SDX:
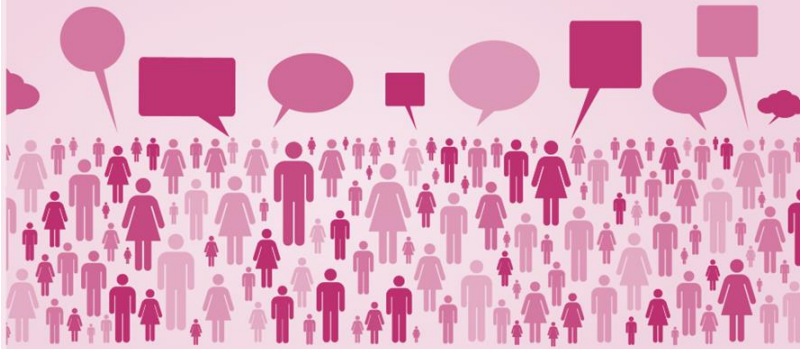# Systemic Design eXchange

Engaging Complexity for Systems Change

WHAT?

An Edmonton based Community of Practice looking to convene individuals interested in collectively learning about Systemic Design as a methodology for addressing complex real world issues.

INSPIRING ACTION FOR

SOCIAL IMPACT

featuring
tacsi
THE AUSTRALIAN
CENTRE FOR SOCIAL
INNOVATION

WHY?

SDX4

September 20, 2016 – Action Lab – Edmonton, Alberta
@SDXCoP **|** #SDXCoP **|** #CoLabAB **|** #actionlabyeg

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

About SDX

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of diverse people who come together to learn, share practices, and co-create knowledge around shared areas of interest. Informal CoPs pop up in organizations around the water cooler, but when purposefully stewarded, CoPs can become powerful, positive forces that help people navigate complex challenges together.

SDX – Systemic Design Exchange – is a collaboration between the Government of Alberta and community-based practitioners. An emerging CoP, SDX will help connect people interested in using systems thinking, design thinking, ethnography, prototyping, and social labs to tackle real-world challenges. With a bias towards learning by doing, SDX aims to be an intersection where multiple sectors can come together, learn together, and act together.

SDX co-conveners – the CoLab and the Action Lab – committed to an initial run of four gatherings, beginning in December 2015.

Check us out online at http://www.skillssociety.ca/projects/sdx/.

"Systemic design helps groups to: visualize complexity from multiple perspectives, create shared frames of reference, surface core assumptions, and find opportunities in complexity by reframing the mess. This enables diverse groups to co-create tangible improvements to the situation. By undertaking this on the front-end of a project, systemic design generates robust options for decision makers."
– CoLab, Systemic Design Fact Sheet, 2014

Action Lab is a social enterprise of Skills Society, one of the largest disability service organizations in Edmonton, Alberta. It is designed for hosting inspiring events, group collaboration, strategy sessions, and social innovation. The Action Lab experience promotes creative problem solving, offers tools to help tap into collective wisdom, and helps people prototype solutions to challenges they are working on.

Revenue from the Action Lab supports the employment of people with disabilities, innovative social change initiatives of Skills Society, and subsidizes lab use by community groups.

CoLab is a team, a way of working, and a space. It was founded in 2014 as a cross-ministry hub for systemic design and strategic foresight within the Government of Alberta. It supports work on many of the government's most complex strategy and policy challenges, providing a new way to have strategic conversations, include citizens in problem framing, and co-design actionable strategies. It runs internal communities of practice on systemic design and foresight, and builds capacity in these areas through training intensives and workshops.

In 2015, CoLab organized and hosted the international Relating Systems Thinking and Design Symposium, bringing the event to North America for the first time.

SDX**4**

SDX4 was a special session, as we were so pleased to host the only Alberta stop of the Inspiring Action for Social Impact Tour. Organized by Social Innovation Generation (SiG), the tour brought The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) to Canada for a cross-country tour to share their learnings and experiences of bringing social innovation to life. On September 20th we welcomed TACSI's Carolyn Curtis, CEO and Ingrid Burkett, Director of Learning and Systems Innovation, along with Geraldine Cahill, Manager of Programs and Partnerships with SiG. Our first SDX hijack was upon us!

