

CHAPTER 6: AGREEMENTS EVIDENCE MAPS—SEEING AGREEMENTS THROUGH THE LENSES OF ECOSYNOLOGICS

The purpose of the Agreements Evidence Map, which I will shorten to the “Agreements Map,” is to enable you to see your agreements as they show up in the practices, structures and processes you experience in your life. The four economic questions lead you to identify patterns that signify the underlying agreements shaping lived reality. Locating this information on the terrain of the Agreements Map will allow you to assess these patterns relative to the five relationships and three levels of perceived reality and to determine which ones you want to strengthen and which you want to have less of. In other words, your completed Agreements Map will support your moving to a higher level of abundance in resources, a higher vibrancy in the value you experience, and a higher harmonic in the organization of human interactions.

In this chapter, I am going to take you through the steps of creating and interpreting Agreements Maps.⁸² First, I will describe the process for gathering the information on which the Agreements Map will be based. Then I will delve into the details of creating the content of the map derived from that information. In addition to mapping the data on how agreements show up, you will be using color-coding to capture the strength of the patterns that emerge. This represents an adaptation of the idea of the “choropleth map,” a map that is color-coded based on some statistical property of the data in the map.⁸³ The color-coding will allow you to make your assessments and comparisons more readily. Finally, I will suggest how to go about determining what the content signifies and the various ways you can learn from Agreements Maps. Now, let’s look at how you can go about constructing an Agreements Map for your own group.

CREATING AN AGREEMENTS MAP

The Agreements Map captures your agreements by applying the four lenses to the five primary relationships at the three levels of perceived reality, all in one color-coded graphic. Yikes! As you approach the task of creating an Agreements Map, it may help to remember that this complicated and impersonal-looking table is just another way of drawing the 3-circle diagram that emerged from our reflections on personal experience. It is just not possible to write down all of our observations on the 3-circle diagram, so we need to work with the table instead. In the translation process, we do not want to forget that the Agreements Map is really the application of the four lenses to your own experience.

Building the map—process

To build the Agreements Evidence Map, you need to populate it with data—evidence of the agreements that exist in the set of relationships you are examining. As in any exercise of this nature, it is extremely important to build the Agreements Map on credible evidence. The process involves identifying reliable sources of information, gathering and mapping the evidence, and then validating the map. I am going to describe how I do this when I am

acting as an outside consultant to the group. Different groups can come up with different approaches, of course. The important thing is to find some way to ensure objectivity and reliability, so that group members will be willing to accept and work with the completed Agreements Map.

SOURCES

To address the issue of reliability, I try to get multiple sources for the evidence. Typically, I focus on interviewing individuals who have a deep understanding of how the group functions, usually based on years of experience in the group. I complement these individuals' observations with my own observations of the group in action. I also look for documentary evidence of the group's processes and outcomes, both from its internal reports and from documents created outside the group. These three sources, as a starting point, let me triangulate different pieces of information to validate what I am seeing or hearing.

For example, if an interviewee in a service organization tells me emphatically that the group focuses on healthy relationships with its customers, I would expect to see documented processes, organizational structures, information systems, and customer feedback that supported that assertion. In a family setting, if Dad says the kids come first, then I might look for evidence of how much time he spends with them. The intention with the triangulation of data is to differentiate people's actual agreements from the "aspirational" agreements—that is, the agreements they would like to have.

People are very good at talking about what they think they should do or what they would like to do. Sometimes this varies significantly from what they actually do. The gap will show up in an Agreements Map inquiry. On the other hand, it can turn out that the practice is even stronger than people in the group suspected, and this becomes apparent when you can document that not only do they say something is important, they are actually really good at seeing it, valuing it, and organizing for it. This is how I have identified many of the leading edge, high-vibrancy practices I have found in high vibrancy groups.

VALIDATING THE AGREEMENTS MAP

Working with the different sources of information, I validate what I am learning along the way as much as possible. When someone tells me about an agreement, my inquiry starts to focus on determining whether the agreement actually exists and whether it is actually in use. How prevalent is the practice based on this agreement? Would most folks say they were aware of it or is it known only within a small group? Does it show up all of the time, some of the time, rarely or never? As you gather evidence on these distinctions, you are building up your case for the picture you will be drawing with the completed Agreements Map.

When you are unsure whether the evidence you find is valid, whether it be in the form of written data, interviews, or your own observations, I suggest you write down the evidence with a question mark next to it, and ask about it. The people who are living with the agreements will be able to help you determine whether the evidence is valid or not. For example, in a toy company I worked with there was one individual who told me about a collaborative practice that he said was very common in the group. Nobody else mentioned

it. I could have taken this to mean that he was expressing wishful thinking. Instead I documented that he had said it, and that nobody else had. When I shared this with the group, they all acknowledged that he was right. I asked why nobody else had mentioned it, and they told me that it was so common in their agreements that they did not even think about it. Fortunately I had documented and not discounted it, as it turned out to be a very innovative practice that they had developed, one that I would have missed had I dismissed it.

I want to emphasize here the importance of keeping an open mind during this inquiry. There are no right or wrong answers; just the data you are finding. The intention is to be accurate, not to push an agenda such as showing how strong the group is, or finding its weak spots or trying to move it in a particular direction. Without this impartiality, you will not be able to see clearly what agreements actually live within the group or what agreements need to shift to a higher level. False data that does not represent what is actually happening can, at the very least, cloud your understanding of what is actually happening and the possibility that is available in the emerging agreements. In the worst-case scenario, false evidence might make a group believe it is at a higher level than it actually is and lead it to take on new agreements that are too far beyond its capacity.

Once you have populated the Agreements Map with evidence from interviews, observations, and printed materials, you can validate it with the group. When I can, I try to validate the map with individual interviews first. Then I talk with the group as a whole and possibly with external sources, such as other people who live near them, someone who works with them, or someone who knows of them in the industry. I have found that starting with individual validation interviews gives each person a chance to give me their input—their stories—without the political charge of competing with other voices and opinions.

I also like to have a group validation conversation, because I find that the diversity in the group offers perspectives the individuals cannot have on their own. These conversations can be highly collaborative and creative, especially if each participant has already contributed through an individual validation interview. If all goes well, the Agreements Map will not only be accurate and accepted as credible by the group, it will provide a solid foundation for moving toward agreements that will lead to higher vibrancy and abundance for everyone involved.

Building the map—content

To create the content of an Agreements Map, I work systematically through the four lenses looking across the five relationships at each of the three levels of perceived reality. Keep in mind that the Agreements Map is a two-dimensional snapshot of this three-dimensional way of looking at your experience. (The three-dimensional view is in Chapter 5, Figure 12.) Its purpose is to synthesize the data in a way that allows you to see the existing agreements through all four lenses at the same time so that you can understand why you are getting the outcomes and experiences that you are. It will also highlight the possible agreements available in the relationships.

As I walk through the construction of an Agreements Map, I will use as an example a completed map from a chain of pet stores my colleagues and I worked with some years ago

(Figure 15). The chain of stores was interested in identifying those practices in different stores that led to stronger outcomes, and a better experience for the consumer and for the employee. This exercise showed the practices as agreements, highlighting those agreements that were common to all stores in the chain, and which were specific to higher performing stores. While the Agreements Map was used for a large company in this case, it can be applied the same way for both small groups or large; whether businesses, communities, government agencies, nonprofits or families. Basically it can be used in any situation to record the evidence of agreements seen when looking through the four lenses at any experience.

