

# Practicing Perspective

**CoLab.**  
Complexity | Collaboration | Co-design | Co-creation

October 24, 2018 | Alberta CoLab | [colab.alberta.ca](http://colab.alberta.ca)  
Systemic Design Community of Practice (SDCoP)



# Systemic Design CoP

## Our Aspirations:

- ❑ **Build** the field of practice around systemic design and social innovation approaches in the GoA.
- ❑ **Catalyze** and **inspire** new ways of working on old problems.
- ❑ **Provide** a safe space for GoA staff to learn from each other, with each other.

## We do this by:

- ❑ **Designing** sessions with a mix of theory and learning by practicing.
- ❑ Being **open** and willing to **share** our experiences with others.
- ❑ Having **fun** – we take our work seriously, not ourselves.

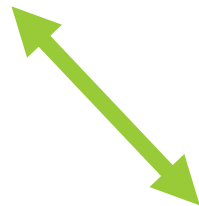
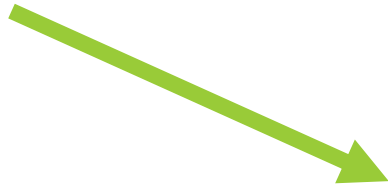
“Any potential relationship suffers if there is any ‘us and them’...if you are holding any judgment or bias in any way about another...”

“Collaboration has a goal...co-creation is about making meaning together. Co-creation is about not knowing where you’re going. Saying that ‘I’m only part of the plan’ and articulating where you stand.”

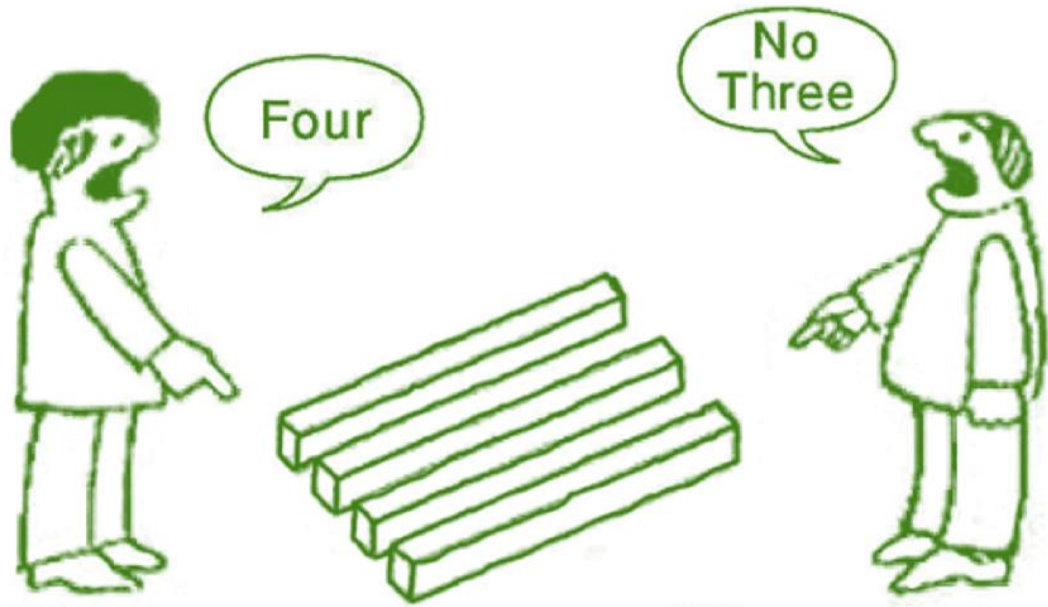
“Seeking to understand before seeking to be understood.”

“It would take a thousand cups of tea to learn what you know.”

Systemic Design Practice



System change is catalyzed by  
significant shifts  
in the typical  
**RULES & RELATIONSHIPS**





# **Individual Reflection**



**Reflect on the story.**

**How do you think about perspective?**

# Opening Activity

- Look at your image and **do not** let anyone else see it.
- Your image has a **connection or relationship** to two other images in the room. There is one exception – one or two images have a connection/relationship to only one image.
- Your **task** is to **discover the relationship/connections** to your image. In doing so you can **talk** as much as you want, **describe** it in exact detail, **act out** the details if you want. The only thing you **cannot do** is show someone your picture.
- You have 9 minutes to complete the task.
- When you have discovered the people with the relationship/connection to your image, **stand with them**. **Do not** reveal your image.



