

SENIOR FELLOWS AND FRIENDS

Alert. Relaxed. Collegial.



Recap of 4/7/22 conversation with Dr. Timo Järvensivu, Helsinki

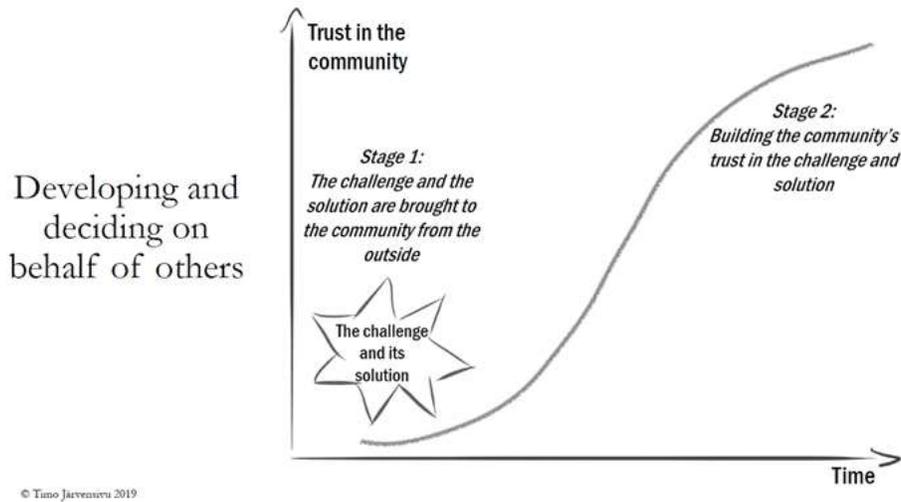
Dear Senior Fellows and Friends,

This was a much smaller, more intimate conversation than usual. As a result, the recap will be more limited. The session was as rich as the larger ones have been, I think because the people who show up are always focused on the value that comes from dialogue as opposed to lecture at scale.

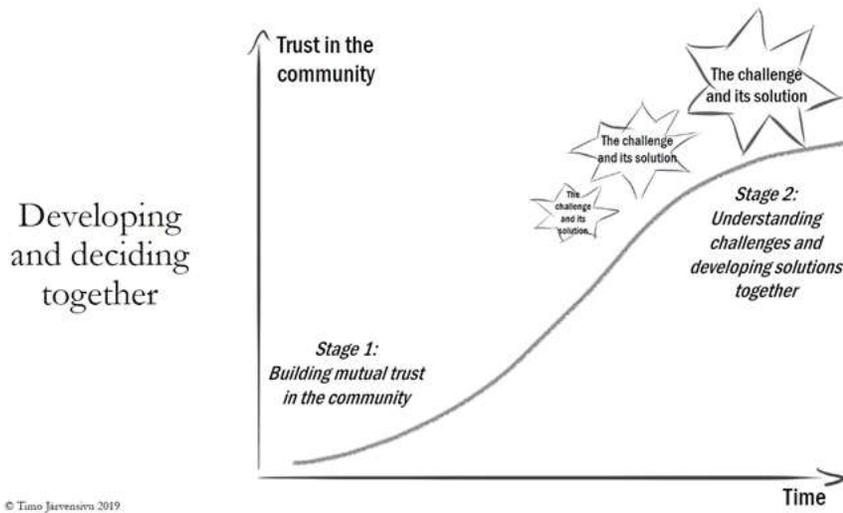
Our Finnish colleague, Timo Järvensivu, who joined at 2 a.m. his time, did not disappoint. We began with introductions as usual. Timo was quite interested in the work of a retired federal HR official/current Ph.D. student who is retooling at the intersection of diversity, equity, inclusion and innovation and is preparing to resume work with government, this time from the nonprofit sector. Her self-introduction led to a conversation that could have gone deep for the entire evening. An important connection was made that could result in future collaboration.

Timo's work, which is usually with nonprofit organizations, involves learning, working, and leading in networks. His experience has taught him that this work is like pushing with a rope: forcing doesn't work. Similarly, devising a strategy and imposing it on the network doesn't work, because trust hasn't developed. He has realized that getting to the core work with each new collection of people begins with peeling the onion and finding out what's there. This has worked at all levels (acknowledging that silos can be both horizontal and vertical) over numerous engagements as trusting relationships have developed.

