Social Innovation in the Cafeteria:

Design principles for Farm to Cafeteria Canada's institutional foodservice Learning Labs

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About Farm to Cafeteria Canada:

What is Farm to Cafeteria Canada?
Farm to Cafeteria Canada is an emerging national network that promotes, supports, links farm to cafeteria programs, policy and practice from coast to coast to coast.

What is a Farm to Cafeteria Program?
Farm to Cafeteria programs connect farm to fork bringing local, nutritious and sustainably produced foods into public agencies – places where we learn, work, are healed and play. Farm to School, Farm to University, and Farm to Hospital are all Farm to Cafeteria programs (differentiated primarily by their settings). These programs are an essential component of strong, resilient, and sustainable, regional food systems, – systems that contribute to the health of people, place, and the planet. All Farm to Cafeteria programs share a common goal to increase access to fresh, locally and sustainably grown, nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods in public agencies.

For more information about Farm to Cafeteria Canada, visit farmtocafeteriacanada.ca, or e-mail farm2cafeteriacanada@gmail.com

About the author:

Dana Lahey has been working to get good food into Canada's campuses since 2007. He did his undergraduate degree in anthropology and sociology at McGill, but quickly realized his passion for understanding and working with the many different communities and organizational cultures that need to be involved in getting food from field (and ocean) to table. Starting the McGill Farmers' Market and the McGill Food Systems Project, Dana spent his degree working to bring together his campus community to improve the sustainability of the university's food supply.

After graduating from McGill in 2011, Dana worked with the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation to develop their national food systems Value Chain granting program. Dana was a founding member and national coordinator of the Campus Food Systems Project from 2011-2013, and has continued his involvement as a consultant on the Project. Currently, Dana is completing University of Waterloo's Graduate Diploma in Social Innovation, and is an Advisory Committee member and consultant for Farm to Cafeteria Canada, an emerging national network working to get local sustainable food into public schools, campuses, and healthcare facilities across the country.

Context

Goals and structure of this paper

This paper is focused on articulating the strategy and rational for a national Learning Lab Program which is currently being developed by the Farm to Cafeteria Canada (F2CC) network.

F2CC's national Learning Lab Program has been directly inspired by the success of similar models including Farm to School Salad bar in British Columbia, School Food FOCUS Learning Labs in the U.S, and institutional purchasing workshops held by My Sustainable Canada in Ontario. However, they can also be viewed as fitting within a much larger movement of Change Labs, Design Labs, and Social Innovation approaches for developing breakthrough solutions to complex problems. As a student in the University of Waterloo's Graduate Diploma in Social Innovation and an Advisory Committee of Farm to Cafeteria Canada, I am using this paper to identify core principles for the structure and impact that F2CC's Learning Lab Program will have, and articulate the key concepts and insights from Social Innovation that support these decisions.

This paper is structured around three important questions about the design of F2CC's Learning Lab Program:

1) *What is the need for, and strategy behind, a national Learning Lab Program focused on transforming institutional foodservices?*
2) *How should the institutions to participate in this Program be selected, and who should be involved in the specific Learning Lab Projects that are hosted at these institutions?*
3) *What will actually happen in the three Learning Lab Projects, and specifically during the three Learning Lab Retreats that provide their central structure?*

A summary table of the answers to these questions, and the supporting insights from social innovation, is provided on page 8. If you would like to read a detailed discussion of any of these topics, the summary has hyperlinks to the relevant sections. The paper is divided into three sections, one for each these three *design questions*. Inside each section, instead of trying to answer the question directly, I will instead start by discussing the related concepts from social innovation theory and practice, presenting a narrative of the most relevant insights and marking the concepts in orange. I will then apply these insights to the F2CC's Learning Lab Program, identifying the important *design principles* for its development.

The sources for this paper are social innovation literature and practitioners as presented in the University of Waterloo's Graduate Diploma Program in Social Innovation, materials that have been published and are in production by the F2CC Network, my knowledge of F2CC's inner processes, and my own experiences in the movement to change institutional foodservices across Canada.

About Farm to Cafeteria Canada

If most Canadians were asked what their association with cafeteria food are, chances are that overpriced, unhealthy, and unappetizing would be among the leading responses. However, there is a growing movement of organizations and individuals working to change that. **Farm to Cafeteria Canada (F2CC) is a national network working to "connect farm to fork bringing local, nutritious and sustainably produced foods into public agencies – places where we learn, work, are healed and play"** (Farm to Cafeteria Canada, 2012).