A microscopic image of plant tissue, likely a cross-section of a stem or root. The image shows a network of orange-colored vascular bundles (xylem and phloem) against a light blue background. The bundles are arranged in a somewhat circular pattern, with some larger bundles and some smaller ones. The overall appearance is that of a complex, interconnected network of plant tissue.

Reveal your images.

Now that you can all see all of the images, arrange yourselves.

# ZOOM

By Istvan Banyai



# Expanding Attention



- Focus on the **margins**.
- Be curious – ask questions to **surface assumptions**.
- Apply to **yourself**, first.

**Belief**



**Action**

**Belief**



*knowledge*

**Action**





# **Individual Reflection**

**We all run and stand still at times. Reflect on your experience.  
Where do you often find yourself?**

# Group Work: Scenario

**YOUTH** in a community want to be genuinely included in the local government – to have voice in decision making across the entire spectrum of municipal issues.

**From their perspective, they feel that:**

- SENIOR OFFICIALS** only offer them token positions and roles related to what gets classified as ‘youth issues’.
- SENIOR OFFICIALS** continue to hold all real power and authority for planning and making change.
- SENIOR OFFICIALS** exclude and disrespect **YOUTH**.

**Youth are asking:**

**How can the youth of this  
community get more power  
from the senior officials who  
hold it all?**



# Shift your Perspective

Imagine you are the **YOUTH** in this community.

- ❑ Come up with a list of words that describe the senior officials – their attitudes, values, and actions.

# Shift your Perspective

Imagine you are the **SENIOR OFFICIALS** in this community.

- ❑ Come up with a list of words that describe the senior officials – their attitudes, values, and actions.

*Break*  
**TIME**



# par·a·dox

/'perə,däks/

*noun*

1. a **seemingly** absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be **well-founded** or true.



# Integrative Thinking

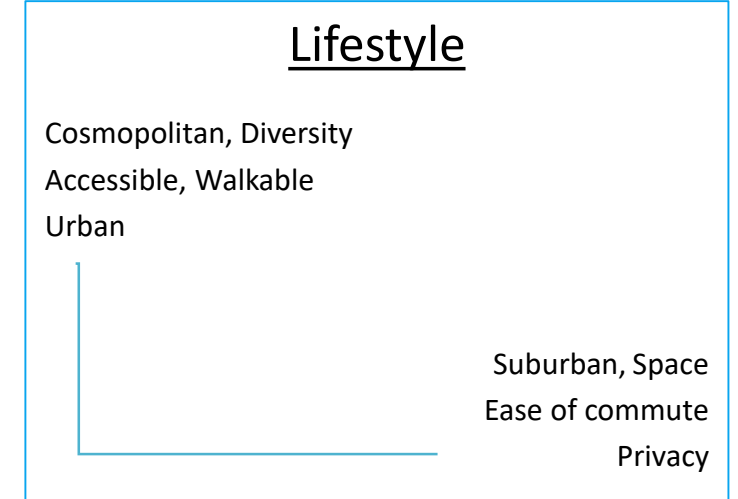
“The ability to face **constructively** the **tension** of opposing ideas and, instead of choosing one at the expense of another, generate a **creative resolution** of the tension in the form of a **new** idea that **contains elements** of the opposing ideas but is **superior** to each.”