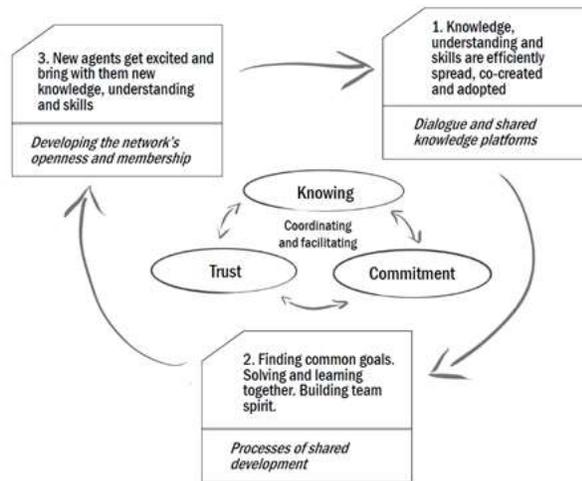
Some customers would like for him to just give them the solution. Over time, he has learned that the problem with that is that they continue to make the same mistakes. To avoid a vicious cycle and repeat engagements that should be unnecessary, one has to transition gradually from **Close doors, come up with solution, provide solution**, like this:



to **Develop and decide together**, like this:



to **Create community of solvers first, foster trust, develop a solution together and commit to a course of action** – and then do it again and again – like this:



Growing together in a virtuous cycle

Timo Järvenivuori - Aditha Arachchi Visak

© Timo Järvenivuori 2019

This is important work because Finland has its own hard-to-solve crosscutting issues, such as mental illness in youth. “We assume we have trust. We’re not good at vulnerability. My role is to help clients develop *enough* trust and vulnerability to enable a virtuous cycle of problem solving.”

Timo thinks about the central components of Knowing, Trust, and Commitment like this:

Knowing	Trust	Commitment
Name, face and background organisation and the person behind the titles	Good will	Will to make promises: autonomy, meaningfulness, connection
Knowledge and skills	Knowledge and skills	Knowledge and skills
Needs and expectations	Vulnerability	Structural factors: enablers and obstacles
Shared history	Consistency	Keeping promises

© Timo Järvenivuori 2019

It’s easy to look at the transition shown above and think, “Well, of course” – yet such a shift rarely occurs in practice, especially when the players sit in different organizations.

Other points of discussion:

- What does shared history mean? Either (a) we’re all alike, or (b) we’re all different, and we’re sharing our differences. Sometimes we’re locked into our history. We must be able to turn the page.

- The point was made that each person must be able to express their truth and their experience, without getting stuck there. "Say it and then move on."
- If we can't be honest, how can we solve?
- Acknowledge the power differentials in the room, and at the same time, remember that as a person I always retain *the power to question* and *the power to take questions*. We must question without attacking.
- There was a brief exchange about polarization, extreme views, and Finland's multi-party system.
- There was a brief exchange about trust (Does it have to be earned?) and respect.

It's obvious that Timo thoroughly understands the interplay of hierarchy and network. He has developed skill in getting others to open up. The result is that he keeps getting new work from nonprofits and government agencies in Finland.

What I've seen more of, during the 19-year run of Senior Fellows and Friends, has been academics and practitioners who dwell on how hard it all is and public servants who get their tickets punched in crosscutting leadership programs and then revert to waiting for permission. Timo is fostering change in a way that is congruent with the stated organizational values and aspirations of U.S. government agencies. A note he sent us afterward expressed his fundamentally collegial orientation: "Many thanks for the lively, wonderful conversation! As I said, I thoroughly enjoyed learning with you. My perspectives into shared history, trust, inclusion and diversity etc. widened toward new, rich territories. Thank you!"

Timo has attended several SFF sessions since early last year and fellow participants have seen how seamlessly he fits into each conversation. If you want to talk with him, he wants to talk with you, so let me know if you'd like his email address or an introduction. As *optional* preparation, you could read his book (see the reviews at <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/52518988-managing-in-networks>). There won't be a quiz!

Participants joined from Fredericksburg, VA, Colorado Springs, CO, and Helsinki, Finland. Each time, we discover commonalities and warm up the space by beginning with a round of introductions. Please consider joining us in the future.

Sincerely,
Kitty Wooley



HOW WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE?

Cooperating freely, learning on the fly, empowering ourselves, and navigating unknown waters beyond the edge of the comfort zone are the name of the game. We began our public leadership journey in calm harbors, and now we're surrounded by the white water of constant change. Business as usual isn't working well enough. We choose to gather our strengths and lead from wherever we are, applying our best efforts to the challenges of our time. Are you coming?

Header photo: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kayakers_in_Redwood_City,_California.jpg