	Resources	Allocation	Value	Organization
<i>Possibility</i>	Potential Capacity	Primary Relationship(s)	Future Potential	Collaboration
	Supplier relationship is mutually beneficial, share consumer info	Occasional examples of all five Group and Individual	Store manager has flexibility, autonomy on scheduling, staffing, community involvement Adoption program -- don't sell cats/dogs	Strong core purpose -- all about loving animals
<i>Development</i>	Capacity Development	Primary Relationship(s)	Learning and Growth	Co-opetition
	Cross-training and mentoring Low turnover relative to retail (depends on store manager)		Pets allowed at corporate Active in community events	Associates can take you anywhere in the store
<i>Things</i>	Available Capacity	Primary Relationship(s)	Outcomes	Competition
	Awareness of broad general capacities each person contributes Awareness of general guidelines	Group	<u>Key Metrics for Store</u> • Sales/sq ft • Gross margin (return on inventory) • Operating profit • Employee turnover Pay is relatively competitive	Data mining and understanding of consumers Well defined policies, procedures, and job descriptions in employee handbook

Figure 15: Example Agreements Map of a Pet Store Chain

AVAILABLE CAPACITY

When I ask the resource question at the things-matter level, the inquiry is all about what capacities are available now. There are two parts to the question: first, what is the awareness of available capacity; and second, to what extent is the capacity being applied. I ask these questions of each of the five primary relationships.

Starting with the relationship to self, if there is awareness, I would expect that when I ask an individual about the specific capacities she brings to the job, she could tell me. To see if those capacities were being applied, I would look for a degree of corroboration of her self-perception in some form of job description or performance evaluations. For example, when asked, an associate in the pet store knew what capacities were required to do his job: knowledge about specific breeds of dogs and cats, including what they eat; skill in asking

questions so he could see what the pet owner wanted to get at the store; and very importantly, he needed to be good with animals. As a matter of fact, many associates told me that part of their job interview process included cleaning out an animal cage, with an animal in it, to test how well they dealt with animals, and how animals responded to them. This seemed to me to be strong evidence that the pet store employees were aware of their individual capacities.

Now, what does it mean that this individual awareness of capacities is part of the agreements in the relationship to self at the things level? What I am looking for is whether or not there is an agreement that this individual self-awareness is important. I often find that people in the groups I work with are completely unaware of basic capacities that are available to them—the knowledge and skills that individual group members have. When I point out these capacities, the group members readily acknowledge how important they are. When I ask why they do not pay attention to them or support them, these same people look at me with a shocked face: “We have never even talked about it. It seems obvious when you point it out, but it’s just not part of our conversation.” I suggest that this pattern reflects an agreement—the opposite of the agreement in the pet stores—that paying attention to individual capacities is not a priority for the success of the group.

Continuing with the mapping in the relationship to the other, I look for some form of awareness and acknowledgement of the capacities that other individuals bring. Can people in one area tell me what capacities individuals in other areas have? In the pet stores, for example, they said they all knew who had particular knowledge about cats or pet grooming. I then look for evidence that this awareness exists in practice and is supported. In some groups, this support might be a directory of special capacities. In the pet stores, it was a resource person who knew who to call for specific needs: “John, I have a 2-year old Labrador that seems to have a fussy intestine. Who should I ask about organic food?”

To explore the relationship to the group, I look for the level of awareness of the unique contribution each individual’s capacities make to the group. That is, in addition to knowing their own capacities and what other individuals can do, do people know how these individual capacities contribute to the group? I ask them about this to ascertain awareness, and I also ask about and observe how awareness shows up in actual practices. For example, in the pet store, do they think about the different capacities needed in helping someone through the whole cat adoption process? When helping someone adopt a cat, do they bring in the colleague who knows most about cat adoptions and is best at making the moment when the customer meets the cat comfortable? Do they then bring in the person who knows most about cat products, like food, toys, scratch pads, and litter boxes? Or do they not even think about all of these parts of the process or who knows most about these parts?

Since the relationship to nature at the things-matter level is all about the concrete, I would look for awareness of available resources that is focused on outcomes. Sticking with the cat adoption example; are people clear about what cats are available, what the customer wants to leave with, and all of the possible accessories the store could sell the new cat owner? If this awareness exists and is put into practice, I would expect to see some protocol or check sheet for the process of taking customers through cat acquisition. Likewise, in the relationship to spirit, the source of creativity, I would look for written-down protocols that everyone knows to follow—the rules that have been handed down.

Now, to summarize what I described above, so that I can record it in the Agreements Map, I found ample evidence of both awareness and application of available capacities in the pet store chain. The employees were aware of their own capacities, those of others, how they each contributed specific, unique capacities to the group, what the expected outcomes were for the customer, and the protocols to follow. The practices supporting their awareness at the things level were very clear, efficient, and effective. This is what I recorded in the Available Capacity cell of the Agreements Map.

So, what would you expect to see in your group if indeed people were aware of available capacities and applying them effectively in each of the five primary relationships? Do the individuals know what capacities they have? In the family, do my kids know they can sing, draw, wash dishes and clean up their rooms? Do group members or family members acknowledge each other's capacities? While my daughter might be a great songwriter and know it, do I know it? At the kids' school, do the different parents know what each family is able to contribute uniquely to the school community? For example, when it comes to school events, do we know which ones are better at planning, or at making things, or at motivating others to participate? At the town hall, do we have procedures written down to explain how to go about, say, getting a hunting license; or does every resident have to figure this out for himself each and every time?

The tricky part of dealing with this section of the Agreements Map is to maintain the focus on resources—the “how much?” question. This is not a value question of the criteria for allocating resources. For example, if the resource is money, deal only with how much money is available, not with who gets to keep what part of that money. Nor is it an organization question of how the relationships should interact, for example should they compete with each other, each providing their own capacities. That would be an organization question. Here we are only focused on the level of awareness and application of knowing what capacities are available in each of the five primary relationships right now.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

To continue the inquiry through the resources lens at the development-motion level, I add the dimension of time. Now my questions are the following: is there awareness of how resources develop over time; and how frequently is this awareness applied? This is the development level of perceived reality of the five primary relationships, as seen through the first lens of resources.

Here are the kinds of questions you can ask to look at each of the primary relationships through this lens: do our agreements include an awareness of how we are individually developing our capacities over time? Do we support each other in the development of these capacities? Are we learning and developing as a group? Do we focus on improving our processes to achieve better outcomes over time? Do we, as a matter of daily practice, look for creativity to enter into our work? You should also look for evidence of thinking and practices reflecting sensitivity to change over time. For example, do people actually spend time during the day thinking about what they know and what they are learning? Are there

moments or spaces for this kind of reflection and inquiry? Is there a way that people keep track of what is being learned?

In the pet stores represented in our sample Agreements Map, everyone was expected to learn about the different areas through cross training in how the different departments worked. There was also quite a bit of mentoring, with people who knew more about a specific area, such as grooming, supporting others as they learned about that area. We found evidence for healthy appreciation of the development level of capacity in some stores in their low turnover of employees, meaning that people stayed in the job much longer than normal, especially in relation to other retail stores. When we inquired into this in the lower turnover stores, the associates shared how much they liked their work, their colleagues, and being able to work with the animals. We found this was truer in some stores than others. I also noted that the store's management worked closely with suppliers in a mutually beneficial manner, sharing customer information, so that the supplier could recommend products that better served the specific needs of each store's customer base.