Participants were greeted with coffee and baked goods, with the first half an hour of the morning open for networking and getting to know each other. The official program then began with welcoming remarks from Ben Weinlick, Senior Manager of Research and Social Innovation with Skills Society, and Roya Damabi, Systemic Designer with Alberta CoLab. Geraldine provided an overview of the TACSI tour and introduced Carolyn and Ingrid to lead the session.

CO-LLABORATING

DOMAIN
What we care about

PRACTICE
What and how we do things together

COMMUNITY
Who cares about it

CO-LEARNING CO-NNECTING

Agenda	
8:30 a.m.	Coffee & Networking
9:00 a.m.	Welcome & Introductions
9:15 a.m.	TACSI Presentation & Group Activity
11:00 p.m.	SDX4 Close

Laura Read, Systemic Designer with Alberta CoLab, holds down registration alongside our brand new poster

Geraldine Cahill with Social Innovation Generation introduces TACSI

TACSI Presentation

Carolyn provided an overview of TACSI's approach to social innovation and highlighted some of their work to date. Established in 2009, TACSI exists to develop, test and spread innovations that change lives for the people who need it most.

> "How is what you're creating leading to change for people? Social innovation isn't a fluffy thing that privileged people get to do. [...] Without implementation there is no impact." – Carolyn Curtis

TACSI aims to:

- Shape major system drivers such as policy, market and industry strategy and civil society participation
- Grow and educate the social innovation ecosystem in Australia
- Demonstrate a rigorous approach to social innovation that leads to improved lives
- Build future services and supports that lead to better outcomes for people
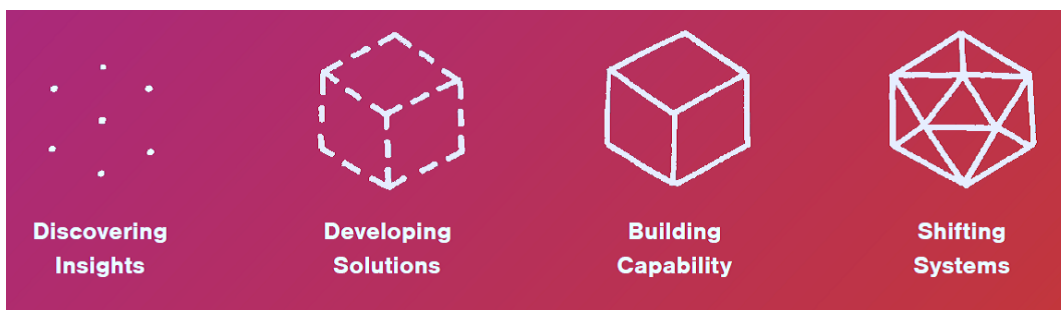
TACSI's approach has four pillars:

- Starting with People: effective social innovation can only come from prioritizing what *people* want and need over what *systems* want.
- Using Diversity: no one discipline has the monopoly on social innovation.
- Getting Serious about Impact: continually asking – is this leading to change?
- Learning through Doing: dedicating significant time to learning and continually improving.
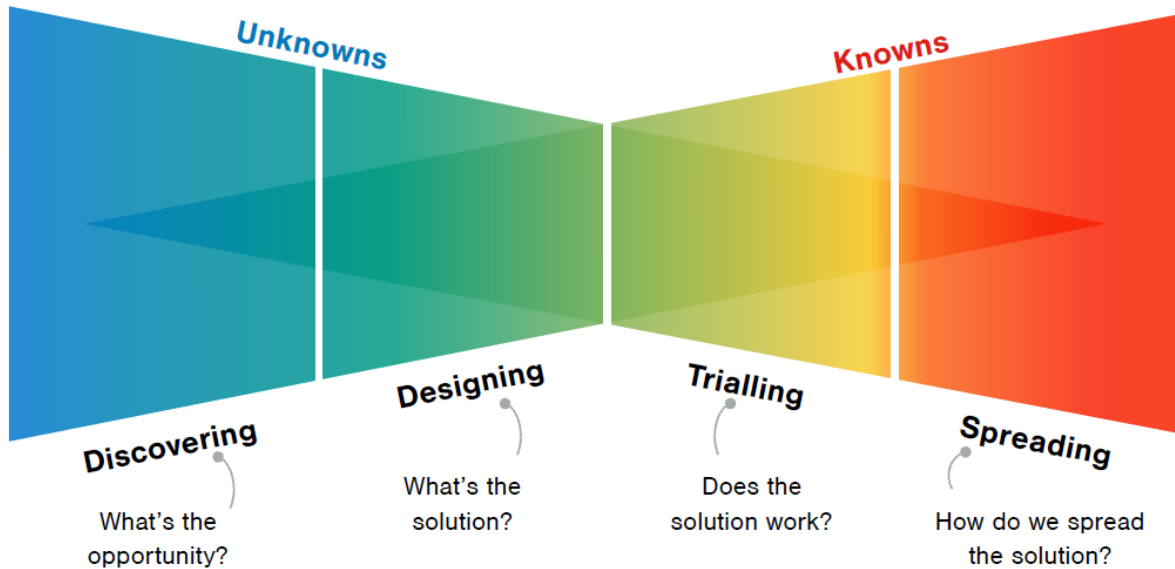