- Roger Martin, *The Opposable Mind*

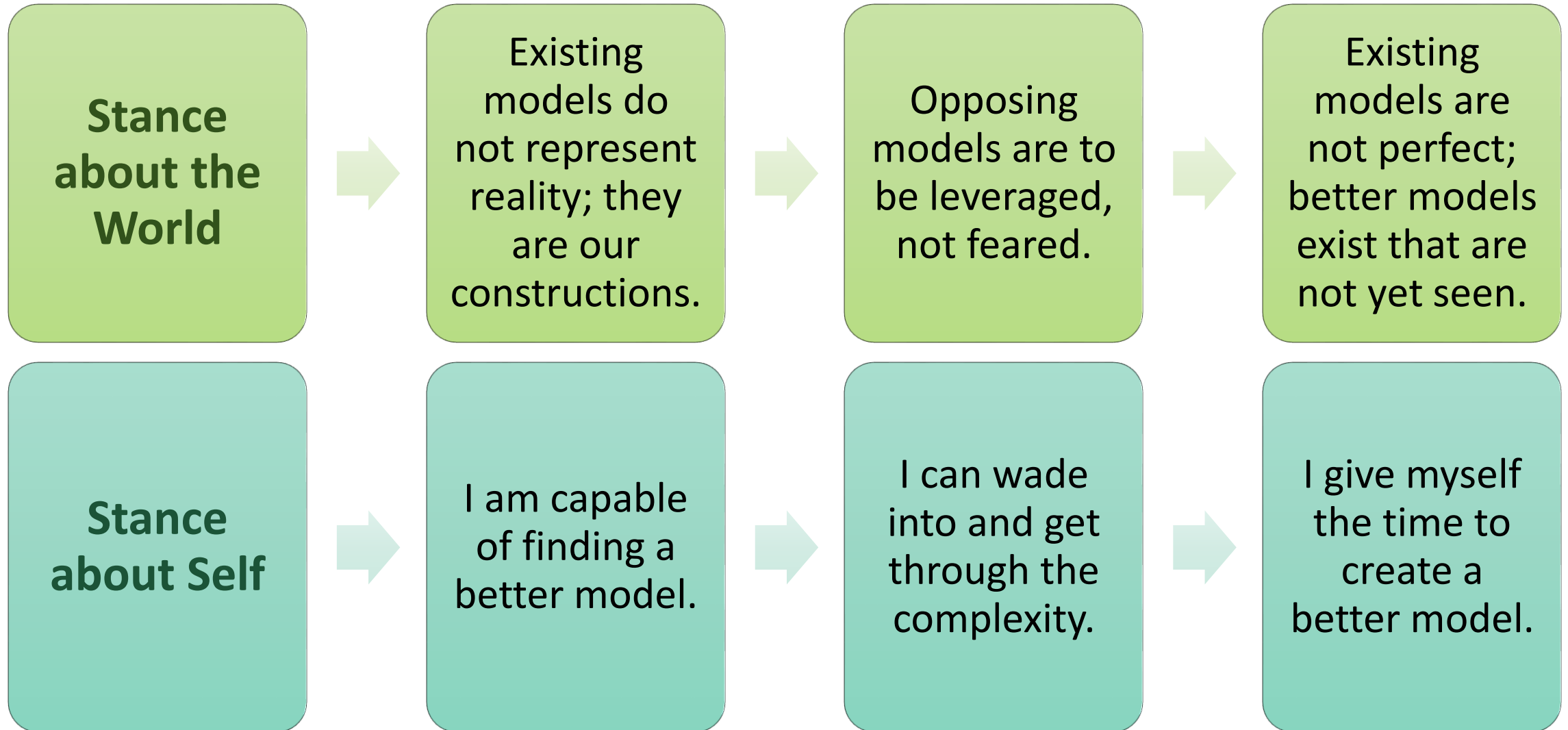


# Integrative Thinking

- ❑ **Values** resist and oppose each other.
- ❑ **We can choose** between opposing values or create/identify innovative combinations.
- ❑ More potential value is created through **combinations**.
- ❑ The **harmony** of the integration can be no better than the harmony and mutuality of those who create it.
- ❑ Confronting dilemmas is both **dangerous** and **rewarding**, threatening on the one hand to disintegrate the organization and yet offering the potential for transformation of the problem domain.



# Standing Still/Cultivating Stance



Do **not** have an **obvious answer**.

Contain the **embedded assumptions** we hold about a situation.

## Wicked Questions

Contain a **paradox** or **tension** (the horns of the dilemma) that demands an **innovative/integrated response**.

