

Patterns of systemic relationships in change programmes

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Delivering Transportation industry change initiatives where legacy systems and processes require replacing to meet compliance deadlines.



Agenda



Context

People in context

Systems in context

Case study

Deploying process change at scale

Stakeholder landscape

Conclusions

Seeing the patterns

Strategies for the future

Human Systems Dynamics – a people-in-context lens

Barry Oshry

Classic interventions in organisations tend to fix individuals and teams

People-in-context evaluations seek to understand behaviours in the context of the system, and the system-in-system

We are blind to our context and others' which leads to bias and politics

The system is described as a:

1. Patterns of systemic relationships (what the whole is)
2. Patterns of systemic processes (what the whole does)

The Organic Systems Framework “allows us to understand and influence the widest range of system phenomena: how, as system members, we experience ourselves, our relationships with others, the systems we are part of, other systems, and the relationships among systems; and it allows us to take more informed actions based on these experiences.”
(Oshry, 2019, p.19)



System structure and function

Systems within system

1. Tops
2. Middles
3. Bottoms
4. Customers

System functions

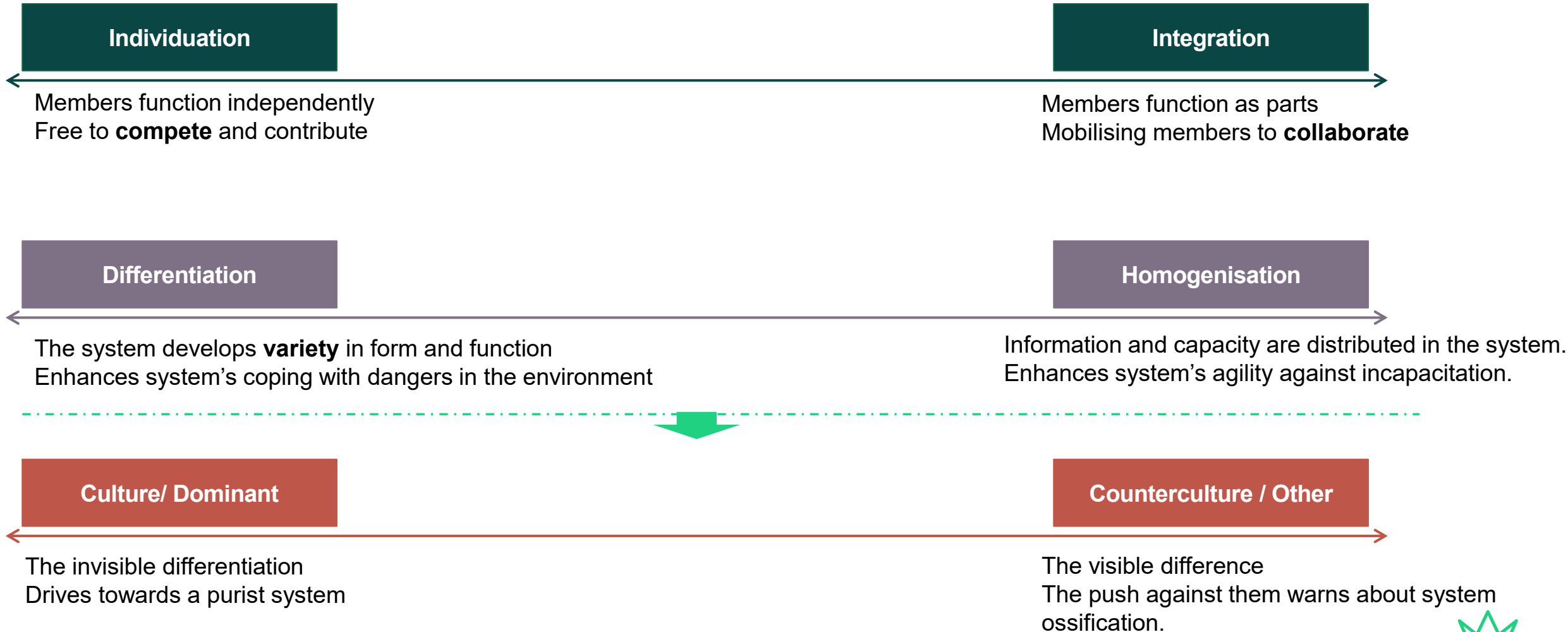
1. Individuation
2. Integration
3. Differentiation
4. Homogenisation

