play its part in changing lives and changing the world. These are not conferences in the ways many might expect. These are life-changing community experiences – ways of living, learning, giving and receiving that prove we can be in the world in radically different ways that enhance the lives of everyone involved.

Who leads? No one and everyone

Newcomers to IofC and Caux are puzzled and beguiled by something that appears to have no clear lines of leadership and authority. Our human tendency for needing to and believing we can control the world around us, is shaken in this place. Outsiders skilled in influencing hierarchies, look for lines to the seats of power – THE person/people at the top. There is no single person in charge; no single pathway to decision-makers and for decision-making - not even the President of the International Association (the membership body for IofC member countries) can direct others to act on their command. Leadership is distributed amongst individuals and across multiple formal and informal bodies. Route-ways to decisions depend on relational, emergent processes; and pathways and outcomes are unforeseeable. We might ask: How does anything get done? Clearly it does. More puzzling a question is: How has so much been achieved at personal, community, national and international levels? The preceding pages, using alternative lenses, offer new ways of understanding how.

IofC: A complex adaptive system (CAS)

In essence, I believe that those within have learned how to work with complexity and emergence - rather than succumbing to the seductive Newtonian illusion that the world, people and processes can be controlled through force and formal power. IofC has adapted and endured; supported by the simple, repeatable conditions that scale up and down the network. Everyone leads and no one leads and everyone has access to the DNA that is IofC.

DNA of IofC: Engaging in **quiet time**; gathering together in **community**, in **intentional service**, **sharing stories** of personal guidance and transformation.... **guided** by a compass of **four universal human standards** (patterns) – manifesting through **consistent behaviours**; which when illuminated and articulated, enable newcomers and old to grasp the tangible from the intangible; ultimately supporting generative²⁶ adaptation and ever greater coherence.

The Caux-Laboratory: A place to convene, connect, commune and co-create

Caux holds, in glorious magnitude, the essence IofC. The Mountain House is our global northern hemisphere home. It is the grand-scale equivalent of the ‘community groups’ that function within each conference of the Caux Forum. It is the place to which we return, to be amongst friends, to share, to learn, to serve, to remember together who we are and why we commit our time, energy and attention; it is where we welcome in and seek to create new bonds with people we have yet to come to know. It is the heart and hearth of our global family and it is in this place that we re-connect, re-invigorate and re-source ourselves to continue in current endeavors or find new inspiration.

It has been and still ‘is’. Caux is in IofC and IofC is in Caux. As one and both: ever-changing – expanding, contracting, changing shape and reacting to local and global uncertainties; and ever the same - fundamentally maintaining an extraordinary coherence, continuity and constancy of purpose. We are in IofC; IofC is in us; IofC is us.

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²⁶ Generativity is another word for sustainability but it emphasises the potential for life-enhancing expansion and change rather than keeping something (sustaining) the same

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