Carolyn Curtis introduces us to TACSI

Ingrid Burkett explores systems change with SDXers

For TACSI, Carolyn explained that innovation is about ideation through to implementation, and every stage needs rigour. What are the levels of evidence that you need at each stage of the process? What is the problem and what are the opportunities? How true are they?

4 stages of innovation

Unknowns

Knowns

Discovering
What's the opportunity?

Designing
What's the solution?

Trialling
Does the solution work?

Spreading
How do we spread the solution?

In its approach to social innovation, TACSI uses a diverse team and toolkit. Much of its work involves generative research – working alongside people to 'make' and 'create' in order to explore and unpack what people know, feel and dream. This may include role playing, art, and other kinesthetic activities that occur alongside structured conversations and observations. For TACSI, innovation is more…attractive, effective, sustainable, spreadable, better!

SDXers having fun…except maybe Sam, who is giving someone some major side eye…☺

Hearing from Anne Harvey, with the City of Edmonton

After Carolyn's presentation, Ingrid took SDXers through a discussion around systems change that got folks moving – literally!

First, Ingrid asked whether SDXers thought that systems change comes from disruption or incremental innovation. Turns out, the disruptive innovation side had a few more people on it. SDXer Sam Singh posed to the group whether incremental innovation gets a bad reputation as being less sexy than disruptive innovation, even though many incremental innovations are both vital and impactful.

On Systems Change:

"Reform and innovation are different. Reform doesn't challenge underlying assumptions, and you to have to for systems change." – Carolyn

"Where we align ourselves influences how we see the systems we want to change." – Ingrid

Ingrid then led the group through a discussion about what systems change means. She asked the group what systems change meant to them and asked for examples.

The next activity involved a card deck of questions related to a system – any system. Each card had a question and an icon representing that question. Exploring the questions generates insights into both the system itself and people's experiences of it. Some examples of the questions included:

- A story that highlights the criticism of the system?
- A story that helps us build empathy with the system?
- What has to be true to make this system work?
- What constrains any future change in the system?
- Who notices and takes action if this system has unintended consequences?
- What job does this system see itself doing for the end users?
- What or who is changed by this system?

In small groups, Ingrid asked participants to choose a few cards that spoke to them and to start mapping out what the system they were investigating looks like.

> "Maybe we need to be a bit more nuanced about the difference between systems and scaling."
>
> "Multiple experiments and prototypes at the same time are
> vital to systems change. Create multiple ripples at the same time."
>
> – Ingrid Burkett

Ingrid leads SDXers through a systems change mapping activity using a TACSI card deck

> "Part of the challenge with this work is having empathy for the system you are trying to shift."
>
> "What about creating a systems map by building stories of potential into them?"
>
> – Ingrid Burkett

Of the six survey responses we received, the results were overwhelmingly positive about SDX4. Survey respondents felt that it was useful to hear about what is happening in Australia, and they found the mix of theory with the different activities engaging. One participant noted that it was exciting to be part of a national tour and that the different scales at which TACSI is engaged – from community to government staff to senior leadership – is both positive and encouraging.

As the SDX conveners have been struggling with SDX as a forum for learning and a forum for working together on a real world challenge – i.e., how best to do that and is it possible with a group that has fluid participation – it was encouraging to read this particular comment from one of the survey respondents:

"Keep up the great work! Build the group […]. At some point there may be enough people with special interests to have groups pursuing long term sustainable solutions to significant problems."