Patterns of systemic relationships (what the whole is)

Tops	Middles	Bottoms	Customers
- Deal with complexity, uncertainty and accountability - Have responsibility for the larger system - Feel overwhelmed, protective and defensive - Respond by differentiating (directionally) - Face territoriality and competition with other Tops - Require more integration and homogenisation	- Deal with tearing and diffusing - Feel responsible for resolving End's problems and lonely/torn from others - Respond by individuating - Drawn towards Tops, Bottoms, Suppliers or Customers but not one another - Face disintegration - Require integration, homogenisation, and differentiation	- Deal with vulnerability - Feel responsible for resolving End's problems - Feel controlled and crushed/eliminated - Respond by homogenising and integrating internally and by differentiating and individuating externally - Face disengagement - Require individuation internally and differentiation externally	- Deal with delays - Feel done by the Providers - Require integration



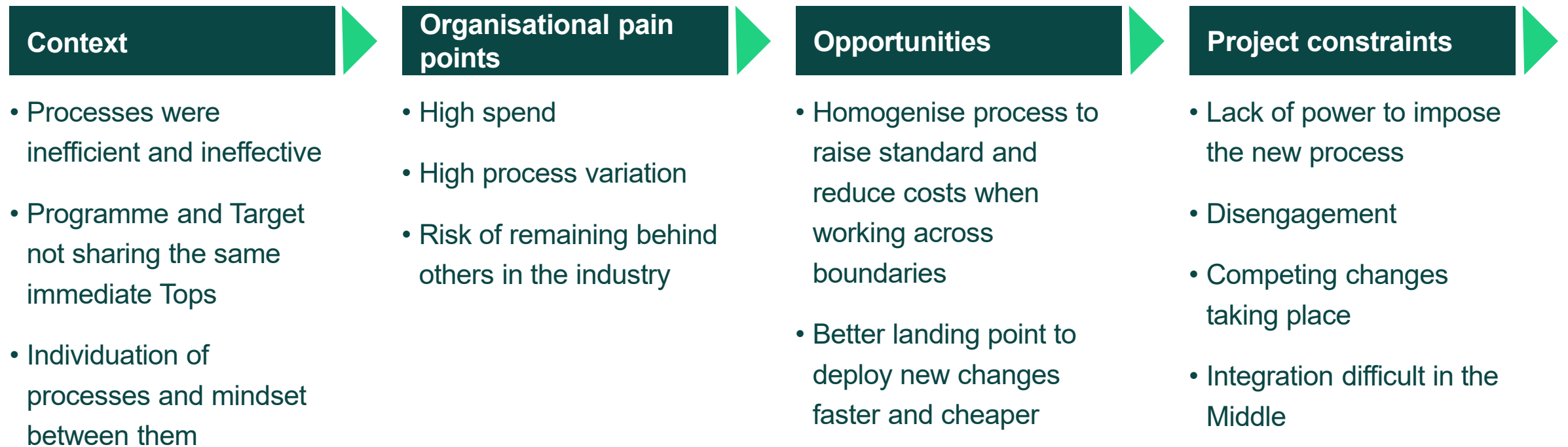
Patterns of systemic processes (what the whole does)