All of this information went into the Agreements Map as an indication that there was awareness of capacity development and application of that awareness. In other settings, we might find practices that track the inflows and outflows of a resource—like tracking the changes in the level of the water in our local lake, as a function of what is flowing in and out over time. Later we will see alternative exchange systems that track the amount of currency people have flowing in and out of their accounts as the result of the activities that they engage in with each other. Some networks track the development of relationships among different members of the network, to see where influence is shifting to over time. The point is to look at change over time in the development of capacities and relationships.

In this section, you are concerned to see how aware you are of the capacities you need, both now and in the future. What do you need to do, over time, to develop those capacities, to meet in those ever-changing needs for resources? Be careful, though. This section only includes the awareness of capacity development, not the cooperative processes you may have for developing these capacities and relationships. That comes later, when you are working with the organization lens.

POTENTIAL CAPACITY

Finally, I want to apply the resources lens to the possibility-light level. The inquiry here revolves around one key issue: does the group look for potential capacities in each of the five relationships, potential that it can sense but that has not shown up yet? To determine whether this is the case, I look for evidence that people are actively inviting in the possibility for new resources to emerge. This often shows up as a consistent expectation by all involved, that creativity is everywhere, all of the time, in all of the relationships, and it is just a matter of being open to and looking for it.

In the case of the pet store chain, you can see by the open space in this cell of the Agreements Map that I did not find evidence of awareness at this level. In examples we will see later in the book, at this level we look for evidence of people acknowledging each other's emerging potential. What possibilities do I see right now in myself? In you? Do we make

time in our daily lives to reflect on what we see emerging? Do we make time to share it? Do we record it in journals, so that we can see what we are enacting of that potential?

Discerning awareness at the possibility-light level can be tricky sometimes because you have to be alert to the difference between talk and practice. In many groups, people feel they should be talking about possibilities for development. One organization I worked with had the motto, “Our people and their potential is the most critical resource we have” boldly written on the wall in its headquarters lobby. But my inquiry discovered that this was not the reality. As soon as profits began to decrease, this company laid off fifteen percent of its more experienced staff, because they were more expensive. Remember, it is what actually happens that we want to capture in the Agreements Map. Consistency is also important. Are people continuously exploring the possibilities, or does this attitude only show up sporadically?

Finally, it helps to be aware that there are many groups where possibility is the *only* reality that shows up in the resources lens. This is tricky because it looks like people are exploring possibility, but they are only looking at possibility. They are not choosing to develop a particular possibility and bring it into being at the concrete level. Functioning at the possibility level of reality requires functioning at the development and things levels as well. Groups that only live in possibilities, never choosing, developing and manifesting any of those possibilities, have actually converted the “art of possibility” into a thing. For them, seeing the possibility is the outcome, the only outcome.

I capture this “possibility-only” awareness on the Agreements map at the things level of available capacity, an example of the on-the-level only thinking I described in Chapter 2. For example, for one group I wrote on the things level of resources: “many conversations about possibilities—no outcomes.” Noting this on the map at the things level highlighted the gap between their talk and what they were actually doing. This is important so that groups do not think they are working at a higher level of harmonic vibrancy than they are.

PRIMARY RELATIONSHIP(S)

We now shift to the second lens, the question of who decides how to allocate the resources. Chapter 4 showed how economic thinking that sees scarcity through the resources lens creates the tendency to see one of the five relationships as primary. Hence, most systems of agreement place one relationship above all others, with the assumption that the others will also be met. This is as true in organizations, communities, and families as it is in political-economic systems. The goal in developing the content of this section of the Agreements Map is to determine which relationship predominates in guiding decision making about how resources will be used.

As a starting point, I use the basic characteristics of the five types of political-economic system presented in Chapter 4 as guidelines for what the primacy of different relationships looks like. Is the emphasis on freedom and self-determination of individuals? Is equity the all-important consideration? Is the prevailing mindset that the wellbeing of the group as a whole comes before all else and ensures the wellbeing of all? Is resource allocation guided

by a systemic view that emphasizes maintaining a dynamic balance among the parts of the system? Or does the organization privilege creativity over all other considerations?

Here I look for the practices people have around how decisions are made about resource allocation. Who is included in the decision—just one person, a couple of people, many or everyone? Also, what is the overriding concern in decision making? Is it every individual for himself or herself? When the decisions are in the hands of two people, are those two representing their personal needs or the needs of the family or team of which they are a part? Does there seem to be one relationship that is primary or are there indications of multiple forms of decision making? For example, does the father decide for the whole family or the founder for the whole company? Or does the group engage many people in its decision processes? Or is there evidence for all five relationships engaged in resource decisions: individuals deciding for themselves; pairs of individuals working with each other to achieve a sense of felt-fair equity; and the group deciding on the basis of the health of the whole, in a way that works with the choosing of possibilities to develop towards specific outcomes and invokes the full creativity available to the group?

Often I find that groups hold different relationships primary at different levels of perceived reality. In the pet store chain, for example, I determined that the allocation of resources at the things-matter level definitely focused primarily on the health of the group. However, when the things-matter level outcomes—such as having the capacities needed in the store to respond on a given day to the needs of customers and their pets—were healthy, at above average levels, the company also gave employees the freedom to focus on their own development and engagement. This is why the pet store Agreements Map indicates awareness of both group and individual relationships at the development level. When we look through this lens at the possibility level, we see occasional examples of all five primary relationships at the same time, like a store where the manager and associates worked together very collaboratively; exploring many creative ideas for ways to engage the community, to improve the store's processes, and to develop the potential the associates and manager brought to the group, both individually and as a group.

I find that what I see through the allocation lens is often the expression of a deeply held philosophy within the group, not just what the leadership is saying but also what the community is living. In the pet store chain, this cornerstone philosophy might be stated as, “We care about animals and how our customers raise them.” In a friend’s family, the philosophy is one of full participation by all family members in decision-making about resources. They enact this philosophy in their daily practices.

The tricky spot in this section of the Agreements Map is to tease out the allocation mechanism actually being used, not just the one people say they use. For example, the leaders of many companies talk publicly with great passion about the importance of individual freedom as part of their advocacy for free-market policies. In reality, many of them only mean freedom for the company as an entity, in the marketplace of companies—in essence freedom for the owner. They do not believe in or practice freedom for the individual within the company. Rather they see that individual as an employee, contributing through very specific tasks to the good of the group. Within many of these companies, you will find that they actually make most agreements based on the health of the group—the company—and not the individuals within the company. In these cases, I record on the

Agreements Map what the companies are actually doing, prioritizing the health of the group in its actual practices of resource allocation decisions, rather than what the leader is saying about personal freedom. Similarly, in some networks I have worked with, there is much verbiage about fairness among the network members in relation to resource allocation, when in practice individuals are expected to fend for themselves. Here again, I highlight the individual-oriented practices in resource allocation and I do not emphasize the words about fairness.

VALUE—OUTCOMES

Next, we will look through the third lens, Value, to explore what guides the allocation of resources in the group. Applying this lens first at the things-matter level, I expect to find thinking about value that is focused on concrete outcomes. This is a transactional mindset: what are we getting for what we put in? When looking through the value lens at the things level, my inquiry focuses on determining what is the value, if any, placed on the existing capacities of the individual, the other, the group, the outcomes, and the creative offer of the group? I look to see if everyone is aware of this value, in each relationship, and if they practice it continuously.

My notations in the Agreements Map in this section record the specific processes and structures the group uses to track the value it is producing with its resources. I look to see whether the group has outcome metrics focused on efficiency, and how much resource they used to achieve what outcomes. I observe whether the incentives for the group and for individuals are clearly aligned with their outcomes. For example, the pet store chain gathered information on store-by-store operation including; the volume of sales revenues per square foot of storefront, the financial return on the investment in inventory in the store, net operating profit, and the rate of employee turnover. It was also paying competitive wages relative to other businesses of its type. In this case, I determined that the organization was rewarding its employees based largely on the specific capacities they brought, with a heavy focus on financial and operational outcomes.