We look forward to seeing where SDX takes us – together! ☺

What topics would you like to explore at future SDX sessions?					
Bridging the Gap	**Creating a Platform**	**Learning**	**Ideating**	**Particular Topics**	**Tackling Specific Issues**
Policy & Delivery	Bring in outside speakers (Roger Martin, Tim Brown, Yves Behar)	Skills & craft of social innovation	Dragon's Den Format	SD as a Tool for Organizational Development	Apply models to real-life scenarios
Systemic Design & Service Design	Develop a space to publish ideas, insights, articles	How is social innovation shifting policy development?	Charrettes	Organizational learning	Have participants bring their projects to the group
Designing for 'Extreme Users'	Communicate the value of SD and Systems Thinking	When to use which tools	Prototyping	Change management, transformation	Explore sticky social issues
		Big picture thinking		Relation between SD and citizen deliberation, engagement	
		How to work better together		SD and community organizing, networks	
		How to understand and map systems		Storytelling	
		How to communicate the value of SD and Systems Thinking		Monitoring & Evaluation for SD	
		How to evaluate social impact			

Multiple Choice/Scale Answer Questions

I work for:

6 out of 6 people answered this question

1	Another organization / Myself	5 / **83%**
2	Government of Alberta	1 / **17%**

What is your experience with the internal Systemic Design Community of Practice run by the CoLab?

6 out of 6 people answered this question

1	I attend occasionally	4 / **67%**
2	I don't work for the Government of Alberta	2 / **33%**
3	I work for the Government of Alberta, but have never attended	0 / **0%**
4	I'm a regular	0 / **0%**
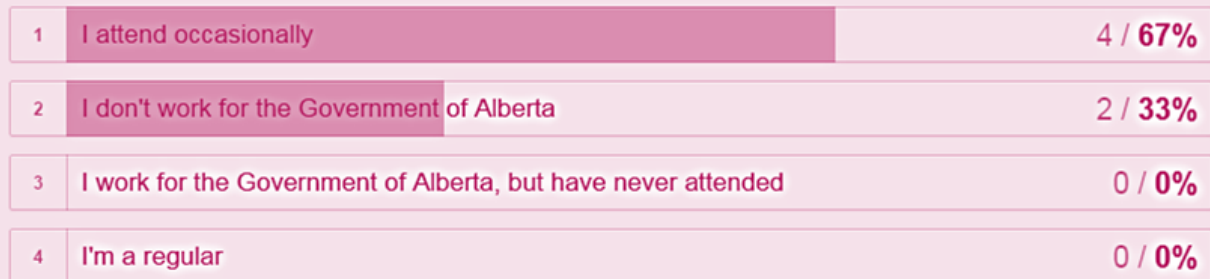
I gained new insight(s) about systemic design at SDX.

6 out of 6 people answered this question

4.33
Average rating

I made new connection(s) at SDX that could benefit my work.

6 out of 6 people answered this question

1	Yes	5 / **83%**
2	No	1 / **17%**

Theory:

6 out of 6 people answered this question

1	Just right	6 / **100%**
2	Not enough	0 / **0%**
3	Too much	0 / **0%**

Practice:

6 out of 6 people answered this question

1	Just right	4 / **67%**
2	Not enough	2 / **33%**
3	Too much	0 / **0%**

Networking:

6 out of 6 people answered this question

1	Just right	4 / **67%**
2	Not enough	1 / **17%**
3	Too much	1 / **17%**

Listening:

6 out of 6 people answered this question

1	Just right	6 / **100%**
2	Not enough	0 / **0%**
3	Too much	0 / **0%**

Doing:

6 out of 6 people answered this question

1	Just right	5 / **83%**
2	Not enough	1 / **17%**
3	Too much	0 / **0%**

I had fun at SDX.

6 out of 6 people answered this question

4.50
Average rating

The methods and concepts we explored interest me.

6 out of 6 people answered this question

4.83
Average rating

The methods and concepts we explored have a useful application to my work.

6 out of 6 people answered this question

4.33
Average rating

Overall, how satisfied are you with your SDX experience?
More cats = more satisfaction!

6 out of 6 people answered this question

4.67
Average rating

THANKS SIG & TACSI!