Case study: Deploying process change across multiple subsidiaries

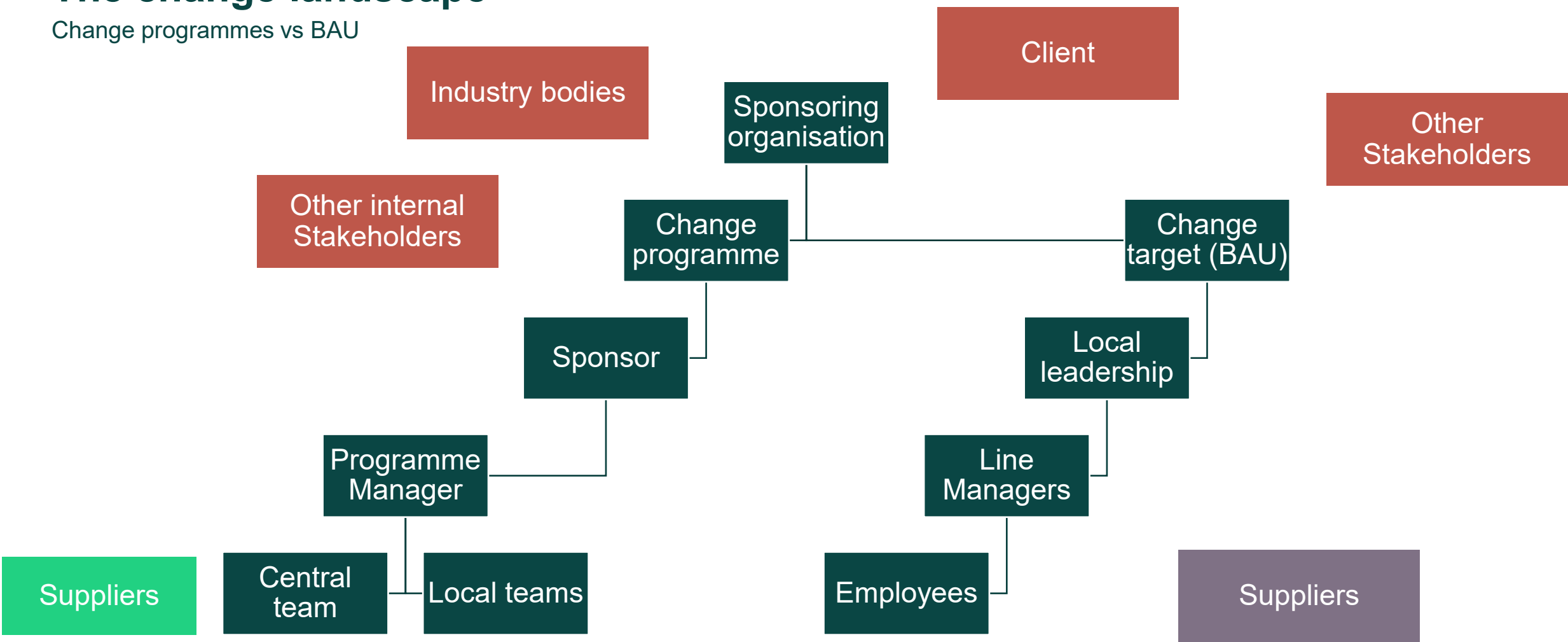
A case study

Views are mine, as an actor in systems



The change landscape

Change programmes vs BAU



The learning



Diagnose correctly in what context we are and they are



Assess the balancing of processes for the programme and BAU



Change is co-created, it requires shared responsibility, alignment, and imagination



What feels like reality, it is NOT reality.

(Oshry, 1995)



Strategies for the future

Focus on the possibility of partnership – it is in our interest and the system’s survival for us to have a satisfying and effective relationship

Courage, systemic knowledge, shared purpose

Use an understanding of “context”

- Limit the tendency to assign blame
- People have affinities for a certain systemic process
- Diagnose your position and the others’ looking at emotions
- Watch where responsibility goes
- Check if people feel incompetent
- Listen for the Counterculture

Bring awareness to the system

- Bring awareness of the dyad when situations arise
- Use what is demanded of the “other”/”them” to drive behaviour when switching conditions
- Invite boundary crossing to update frames of reference
- Start with 1-2-1 coaching conversations
- Co-locate and shadow to step in each other’s shoes

Shift to a Total System Power

- At the Top, from Arrogant and Burdened to Developer of people
- At the Middle, from Weak and Torn to integrator
- At the Bottom from Resistant and Oppressed, to Fixer of problems
- At the Customer, from Nasty and Screwed to Validator of products
- Emphasise shared responsibility

Seek to balance the system

- Encourage a kaleidoscope, not purity of colour
- Every push has its pull: seek to understand unintended consequences across multiple dimensions
- Use scenario planning to review consequences of imbalanced systemic processes
- Iterate often
- Use alliance agreements



Thank you,

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APM Systems Thinking Network Volunteers

<https://www.apm.org.uk/community/systems-thinking-interest-network/>



References

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Total System Power - Article by Barry Oshry - Power in Relationships

The Systems Thinker – People in Context, Part I

The Systems Thinker – People in Context, Part II

SCiO - Barry Oshry: What Lies Beneath. Systems blindness and systems sight