VALUE—LEARNING AND GROWTH

To see if groups are thinking about value at the development-motion level, I try to discover whether they see value in the building of capacities and relationships over time in the five relationships. Do they value and support individual growth and development? Do individuals support learning and growth in others? Is there awareness of how the development of individuals contributes to the group as a whole, and what is the group's capacity to support those contributions? Do people see the value of process, of the journey and learning along the way? And, finally, do they see the value in moments of creativity springing forth from individuals?

On the Agreements Map in this section, I want to capture structures and processes that show how prevalent these experiences of value are and how much the group values the development of relationships. In the pet store, I saw people talking about the value they get from training across the different areas of the store and the importance they placed on the quality of their relationships with customers, customers' pets and the other employees in the

store. Depending on the store manager, some pet store employees had quite a bit of autonomy, for example, to schedule and hire the staff they wanted or to engage their local communities in creative ways, such as pet adoption or pet appreciation events.

Another example of the value the company placed on relationships revolved around the animals. Associates who valued their relationships with the clients' pets also tended to value the relationship with their own pets. The corporation showed respect for these relationships through its policy of allowing employees' pets at the corporate office, just as it allowed customers to bring their pets into the stores. The high value the company gave to relationships with animals also led it to stop selling cats and dogs, and to develop an in-store adoption program that partners with local shelters to rescue orphaned animals instead, encouraging its customers to see themselves as saving the life of a pet.

Awareness of capacity development shows up in other form in different groups, for example, in the merit badges awarded to scouts. These awards acknowledge their development and lead to their stepping into greater responsibilities. Similarly, in certain religious groups, the development of the ability to read the core book is marked with a celebration of the attainment of a higher level of development. I also find various kinds of evidence of the development of relationships over time. In a network, for example, I look for signs that the network is becoming stronger because of the relationships that are developing among its members.

VALUE—POTENTIAL

At the possibility-light level, I inquire into whether the group places importance on its members' living into their full potential in the five relationships. Do the practices, systems and culture support looking for the best in each individual? Do individuals support each other in that exploration? Does the group as a whole value the search for its own highest possibilities and invite what each member might contribute to achieving them? What value is placed on the process of seeing new possibilities and working with them? To what extent does the group value creativity in all of its forms?

To capture the results of this inquiry on the Agreements Map, I need to record those structures and processes that express the nature and degree of how the group values possibility. In the case of the pet store chain, I noted the fact that the store manager has flexibility to make decisions in a number of key areas—scheduling, staffing and community involvement. This is an example of valuing the store manager's ability to see potential in her employees, to run the store in a way that enables it to meet emerging consumer needs and to identify and reach out to potential new markets.

COMPETITION

The organization lens focuses on how people interact to achieve what they value. At the things level, this fourth lens highlights the group's ability to utilize its available resources in a way that maximizes desirable outcomes relative to what it values. I want to see, quite simply, whether or not the group is organized in a way that enables it to deliver on its purpose: whether it can produce results. As evidence of this, I look for well-defined procedures,

policies, structures and job descriptions that can support people in performing effectively and efficiently, across all five primary relationships. In the pet store chain, I found all of this in the employee handbook.

A friend described the competitive logic of the experience of his kid's football team, as seen through the lens of organization. The focus is very much on the specific skills each kid brings, with some kids being stars and others being supporters of the stars. While they train all season, the training is focused on strengthening the existing capacities. This is different than a developmental approach, which would look to learn about the evolving capacities of each kid—here the focus is on being more efficient, stronger, and more able to do the task at hand with the kid's given capacities. In this case, I would capture the careful assessment of each kid's capacities and results (speed, dexterity, strength, endurance). I would also note the fixation on record keeping of all of these stats, the clear and precise ranking of kids by results, and the focus on those who make the best contribution, the stars, using the coach's play book of best offense moves. These are all indicators of an organizational focus on the things-outcomes level of scarce resources put to optimal use to obtain a scarce outcome, winning. There is, after all, only one team who scores the most points.

CO-OPETITION

At the development-motion level, the organization lens sheds light on how a group is organized to build capacities and relationships. The label for this area of the Agreements Map, “co-opetition,” is shorthand for cooperative competition, which is what I look for at this level of perceived reality.⁸⁴ The word competition comes from the Latin root for striving—striving to be better than others. The trick in this section of the Agreements Map is to distinguish whether the group you are looking at is not-competitive, only-competitive, or also-competitive. The distinction among these three is significant. Not-competitive means that the group cannot compete successfully. Only-competitive means that competition is the principal drive of the organization—striving to be better than others is its main focus. Also-competitive means that the group is organized for a purpose other than competition, *and* it is also very competitive. This is what co-opetition typically looks like.

In the pet store chain, I found evidence of functioning at the level of co-opetition in the company's processes for developing its associates' understanding of, and belief in, its core purpose—which is all about loving animals. Everyone pays attention to how associates work with the animals, and they talk about this in meetings. The company encourages taking extra time with customers to make sure that the needs of their pets are met; the opposite of trying to get people out of the store quickly with as much merchandise as possible. The stores' organizational practices reflect the corporate attitude that building the customer relationship is critical to its mission as well as to its success as a business. This attitude is also clearly visible in how the associates engage with pet owners and their pets as they enter the store and the quality of care they give the animals.

I have found that many groups who look through the organization lens at their experience and see co-opetition are much more efficient than the only-competitive groups they meet. On my son's soccer team, for example, the kids have all worked together in many activities related to art, sports and academics, because teaching students how to work cooperatively is

a priority at his school. As a result, the team members know each other very well and cooperate effectively and efficiently. They compete against many teams that seem to be focused on only competition, as evidenced by the fact that they have a couple of star players who are always aggressively doing the work of the rest of the team. My son's team usually beats such opponents. The point is that also-competitive groups that are very efficient cooperators or collaborators, are able to play the game as well as or better than the only-competitive, and usually without the negative costs of the exclusive focus on competition.

In groups that are successful at co-opetition, I expect to see people working together to achieve the shared goal of performing effectively and achieving success, with some degree of focus on learning and growing together. In the relationship to self, I look for whether individuals are motivated toward personal growth and working with others. Are there processes to support individuals' knowing what others can contribute, not just with their current capabilities, but also with the new capabilities they are in the process of developing? Does the group focus on teamwork and readily form new teams as projects require them? All of these things are indicators of co-opetition. In the pet stores, I saw evidence of this level of functioning in the fact that every associate is expected to be able to take the customer anywhere in the store. This means they must know about all parts of the store and be able to determine what services a customer needs, beyond their immediate area of responsibility. They must also be aware of the overall needs of their customers and the customers' pets and be able to think of ways to meet them. All of this requires a great deal of capacity development and teamwork.

COLLABORATION

The final section of the Agreements Map looks through the fourth lens of organizing interactions at the possibility-light level. To see if a group is operating at this level, I look for collaboration. By collaboration I mean that people are working together toward a shared purpose that transcends operational effectiveness. Everyone is participating and contributing creatively to imagine future possibilities in all five relationships on a continuous basis.

I also look for patterns, processes and structures that support collaboration. Is there a flow of mutual support among group members at meetings, in interactions between meetings and in all forms of communication? Is everyone aware of the core purposes and how their local tasks align (or not) with those purposes? Do people continuously seek clarity around this alignment? Do the group's communication and information systems and processes of interaction enable its members to identify moments of creativity and know how to capitalize on those moments?