Include a paradox that demands **reconciliation of perceived opposites**, both seen as **valuable**.



# Wicked Questions

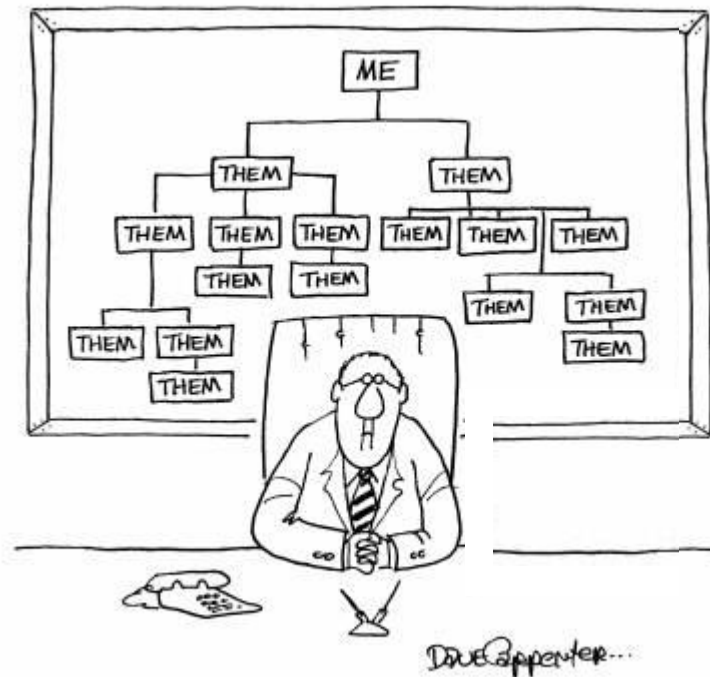
- ❑ Make sure you express **both sides** of the paradox in an **appreciative** form: “How is it that we are \_\_\_\_\_ and we are \_\_\_\_\_ simultaneously?” and not in opposition of each other.
- ❑ Avoid nasty questions that appoint **blame** or are **unbalanced** on one side. Here is an example of a nasty question: “How can we focus on our customers when we are forced to spend more and more time on the headquarters’ bureaucracy?”
- ❑ Avoid **data questions** that can be answered with more analysis.



# Shift your Perspective

What new questions – that incorporate **both** perspectives – could be useful for moving forward?

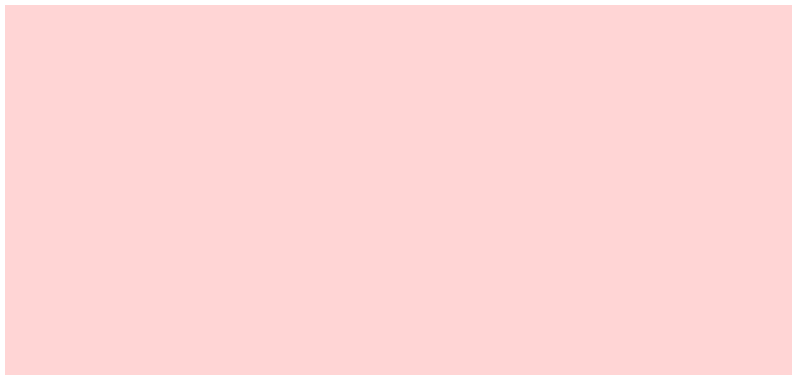
Share your **PERSPECTIVE** on something that shows up in your work that could easily fall into the category of **THEM AND US**



# Us



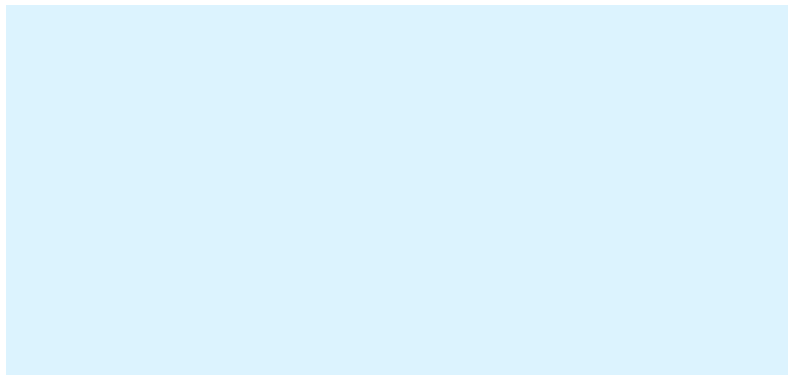
Value:



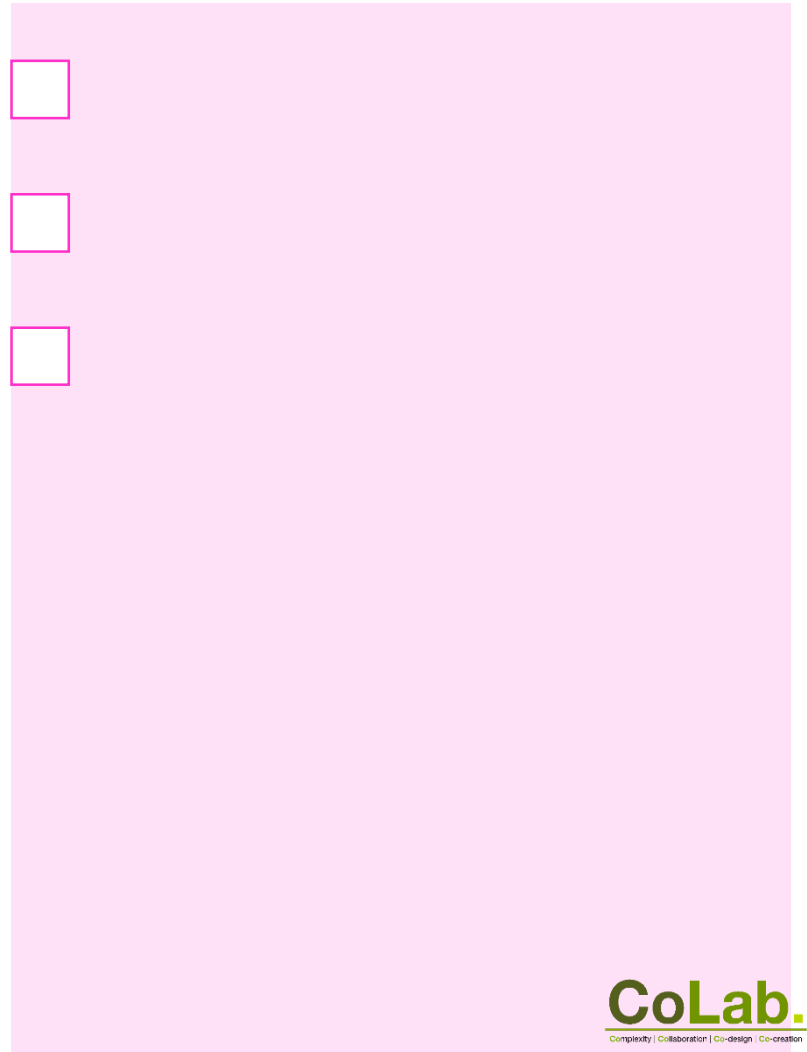
# Them



Value:



# Wicked Questions



- ❑ 'Us and them' thoughts damage relationship.
- ❑ Relationships are foundational for change.
- ❑ We build relationships by seeking to understand before seeking to be understood.
- ❑ This requires us to stand still.
- ❑ Perspective matters – ours and others'.



# Moving Beyond

- Practice **standing still**. Alone and together.
- Seek to understand the source – your own **perspective** and others’.
- Mix it up – **expand your attention**.
- Consider rules AND **relationships**.
- Set **expectations**. Help yourself and others be **accountable**.



# **Individual Reflection**

**Reflect on the session today.**

**What is front of mind for you?**

**How might you apply today's concepts in your work/life?**

# Closing

## Watch your inbox:

Online Evaluation

## Next Session:

*Talking Systems*

Friday, Nov. 16, 2018