Formed in late 2011, the F2CC network has spent its first year developing its internal governance and a strong understanding of the situation of farm to cafeteria work across the country. It now has an Advisory Committee (AC) with 15 members and 6 liaisons, representing 21 organizations that span all three institutional settings, national and provincial organizations, and backgrounds including farming, foodservices, health, environment, education, youth, and academia (Farm to Cafeteria Canada, 2013a). Using the combined reach of their networks, the F2CC AC has conducted the first national survey of farm to cafeteria activity. This survey provided a clear snapshot of the significant changes already underway in schools, campuses, and healthcare facilities, and demonstrated a clear desire from all institutional settings to continue and increase this work (Farm to Cafeteria Canada, 2013b). Based on the results of the survey, the F2CC AC created a strategic plan, settling on three priorities for their work together:

- *Catalyze, support and sustain organizations in their work to develop knowledge, build skills and operate Farm to Cafeteria activities and programs*
- *Influence policy, conduct research and advocate to make it easier for public agencies to acquire and serve local, healthy and sustainable food*
- *Raise awareness about farm to cafeteria work and Farm to Cafeteria Canada*

(Farm to Cafeteria Canada, 2012).

The F2CC network is now ready to move from its own internal organizing, to working together to advance its goals and intervening in Canada's institutional procurement and food systems. Based on the results of the national survey, the experience of F2CC's members, and the interests of funders, the F2CC Network has decided to launch a National Learning Lab Program as a next stage of its work.

Farm to Cafeteria Canada's Learning Lab Projects and National Program

F2CC is current planning three distinct levels of Learning Lab activities:

1) National Learning Lab Program will provide coordination and support for all Learning Lab Projects.

2) Learning Lab Projects are two-year projects that will work with an individual institution, or group of linked institutions, to increase the ability of their foodservices to serve local and sustainable food. Learning Lab Projects will bring together host institutions, supply chain actors, and F2CC member organizations together to:

   - **Build relationships and a common vision**: connect together stakeholders that do not typically interact, and providing careful facilitation to develop communication and collaboration between them, break down myths and misconceptions, and surface common goals and strategies
   - **Identify shared problems, do shared learning**: clarify common research and capacity needs, bring in technical assistance and develop partnerships to fill these needs
   - **Test solutions, find ones that actually work**: leverage the diverse experience of stakeholders to come up with new ideas, then prototype and pilot these strategies, assess results, refine approaches, and keep repeating until a breakthrough solution is found
   - **Spread lessons learned**: capture outcomes and process of Lab, disseminate the results and learnings widely, and use them to improve the design and resources of future Labs

3) Learning Lab Retreats. Each two-year Project will be structured around three multi-day Learning Lab Retreats, which will convene relevant stakeholders to identify and assess progress on key interventions for changing foodservices. Retreats will be held at six-month intervals, and the time in-between Retreats will be used to implement key interventions. Interventions may include, but not be limited to, changing purchasing of specific product categories, staff training, equipment purchasing, or policy development. (Farm to Cafeteria Canada, 2013c).

For a more detailed description of these three levels of activities, see Appendix I.

Below is a summary of the design questions and principles for the Learning Lab Program, Projects, and Retreats, with corresponding insights from social innovation theory and practice. Please note that this summary provides hyperlinks to the relevant sections of this paper, for further reading as desired.

Summary of F2CC Learning Lab design principles

Design questions for F2CC Learning Labs	**Design principles** for F2CC Learning Labs	**Supporting insights** from Social Innovation theory and practice	**Supporting concepts** from Social Innovation
1. Why a Learning Lab Program?	1.A The F2CC Learning Lab Program will provide the time, resourcing, and customization needed to transform foodservices at individual institutions. It is based on the recognition that there are many success stories and examples across Canada, but that these approaches can not be directly replicated to new institutions because of the unique characteristics of each institutional setting and their supply chains.	Social innovations provide solutions to complex problems. Complex problems are unique in each instance, therefore solutions to them can not be directly copied or replicated. Therefore, spreading social innovations requires customization to each new context.	1.1 Social Innovation 1.2 Applied Dissemination 1.2 Complex Problems
	1.B The F2CC Learning Lab Program will develop a new model for transforming institutional foodservices. It will bring together and facilitate the diversity of stakeholders, research, resources, and testing needed to develop breakthrough solutions.	Complex problems involve a myriad of actors and interdependent issues which influence each other in unpredictable ways, making it hard to plan or predict effective interventions. New models for decision-making need to provide broad participation in the iterative development, prototyping, and evaluation of solutions.	1.3 Lab models for social innovation 1.4 Developmental Evaluation
	1.C The F2CC Learning Lab Program will both transform foodservices at specific institutions and provide examples, inspiration, and precedents for change across the country.	Fully solving a complex problem often requires making change at many levels: from the individual, organizational and community, to the national and cultural. Establishing successful examples of how to overcome the complex problem at the organizational and community levels doesn't directly change the others, but is essential for redefining what is possible.	1.5 Reservoirs of Alternatives 1.5 Making Hope Visible