There was no evidence of this level of organizing in the pet store chain. However, I have seen it frequently in high vibrancy groups. One such group is THORLO, the high-tech sock company I introduced in Chapter 3. Many of THORLO's possibility-light-level organizational practices came into existence to support what the company calls "integrated collaborative conversations." These conversations are designed to keep different parts of the organization in constant interaction and create a continuous flow of information, all focused on THORLO's clearly articulated purpose—to ensure the foot health of its loyal customers.

One of the processes supporting the integrity of these conversations is “surfacing surprises.” It is part of the agenda every time the “conversation” gets together, often weekly, to see what new, big, or different things are happening. It represents an effort to avoid gaps in communication that might create future problems.

For example, there might be this exchange: “It surprised me today when you placed an order without asking me.” “I did that in response to a special case that required a quick turnaround.” “Okay, what can we learn from this surprise about how to do quick-turnaround orders without keeping me in the dark?” This is an example of the kind of evidence I have found at THORLO, which shows me that the group is actively collaborating based on a sense of shared purpose. Everyone knows that this purpose requires each person’s unique contributions. All must be aligned on who is doing what when, but they must also be responsive to moments of creativity throughout the system. This is what I mean by effective collaboration.

Building the map—color coding

With the content of the Agreements Map in place, I can delve into the nature of the agreements in the group in some detail. At the same time, however, I want to be able to tell with a quick look how much the agreements support the group’s functioning within a specific combination of relationship, level and lens. How aware are people in the group of available capacity, or learning and growth, or collaboration; and how consistently do they apply that awareness? This is where color-coding comes in. It shows me at a glance the patterns across all sections of the map.

I create the color codes by rating the strength of awareness and application in resources, value and organization, using a scale of 1 to 10. A score of 1 means that folks are almost never aware of, say, potential capacity in the group, and there is little to no evidence of its being applied. By implication, it is not part of their agreements. On the other end of the scale, a 10 means that they are almost always aware of it and almost always apply that awareness. It is an integral part of the agreements.

I use the color green for the high end of the scale, yellow for the middle, red for the low end and white to show no awareness or application. In other words, for green, most people are aware of the element—capacity development, outcomes, competition—and they apply that awareness most of the time. Yellow shows that some people are aware of it some of the time and apply it some of the time. Red means that most people are not aware of the element and rarely if ever apply it; that is, little to no awareness and very infrequent application. White means that there is no evidence that it happens at all.

Another way of thinking about the colors is that green means go, all systems are good; yellow means watch out, as some systems are working and some are not; red means to stop and notice as this is rare; and white means it does not exist in the agreements. You can also think of it as red is where the newest opportunities are for growth, yellow is where there is growth beginning to happen that could be nurtured, and green is where the success needs to be maintained, while supporting new growth. White shows completely new territory for the group.

Figure 16, below, shows the color-coded version of the pet store chain's Agreements Map. You will notice that the color-coding forms bands across the different levels of perceived reality. This is true of all Agreements Maps, although not all Agreements Maps have four different colored bands like this example. It is a basic principle of Ecosynomics that the level at which an individual or group is functioning applies across all five relationships, as part of an integrated experience of reality. Now we are also integrating the different perspectives on that experience provided by the lenses. Bringing those perspectives together with the color-coding gives greater meaning to the data in the Agreements Map.

	Resources	Allocation	Value	Organization
<i>Possibility</i>	Potential Capacity	Primary Relationship(s)	Future Potential	Collaboration
<i>Development</i>	Supplier relationship is mutually beneficial, share consumer info		Store manager has flexibility, autonomy on scheduling, staffing, community involvement	
	Capacity Development Cross-training and mentoring Low turnover relative to retail (depends on store manager)	Group and Individual Primary Relationship(s)	Adoption program -- don't sell cats/dogs Learning and Growth Pets allowed at corporate Active in community events	Strong core purpose -- all about loving animals Co-opetition Associates can take you anywhere in the store
<i>Things</i>	Awareness of broad general capacities each person contributes Available Capacity Awareness of general guidelines	Group Primary Relationship(s)	Key Metrics for Store • Sales/sq ft • Gross margin (return on inventory) Outcomes • Operating profit • Employee turnover Pay is relatively competitive	Data mining and understanding of consumers Competition Well defined policies, procedures, and job descriptions in employee handbook

Figure 16: Color-coded Pet Store Chain Agreements Map

AT THE THINGS-MATTER LEVEL

A green band at the things-matter level is an indication that the group has a strong foundation for its operations. This is what we see in the pet store example. In the resources area, there is a conscious awareness of the capacities available right now and the outcomes achievable with those capacities. Green in the value section at this level indicates a healthy clarity about the value of the capacities that exist in the group and of the outcomes those resources can produce. Similarly, green in the organization section shows a group that has structured its interactions to deliver those outcomes. All of these positive conditions existed in the pet store chain and are captured in the Agreements Map.

A yellow or red band at the things-matter level would suggest that a group was operating on a weaker foundation (yellow) or no foundation at all (red). Yellow in the available capacity

section could mean that the group is only slightly aware of the core capacities it has or it lacks the practices to acknowledge them. I have found this state of yellow in many groups that have only some awareness of the capacities available to them internally. When I ask what can Fred or Susan do to contribute to this group and only a couple of people can tell me some of the capacities they bring, even though I know those capacities are critical to the group's functioning, I see yellow. Think about your kids' ability to describe what Mom or Dad contributes on a daily or weekly basis to the family.

Yellow in the value section signifies that the group struggles with valuing the available resources, and others only occasionally acknowledge that value too. At a school I have worked with, the faculty seems mostly oblivious to the great love and deep capacities that the parent body has and could contribute to solving fundamental problems the school has, such as fundraising and community outreach. Through the organization lens at the things-matter level, yellow means that the group struggles with consistency in delivering results that others value.

Red at the things level shows a very weak or completely lacking awareness of the available capacity in the five primary relationships. A group in this situation usually has little self-awareness and poor communication about what the group needs, what it can do as a group and what the various members of the group can contribute. People in such groups often tell me that they do not even know what they bring to the group or if they are necessary for its success. Red means that the group places little value on the resources it gets and, as a result, barely gets by. The group's organizing rarely results in specific, measurable outcomes.

White at the things level means there is no evidence of any awareness of resources. They are not valued and there are no organizational practices in place to help the group perform effectively. In essence, there are no agreements in place. I have never seen a group that has a solid white band at the things level, but I have found evidence of things-level agreements that indicate a rather primitive level of things awareness. In these cases, the green, yellow and red bands only cover the lower part of the things level, while the upper part of the band is white. We will see a couple of examples of this pattern in subsequent chapters. It is an indication that the agreements are focused on how many resources are available right now and the transactional value of those limited resources. Organizational practices are focused purely on obtaining that transactional value from the limited resources.

AT THE DEVELOPMENT-MOTION LEVEL

At the development-motion level, the color-coding signifies the degree of conscious awareness and application of practices around developing capacities and relationships. Green at this level means that people are aware of how much they are developing capacities and relationships (the resource lens), and that people value this conscious and continuous development (the value lens). Green shows the tendency to use multiple primary relationships in decision-making (the allocation mechanism lens). It also indicates clear processes for cooperating in the service of a shared purpose (the organization lens), and those processes typically reward individuals for both their efforts toward self-development and the outcomes they deliver, individually and as a group. Basically, green at this level

means that anyone and everyone in the group could describe the experience of developing capacities and relationships, as this experience is central to the group.

