



## **Berkana as a Self-Organizing System**

Berkana is reinventing itself, and we'd like to share our new direction with you.

Since 1992, when Berkana was founded, we have been learning about how to create the conditions for self-organizing to happen. During this time, we ourselves have operated in a somewhat traditional form: as a nonprofit institute with staff, offices and professional leadership. The gift of today's challenging economic environment has been to call us far deeper into the experiment in self-organizing.

For all of us working to create social change, we are confronted with the paradox that there is less money available but more need than ever for the kind of work we do. The nonprofit model Berkana has been working in is proving to be unsustainable, and we believe it is time to invent a way to do our work that is flexible, resilient and adaptive.

Fortunately, we know a little something about flexible, resilient and adaptive systems. The organizational model that we plan to experiment with is a self-organizing system that invites many people throughout the Berkana community to step forward with the leadership they wish to offer. It calls for entrepreneurship, creativity and ingenuity. It requires that many people engage in a whole new level of effort around the actions they wish to commit to.

We envision four domains of activity for Berkana moving forward. These are:

1. **Pioneering Initiatives:** the communities of practice that are pioneering new ways of creating change in our communities. Examples include Swaraj University in South Asia, the Southern Africa Learning Collaborative, Powers of Place, the Upcycling Portal and the North America Feeding Ourselves Sustainably Community of Practice.
2. **Consulting and Learning Services:** events and consulting activities that serve organizations, individuals, and communities, primarily in the U.S. and Canada. These services are often connected to communities of place or practice. They include the Art of Hosting, Consulting, Learning Journeys and the Women's Initiative.

3. **Illumination and Thought Leadership:** the media, publications and products that harvest our learning and share it among individuals and communities who wish to learn alongside Berkana.
4. **Shared Services:** an internal capacity to meet the needs of all initiatives affiliated with Berkana by providing administrative, legal and financial services, managing Berkana's identity and web presence, and managing relationships and events.

In this model, *leadership and accountability* are distributed throughout the Berkana community. *Principles* rather than policies guide our actions and behavior. *Decisions* are made by those involved directly in the work.

Each of us on the board of Berkana has answered a resounding *yes* to the call of Berkana's values, principles and beliefs. We know that many of you share that *yes* with us. We look forward to partnering with many of you as we experiment with a self-organizing system that can harness our collective creativity and commitment for building healthy and resilient communities.

Blessings,

*Bob Stilger, Deborah Frieze, Manish Jain, Martin Siesta, Meg Wheatley, Teresa Posakony, Tim Merry, Tom Hurley, Tuesday Ryan-Hart*