# The Outside:
# Jargon Jukebox

Words are funny, shape-shifting, musical things; they hold different meanings for different people and different communities. This is often a wonderful thing, but for words to be useful in collective systems change work, we need some shared definitions. In short, context matters. Maintaining respect for cultural differences, we also have a responsibility to be clear with each other for the purpose of shared learning.

When members of The Outside team use the following terms, these are the definitions that we are working with and that we encourage you to work with below. Would you like to see another term on this list? Let us know!

**Community of Practice (CoP):** A community that learns and practices new ways of working together, with individuals openly sharing information and resources, for the purpose of shared learning.

> *"CoPs are also self-organized. People share a common work and realize there is great benefit to being in relationship. They use this community to share what they know, to support one another, and to intentionally create new knowledge for their field of practice."*
>
> -Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, "Lifecycle of Emergence: Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale."

**Emergence:** The process of a new reality coming into being as a result of self-organizing parts and patterns that could never have been predicted.

> *"In nature, change never happens as a result of top-down, pre-conceived strategic plans, or from the mandate of any single individual or boss. Change begins as local actions spring up simultaneously in many different areas. If these changes remain disconnected, nothing happens beyond each locale. However, when they become connected, local actions can emerge as a powerful system with influence at a more global or comprehensive level."*

-Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, "Lifecycle of Emergence: Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale"

**Participatory Leadership:** A collective approach to decision-making that honors every contribution and intentionally redistributes power.

**Prototyping:** An experimental approach used to quickly test ideas, directions, and strategies in complex environments.

**Learning Organization:** An organization that recognizes its own limitations and commits to continuous, collective learning for the benefit of all parties.

> *"[Learning organizations are places] where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together."*
>
> –Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*

**Living system:** An open system that we find in nature (or that is inspired by nature) that moves and evolves based on the fundamental principles of nature, the two primary principles being self-organization and emergence.

**Self-organization:** The process by which actors in a living system organize in ways to support themselves and each other and the whole.

> *"Networks are the only form of organization used by living systems on this planet. These networks result from self-organization, where individuals or species recognize their interdependence and organize in ways that support the diversity and viability of all."*
>
> -Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, "Lifecycle of Emergence: Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale"

**Shared Work:** The aspirational work of a team, organization, or community that brings us together despite our different lived experiences and perspectives.

> *"Often the differences between collaborators—different perspectives, backgrounds, ideologies, and aspirations—becomes the focus of meetings rather than getting work done together. Shared Work offers a way for us to think about taking the next step together to begin to move forward on those issues and challenges we care about in our organizations, communities, and systems."*
>
> –Tuesday Ryan-Hart

System: An interconnected structure of actors, relationships, parts, patterns, and flows of information.

> *"What is a system? Simply a set of things that are interconnected in way that produce distinct patterns of behavior—be they cells in an organism, protestors in a crowd, birds in a flock, members of a family or banks in a financial network. And it is the relationship between the individual parts—shaped by their stocks and flows, feedbacks, and delay— that give rise to their emergent behavior."*

> –Kate Raworth, *Doughnut Economics*

Systems change: An attempt to work with systems and inside of systems, understanding systems dynamics and patterns, to create positive social change.

> *"Our systems are giving us the results they were intended for. The problem isn't their design. The problem is that we—our communities, capabilities, awareness, and expectations—have changed while our systems have not...*

> *...'the good old days' are a myth. The 'good old days' provided decent outcomes for only a fraction of people. But in generations past, many didn't mind that decent outcomes were reserved for the fortunate. In a delightful twist, however, the seeking-out of new approaches—done in the spirit of correction—tends to surface bold new alternatives that don't only serve marginalized people better. Bold new alternatives serve everyone better."*

> -Tim Merry and Tuesday-Ryan Hart, "The Big Bang of Equity & Systems Change"