A yellow band across the development-motion level shows that the expressions of development I just described, as seen through the four lenses, are not completely conscious or consistent. While there is evidence that people do see the development level and work with it, this behavior is sporadic. This is the situation captured in the pet store Agreements Map, indicating a group that operates occasionally but not consistently at this level. There were many examples of capacity development in the stores; however, these efforts were mostly focused on getting better at the job of delivering outcomes. I consider this a low-level of resource awareness at the development level. For an intermediate to high (i.e., green) code here, I would look for the focus to be instead on capacity development as an end in itself across all five primary relationships. Since there was ample evidence of low-level capacity development in the pet store, and sporadic examples of high-level capacity development, I colored this section yellow in the Agreements Map. Similarly, across the band, yellow signifies sporadic awareness of the value of learning and growth and only occasional efforts to work cooperatively and organize to learn from experience and develop further capacities.

Color coding the development level of the Agreements Map red means that this experience is rarely to never evident, happening only by mistake if it does. Red means that few people if any see development as an important resource: development is not valued in the group. The group rarely cooperates and is not organized to learn and develop capacities over time. White at the development level means that there is no evidence of any awareness or practice around development. A group like this, with no practices at the development level, is at risk of not having the basic resources it needs to survive, even over the short term. Such a group tends to have high turnover of personnel, because people come into the group for purely transactional purposes, and there is no conscious development within the group.

AT THE POSSIBILITY-LIGHT LEVEL

The band across the possibility-light level highlights the degree of awareness of the emerging future in the group and the extent to which the group is thinking creatively about how to shape its agreements to fit with that emerging future. The red color of the lower portion of this band in the pet store chain Agreements Map signifies that there was some evidence that some of the store managers work with emerging possibilities and that, in some practices in some stores, there was evidence of all five primary relationships being used to allocate resources. However, these patterns were far from common in the stores. I use red here to show that it is possible, just very infrequent. The fact that the upper part of this section is colored in white shows that I found no evidence of working with the deeper potential and creativity inherent within the five primary relationships.

Basically, red in this section shows very little awareness of possibility as a resource available to the group, typically coupled with little to no valuing of potential and no organizational processes set up to support working with potential in the five primary relationships. Red at this level indicates low awareness of the potential resident within group members. Most groups I have identified as experiencing red at this level struggle to bring the best out of

their people. Individual group members might aspire to engage more of themselves in the work but do not know how. Development-level practices alone do not enable them to achieve the higher potential they sense in themselves; this requires a collective vision of what may be available at the possibility level.

In contrast, green at this level indicates that the group is constantly asking the questions about what the emerging possibilities may be and what capacities it might develop in the future. It also signifies serious investment in sustainability in all five relationships, with great clarity about what is most valuable in each relationship and continuous monitoring to ensure that the group is meeting that value expectation. Finally, green across this band portrays a group that is effectively organized to work collaboratively toward seeing and taking advantage of future possibilities. A group like this is actively working to engage the full potential of its people in the five primary relationships. While this does not ensure the group's sustainability, it greatly increases the chances for it, especially compared to groups for which this section is colored yellow, red, or white.

Yellow, on the other hand, says that some people in the group are aware of potential capacity and future possibilities and/or the group as a whole occasionally becomes aware, perhaps because of a sudden realization that things are not going well. This is a reactive posture. It also may be that a group works off and on with possibility, maybe on a cyclical basis or due to the awareness and efforts of certain individuals or small pockets of people. Some people place a high value on future potential and that can sometimes move the whole group. I use yellow when a group is experimenting with possibilities and organizing itself collaboratively in small pockets, by accident or out of a sense of necessity rather than a perception of value. Yellow in this section shows that the group has some awareness of the potential in the five primary relationships and is working towards engaging it. There is promise here, and evidence for the group that it is possible.

INTERPRETING THE AGREEMENTS MAP—SEEING AGREEMENTS AND CHOICES

With the content filled in and the color-coding complete, an Agreements Map provides two powerful views of the group—a high-level overview with broad bands of color and a ground-level view with a lot of concrete details. The broad overview offers a quick, forceful impression of the state of the group, based on its current agreements. The view from the ground level, on the other hand, includes the kind of information needed to analyze the agreements and perhaps see how to change them and move the group in a positive direction.

High-level overview

In the high-level overview, you can see at a glance what the group is paying attention to and what levels of perceived reality are informing its operations. Lots of red looks very different from lots of green, obviously, and different colors suggest very different situations in the group. Just this simple observation can give you a good sense of what the agreements in the group are enabling it to do and, by inference, what is possible.

For example, the Agreements Map can give you a quick read on a group's resilience, its ability to sustain itself when it faces uncertainty. The more red there is on the map, the more scarcity the group is likely to be experiencing in terms of lower efficiency, higher costs of operation and fewer desirable outcomes. This is a recipe for low resilience or failure. Green all over the map does not necessarily mean continued high resilience and sustainable success, but it is a much stronger place to start. At the same time, you can often see what is possible by the yellow areas. When at least some people are aware of resources, value and organization at the development or possibility level, there is a greater likelihood that the group as a whole can step into that awareness and lift its functioning to a higher level.

The intention is not to value green over yellow or red or white or higher levels over lower ones. The purpose of the Agreements Map is simply to highlight where the group is. There is nothing wrong with focusing primarily on the things level. Better to know that is the case than be misled by what I call "brochure-talk" about what the group values, what it is paying attention to and what it can achieve. This brochure-talk, what one says as opposed to what one does, can be dangerous when people begin to believe in it and it raises their expectations above the reality they are living. By providing a clear picture of the current reality the Agreements Map can help to uncover opportunities for moving with intention toward new agreements.

The high-level view provided by the Agreements Map also makes it easy to compare groups or see how one group is changing over time. This can facilitate the process of changing agreements, for example by identifying groups that are living with agreements at the level you want to be at—where your group's map is red or yellow, their maps are green. You can then look more closely and see what practices you may want to adopt. You can also create before and after Agreements Maps. By seeing where you were before and where you are now, you have a picture of how the group functions under different agreements. This picture can help you determine what shifted with the change in agreements and how the shifts affected the experience you are having.

PATTERNS OF COLOR

The color pattern of the pet store example is a common one in groups I have met. These groups are successful in delivering results, that is, they achieve things on a regular basis, whether it is getting the kids to school every morning or delivering quality products and services to their customers or communities. The people in these groups are also aware that continued success means that they have to develop capacities and relationships. They know they must learn to get better at what they do and keep learning as circumstances in their environment change. As the kids get older, what used to work to motivate them no longer does; new techniques are needed. When a competing shop or restaurant in a neighboring town provides more attractive goods or higher-quality service, the group needs to improve its own performance by learning about new techniques and practices.

Of course, different patterns are quite possible, and you will see some of in later chapters. Many companies and communities I have encountered or read about have Agreements Maps that are mostly white, with the green, yellow and red bands confined to the things-matter level. As I mentioned above, these things-only groups focus only on transactional outcomes

in the present moment. I have also seen a few instances of Agreements Maps that are mostly green. We will look at one such case in the next chapter. This pattern shows groups that are consciously working with all three levels of perceived reality in all five primary relationships. They are also often achieving results most people would believe are impossible, simply because they are attempting to engage the whole human being.

