

# The Collaborative

## Tough Problems & A New Solution

Rapid **change** creates uncertainty as new developments continually challenge our worldview. Change is the only certainty.

We also often fail to appreciate the incredibly complex **systems** that serve us. Cities are a prime example. Citizens are served by complex, adaptive and often highly interdependent systems. Think of food, water, energy, markets, mobility and more. Complex systems that serve us within the integrated natural-and-built environment where about 80% of us live.

All of these systems are themselves continually reshaped by technological, environmental, economic, social, political, legislative, regulatory and other changes. To add even greater complexity, many individuals, groups and organizations dynamically participate in these systems making describing, measuring or mapping our complex systems virtually impossible.

This **complexity** also makes it difficult to intervene to improve our systems. It also gives rise to what Adam Kahane called **tough problems**, which have:

- ✓ **Social Complexity**: Where interests differ among system stakeholders (e.g., the transition from high-carbon energy use to a low-carbon future).
- ✓ **Dynamic Complexity**: Causes and effects are separated in time and place (e.g., today's carbon emissions and long-term climate change impacts).
- ✓ **Generative Complexity**: The future is fundamentally different from the past (e.g., the global pandemic).

Kahane concluded that tackling tough problems requires using highly integrated systems approaches (like Scenario Planning) and **engagement processes** that promote dialogue and collaboration.

Our answer to tough problems is a new form of organization called a **Collaborative**. Unlike other collaborative endeavors, a Collaborative invites all of the stakeholders who are focused on a shared concern, a shared purpose or solving a tough problem to the table. Spanning across silos and borders, a Collaborative is:

- ✓ a social innovation that accelerates shared action while building awareness, access and the option to communicate and collaborate better along the way;
- ✓ 100% inclusive: open to every individual, informal group, organization or multi-stakeholder group who shares a Collaborative's values and who can contribute to its shared purpose.
- ✓ Rooted in the innovative ideas of **Organic Collaboration** and **The Collaborative Leader**
- ✓ Enabled with S2S' **Collaborative Leadership** infrastructure.
- ✓ Complemented by **Theory of Change** thinking and **Mind Suite Analytics**.

The Collaborative was first designed to build common ground among First Nations and the large infrastructure project proponent. It was then applied to our decarbonization challenge. A Collaborative can be deployed anywhere to accelerate shared action and shared success. From the kitchen table to the coffee shop, town hall or boardroom – locally to nationally – a Collaborative is a new way to solve tough problems!

