2015

Seeding and spreading capacity for systems design across social service organisations
Aguirre, Manuela and Schulman, Sarah

Suggested citation:
Seeding & Spreading Design Capacity
Case Study of Fifth Space

Systemic Design Symposium [RSD4]
1-3 Sept. - The Banff Center
5 organizations collaborating:
3 social service delivery agencies, 1 social entreprise & 1 design university

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what unites us?

transforming social services from safety nets into trampolines
A mixed track record:

- #disability
- #homelessness
- #youth
- #addiction
- #family
- #domestic violence

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FAMILY

BY family
But we didn’t change what the system did.
Shifting the feedback professionals get

Shifting Fay’s context & conversations

Shifting human resourcing, procurement, metrics, etc.
What is the **smallest increment of change** that might represent that we are changing in the right direction?

Ann Pendleton Jullian
So we move here, to a social housing complex, in a suburb of Burnaby. Lived 3 months. Blend of designers, social scientists, secondies from agencies.
the starter project was a way to test the partnership
The underutilized

The empty pipeliners

The divers

The dissatisfied

The pleasers

The positive deviants

Ethnographic research-by-design

Insider perspectives, generative approaches, operate in rich and multiple layers of real life contexts. (Birger Sevaldson 2010)
Has been going to the same day program for 20 years.

“I’m tired of making spaghetti. I’d really like to learn to make a roast.”
Also feeling a bit stuck. No source of new ideas. Same thing day in, day out.
Spends his entire day with a human resourcing puzzle. How to staff, how to stay within budget.
Innovation Director of government agency wants to reduce service dependencies. How to make change when you fund the same way.
formal system
informal system

policy-makers

service organization

service deliverers

passionate individuals

small business owners

schools, cities, community centers

fifth space

#KUD0Z 100% at-scale business resources
informal system

- small business owners
- schools, cities, community centers
- passionate individuals

#KUD0Z

100% of expertise, 100% business outcomes

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testing tweaking, reshaping....
policy-makers

service organization

service deliverers

formal system
mechanics of fifth space

20% FTE for 6 months
from 29 to 27 people
3 social service organizations
7 teams, 6 projects
2 projects moving forward
all interactions prototyped

*Modeled on Google’s “20% Time” that aimed to empower employees to use 1/5th of their FTE to work on projects (this is how Gmail got developed).
what has changed from February 2015?
early indicators of change

starting to create change at the **individual** level & informal system

12 new friendships catalyzed
5 small businesses offering jobs
12 hacks identified
10 families asking for more
early indicators of change

policy-makers

service organization

service deliverers

a network of support to draw from in three social service agencies and policymakers will soon have a 3-day residency
ripple effects among some colleagues
when moving quickly & nimbly, we’ve inadvertantly left people out and created pockets of resistance
CEOs mobilizing resources in record time
recruitment
application
selection
a flat structure of inter-agency & inter-hierarchy team collaboration
a safe space for challenging assumptions & being creative
iteration #1 of 4 of research tools
from concept development
to live prototyping
6 projects were live prototyped for 1.5 months - 2 moving forward
24 participants / 2 events

#SpeedFriending

12 sets of phone numbers exchanged

#Fiesta4Living

1 set considering homeshare

2 sets of long lost friends reconnected

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how do we scale?
Social Service Providers in British Columbia

providing a backbone infrastructure

curation coaching curriculum

HR employment

finance

services

employment

community connections

style skills space staffing strategy structure shared values
scaling in partnerships

curation, coaching, curriculum, culture, collaboration
3 things to remember

**What:** We are trying to prototype change for people at all levels of the social system.

**How:** Working from the ground-up to model new practices, live prototyping and measuring what works, what doesn’t, for whom and why.

**Why:** Too many top-down changemaking approaches have a huge disconnect between what is designed and what is actually implemented and felt by people on the ground. So we are working backwards: from people to interactions to services - rather than from policy, to program to people.

*Ask us for a copy of Grounded Change*
we are poking the system from within by actively prototyping new possibilities and scaling the fifth space mindset