Another significant pattern I have seen in Agreements Maps is small bands of yellow and red above a larger band of green. The green band might cover only part of the things level, or it might cover things, development and part of the possibility level. At whatever level, the thin yellow and red bands cover only part of a level of perceived reality. Based on what I have seen so far, I interpret this pattern as signifying a fairly consistent set of agreements throughout the group, colored green, with small pockets of people occasionally attempting practices at the next level, colored yellow or red. These small bands of yellow and red may also indicate that the practices at the next level of harmonic vibrancy are different enough from those that are commonly agreed to that the group finds it difficult to see, much less appreciate, those practices and their importance. I will discuss this pattern further in the next section and subsequent chapters.

Ground-level view

The ground-level view focuses on the specific practices, processes and structures showing up in the group as an expression of existing agreements. By mapping them onto the levels of perceived reality, the Agreements Map exercise enables the group to see and discuss in detail its current experience relative to the experience group members want to be having. The group can then begin to see the need to change the underlying agreements in order to move to a higher level of harmonic vibrancy, as well as identify opportunities for doing so.

One of the best ways I know to clarify what a group needs and wants to change is to assess the “costs of scarcity” in areas of the Agreements Map where it is not functioning strongly. What are the costs of not living into the benefit of abundance in experiencing the middle and outer circles of harmonic vibrancy? Seeing these costs clearly can be a strong motivator to change. It highlights the undesirable effects of scarcity and, by implication, the benefits of abundance in a particular area. Specifying the costs of scarcity makes it clear what structures and processes need to be changed if the group desires to shift to a higher level of harmonic vibrancy.⁸⁵

Figure 17, below, suggests costs of scarcity in the different areas of the Agreements Map. My colleague Mike Puleo and I developed this example of the costs of scarcity with business organizations in mind. We identified common examples of costs we had found in groups where they did not include one of the levels of perceived reality in their agreements. For example, what are the costs of not including possibility in the agreements? Of not including development and possibility in the agreements? We also identified a measurable indicator—a proxy—for each cost. For example, a proxy for the quality of the work environment might be the rate of employee turnover. Proxies make it possible to calculate the costs of what is missing.

So far it seems that the costs of scarcity we identified initially are applicable in various settings, not just in businesses, but also in communities, groups of friends and families. For example, when looking through the resources lens at the possibility level, one of the costs of scarcity is the high probability of obsolescence. When people do not pay attention to the possibilities they can see in each of the five primary relationships, they run the risk of missing something new that turns out to be important. Instead, they depend on what has already been developed, and when the environment changes—when consumers move from landline phones to cell phones, or when kids evolve from babies into teenagers—what used to work does not work anymore. It has become obsolete. Looking for ways to measure this risk of obsolescence within a business, Mike and I saw that some companies were tracking the percentage of their revenues coming from products developed within the previous three years. The higher this percentage, they reasoned, the lower the risk of their products becoming obsolete.

While the percentage of revenues might not be applicable as a proxy in the situation with the kids, clearly, something like it might. For example, to see the potential my kids experience in our family, I might look at what percentage of my thoughts about them come from ideas they have shared in the past six months. This would indicate how much I engage them in what they can see in themselves now, as compared with what we could see in them when they were much younger. Do I still think of my 18-year old as I did when she was five, or have I updated my understanding of her potential? Now, let us look at the costs of scarcity more generally.

The Costs of Scarcity

What are the Costs of Scarcity?	Resources How Much? 	Allocation Who decides? 	Value By what criteria? 	Organization How shall we interact? 
Possibility Potential (Light) 	<i>[Proxies: % rev from new product in last 3 years]</i> Potential Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of new opportunities - Higher probability of obsolescence - Unintended consequences 	Which Primary Relationship(s)	<i>[Proxies: % of one's potential contributed to group, % bonded loyal stakeholders, price premium brand value]</i> Future Potential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of inviting best contribution 	<i>[Proxies: % top performing employees in niche, % highest margin's prod/serv in niche, ranking in innovativeness]</i> Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of high potential people/relationships - Lack of inspiring innovation - Lack of credibility as expert
Development Motion (Verb) 	<i>[Proxies: costs of over-production, over-processing, % defects-rework, inventory turns]</i> Capacity Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of necessary resources - Lost opportunities (compromise) - Expensive resources 		<i>[Proxies: % of customer needs met]</i> Learning & Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of belonging 	<i>[Proxies: employee turnover rate]</i> Co-opetition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of cooperation (redundancy) - Lack of healthy work environment (high turnover, stress)
Things Matter (Noun) 	<i>[Proxies: mistakes in resource]</i> Available Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough self-funding - Resource turnover - Low productivity of assets, human resources, funding 		<i>[Proxies: cost of capital, profit margin]</i> Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interest rate of money 	<i>[Proxies: cycle time, % of one-time customers]</i> Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lost intellectual capital - Lost social capital

Figure 17: The Costs of Scarcity

SCARCITY AT THE POSSIBILITY-LIGHT LEVEL

We need possibility in our lives. When we ignore possibility, we experience lower harmonic vibrancy. The costs of not explicitly including possibility are the real costs of what never showed up, in the resources we never had, the best contributions that never appeared, and the collaborative creativity that was not in the room.⁸⁶

Looking through the resources lens, the costs of scarcity start with the new opportunities that we never saw (see Figure 4). The strategic resource we could have seen remained invisible; the potential abundance in an existing resource went unrecognized. This is the gift that was knocking on the door that was never answered. We have to stick with the existing resources and old opportunities. A related cost is the obsolescence of the existing resources. A reputation built on past success eventually erodes, as does the training in old technologies that are no longer used.

Through the value lens of “what criteria?” we can see the high cost of scarcity in not inviting in the best contributions group members could make. The people are already there. You have already engaged them. For the lack of the ability to work at the possibility-light level, their best gifts, which were already available, were never engaged. A proxy for the existence or non-existence of this possibility-level value is the percentage of an individual’s potential he or she experiences within and contributes to the group. Another proxy might be the value of the group’s reputation or brand—a measure of certainty in future potential.

The organizational costs of scarcity at this level come from the lack of the kind of talented people who thrive in and expect to work in environments that invite their creative contributions. Without these very creative, high-potential people, another cost comes into play: the inability to attract other people who want to engage with them. These might be friends who will make an effort to join groups that are really fun, adventurous or humorous. In a business or professional setting, they might be clients who are willing to pay a premium to access talented, creative people, whether they be actors, comedians, musicians, thought-leaders, consultants, teachers, architects or the great waiters in a restaurant. Lack of collaboration can also lead to a lack of the creative solutions that enable a group to take leadership in its field, relegating it to the position of follower. Proxies for the possibility-level of organization might be the percentage of people in the group considered to be the best at what they do. Another proxy might be how well known the group is for consistent innovation.

SCARCITY AT THE DEVELOPMENT-MOTION LEVEL

Motion and emergence are our lifeblood. When we ignore them, we experience very low harmonic vibrancy. Scarcity at this level shows up as ossification. The costs of not explicitly maintaining awareness of development are the real costs of underutilized resources and inefficiency in the system, as well as the opportunity cost of not having the resources we need when we need them. Scarcity at this level also means that we are not further developing across the five primary relationships. We are looking at them solely in terms of existing capacities rather than with awareness of what we are learning in each relationship over time. When we do not develop these relationships, we also do not develop the

understanding and trust that are vital to healthy relationships. Hence scarcity at this level also shows up as weak or unhealthy relationships.

In the area of resources, the most basic cost of not functioning at the development-motion level is the inability to see how to accumulate and maintain the required resources. When we are not aware of the net effect of the inflows and outflows, resources seem to erode all of a sudden. If we pay attention to the dynamic nature of resources, we can avoid such unpleasant surprises. On the other hand, attempting to respond to unexpected opportunities through sudden acquisition of resources is expensive. This is the cost of not having foreseen the need for the resources and how to accumulate them.

A proxy for these scarcity costs in the area of human resources is the percentage of defects in products made or process errors. A group that is learning over time improves its ability to do repetitive activities well, becoming more efficient and creating fewer defects or errors. Another proxy is the rate of turnover in inventory. Here the idea is that the more finely tuned we are to the development process, the more efficiently we use the materials at hand and the faster we use them up. Another way to think of this is that, when our awareness at the development level is low, we tend to be afraid that we might run out of resources, so we tend to have too much on hand or use it up and find it difficult to replenish. Either way, more awareness at the development level will usually be reflected in a higher, more consistent turnover rate in resources. Another common proxy here is the cost of making the mistake of underestimating the capacities required at any given time, which leads to overpaying for expediting acquisition of the required resources. This proxy also indicates the lack of awareness of how much resource is present.

Looking through the value lens, the development-motion level focuses on the importance given to learning and growth as one experiences the flow of creativity in the five relationships. When the group is low in awareness here, the deficit shows up in group members having a sense of not belonging and often leads to diminished contributions and, ultimately, high turnover. A proxy for the level of scarcity or abundance in this area might be the percentage of times the group meets an agreed-upon expectation of an outcome at a specific time. For instance, we promised to deliver every customer's order of skis within seven working days; for what percentage of orders did we accomplish that in the last six months? Meeting someone's expectations requires a process for developing a strong enough relationship to know what those expectations are, as well as an attempt to meet them.

When a group is not functioning at the development-motion level in the arena of organization, it is missing out on the key benefits of cooperation and alliances—the development of individuals and relationships.⁸⁷ Lack of cooperation also usually leads to severe duplication of resources, a direct cost of scarcity at this level. Lack of appreciation of relationships leads over time to poor working environments, high employee turnover and difficulty in attracting better employees, suppliers and customers. The rate of turnover in these key relationships is a good proxy for the level of scarcity or abundance in this area.

SCARCITY AT THE THINGS-MATTER LEVEL

We are matter. We eat food, wear clothes, and drive cars. When we ignore matter, we experience deep scarcity. There just is not enough of what is needed to keep moving forward.

Not understanding the things-matter level of resources inevitably means that there are never enough of them. Poorly worked land becomes infertile. Poorly supported labor renders little and quits. Poorly understood capital rarely shows up, and only in small amounts. People are always begging for more, and this has a high cost for the group. A proxy for this cost of scarcity looks at the mistakes made in estimating the amount of resource needed. What were the costs in not having the necessary resources? We were not able to produce food on the infertile land. We produced very little because we were constantly having to train new staff. We did not have enough money to do the programs we wanted to do.

In value, lack of awareness at this level leads to poor use of money and a high cost of money, usually reflected in higher interest rates. The cost of capital—interest paid on bank loans and other credit—is a useful proxy for this poor use of money. At this level, not valuing the basic capacities in the five primary relationships leads to a gross underutilization and under-engagement of the capacities that are available to the group.

Seen through the organization lens, a lack of things-level understanding leads to poor contracts, which lead to the loss of individuals, their talents, and their relationships. This direct loss of intellectual and social capital makes it difficult for any group to function well. A proxy for scarcity or abundance at the things level of organization, in this case, might be the percentage of one-time customers. Without even a basic level of organization at the things level, the group lacks any capacity for efficiency. In these groups, people feel like they are wasting their time, as the group is unable to produce much of anything. This lack of engagement leads to a high turnover of people, leading to the loss of what the people learned while in the group and the relationships they developed while in the group.

Using the Agreements Map

In my work as a strategy advisor to companies, communities, government agencies and networks, I have found the Agreements Map to be an invaluable tool. Before I had this tool, I often struggled to figure out which strategic framework to apply in a particular situation. Was the key issue the cost-benefit equation? Was it all about market systems—neoliberal versus egalitarian? Did the situation call for developing an intentional learning community or just becoming more efficient in delivering agreed-upon outcomes? Did the group need to engage people in a creative, participatory design process or focus on optimizing the existing agreements? Was it about resources, value or organization theories? It was often unclear.

Now, with the Agreements Map, which incorporates all of these dimensions at a high level, I can see the patterns of agreements along all of the dimensions at once. It is now clear, from the color-coding of the Agreements Map, at which levels of perceived reality a group is functioning strongly, where it is developing new capacities, and where it is not yet

developing. Knowing that a group is consciously working at a particular level lets me know what types of strategic work the group is ready to take on. If it is strong at the things level only, for example, I proceed with caution in raising development-level questions. Likewise, if it is strong at the things and development levels, then I assume folks are able to work with processes that might strengthen those levels and begin to explore possibility-level efforts.

The integration of the four lenses into one map helps me see the essential interrelatedness of what might seem to be disparate processes. For example, in the past I have been in the situation of trying to help a group think about its resources at the development level, using resource-systems modeling techniques, like the ones I will highlight in the learning labs in Part 4 of the book. The group had contracted for my work independently of the values work being done by another consultant and also independently of the organizational learning practices emerging within the company. These days I would not agree to such an arrangement. Now that I can see how the resources, allocation mechanism, value and organization lenses highlight different questions about the same experience, I know these different types of work cannot effectively be done in isolation of each other.

Furthermore, because the Agreements Map gives me a quick sense of how a group's agreements incorporate the five primary relationships at the three levels of perceived reality, as seen through the four lenses, I have a powerful diagnostic tool to help groups determine what work they need to do. I can now point out the full set of agreements they are working with, as seen from all of these perspectives. The map also highlights those areas that might be quite challenging for the group to take on right away. If there is no evidence of practices or agreements at the level of perceived reality above where they are currently functioning, then the practices at that next level will probably be very different from what they are used to. For example, it takes time to create the high-trust environment required for collaboration at the possibility level, trust which is likely to be absent in a group focused solely on competition-based organizational practices at the things level. This does not mean that the group could not eventually get there, rather that these new practices at the possibility and development levels are very different from the things-only level practices and require time and dedication to bring them into the group's agreements and culture.

With this initial framing and example of the Agreements Map, I hope you begin to see how a quick assessment can highlight what the group's agreements are able to embrace—the primary relationships and levels of perceived reality included, as seen through the four lenses—and therefore what is immediately available to the group and what practices it might be able to adopt in time. Once you get used to working with Agreements Maps, you will find there are various ways you can use it as a diagnostic tool. When you determine which of the five relationships and three levels of perceived reality your agreements encompass, you also see which ones they do *not* include. This shows you where you can focus attention in order to start functioning at a higher level of perceived reality and start experiencing higher levels of abundance and harmonic vibrancy. Calculating the costs of scarcity will help provide the motivation and direction for change.

It can also be helpful to look at your agreements over time. For example, you can reconstruct what they looked like before you made some changes and what they look like now. How do the shifts in agreements relate to shifts in your experience? Or you can establish where you are right now, your current status, and assess the impact of changes you

make going forward. Finally, you can learn a great deal by comparing your agreements to those of another group. If that group is experiencing more or less harmony, vibrancy and abundance than yours, its agreements might be different. The Agreements Map will help you see where those difference lie.

In the rest of this book, I will use the Agreements Map and the concept of costs of scarcity to illuminate a variety of examples of how groups are innovating to achieve greater harmonic vibrancy and to bring greater abundance into their experience. I will also show you how to use these tools to support positive change in your own groups.