Design questions for F2CC Learning Labs	**Design principles** for F2CC Learning Labs	**Supporting insights** from Social Innovation theory and practice	**Supporting concepts** from Social Innovation
2. Who should Learning Lab Projects target?	2.A F2CC Learning Lab Program will focus on identifying institutions that are interested in transforming their foodservices, are in a transition period and open to these changes, but need support developing a shared vision and prioritizing strategies for how to make these changes happen.	Complex problems involve many interrelated levels and actors. These can be grouped and understood as systems. Systems go through predictable cycles of growth, stability, decline, and reorganization. Periods of decline and reorganization are when systems are most open to change, and are thus essential opportunities for intervening in complex problems. However, they can also be times of chaos and confusion, making change difficult to direct without careful facilitation and time for creating cohesion.	2.1 the Adaptive Cycle 2.1 Opportunity Contexts
	2.B F2CC will identify champions who are ready to lead Learning Lab Projects at their institution through a self-selection process. Criteria for lead applicants will include a strong understanding of their context, broad networks, a sense of current opportunities and available resources, and past experience in convening stakeholders around a vision for change.	Common approaches for changing complex problems have been identified. The characteristics and skillsets of the people working most effectively to create these changes have been too. Identifying, supporting, and connecting these people is essential for solving complex problems.	2.2 Institutional Entrepreneurs

Design questions for F2CC Learning Labs	**Design principles** for F2CC Learning Labs	**Supporting insights** from Social Innovation theory and practice	**Supporting concepts** from Social Innovation
3. What happens during Learning Lab Retreats?	3.A F2CC Learning Lab Retreats will create a facilitated space for previously unconnected stakeholders to come together around a common goal, develop trust, integrate diverse perspectives, identify concrete actions to take together, and build capacity for long-term collaboration.	New ideas are central to solving longstanding problems, but so are new ways of working together. Breakthrough change comes from individuals with very different perspectives taking the time to really listen to and understand each other's perspectives and needs, identifying their shared visions and goals, and finding a concrete project to work together on.	3.1 Generative Relationships 3.1 Investigative Negotiation 3.1. Finding the "golden string"
	3.B F2CC Learning Lab Retreats and Implementation Periods will create the space for strategies to be researched, developed, tested, refined, and delivered. Not only will they create meaningful changes in each institution's foodservices within a two year period and build the capacity of all stakeholders to continue transforming foodservices at their institutions, the lessons learned will also be captured to strengthen all future Labs and the movement at institutions across the country.	Breakthrough solutions to complex problems are not developed in a single brilliant idea of an individual, but through the continual learning and iteration of a group. A well-structured and closely facilitated process is essential for creating the space necessary for busy people to be able to do this cyclical visioning, prototyping, and learning together. Building this habit of action and reflection is a powerful way to increase the effectiveness of individuals and organizations, and captures deep lessons which can be widely applicable.	3.2 Design Thinking 3.2 Developmental evaluation

F2CC Learning Labs: design questions, supporting insights from social innovation, & design principles

Design question 1: Why a Learning Lab Program?

As Farm to Cafeteria Canada sets out to develop a national Learning Lab Program, one of the most fundamental questions to be answered is ... why? What is the need for, and strategy behind, a national Learning Lab Program focused on transforming institutional foodservices? This section of the paper will first identify and discuss relevant concepts from social innovation that will help to answer that question (points 1.1 - 1.5), and then apply these insights to specific recommendations for the Learning Lab Program (points 1.A - 1.C).

1.1 Creating breakthrough solutions: defining Social Innovation

Westley and Antadze (2010) define social innovation as:

> a complex process of introducing new products, processes or programs that profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flows, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs. Such successful innovations have durability and broad impact. (p. 2)

The Social Innovation Generation (SiG) Knowledge Hub clarifies that:

> some change happens at the individual level, some involves groups or organizations and then some gets at the really tough places – into areas like our beliefs, our habits, our laws, our economy ... [social innovation] requires that change happen **across** these different levels or scales so that impact is strong and lasting; so that something that seemed impossible to change in the world becomes very different. (SiG, 2013a)

The common understanding of innovation is of developing a brand new product or concept. Developing a social innovation, however, is more often about figuring out how to effectively knit together existing ideas, people, technologies, and resources in a way that fundamentally changes a longstanding and seemingly intractable social problem. Al Etmanski, founding member of the SiG collaborative, has stated that he believes we actually have all the technical solutions and processes we need to solve our societies' biggest problems, and that essence of creating social innovation is in working to shift *culture* and *relationships* inside systems, in order to create the space for these solutions to actually be put into place (personal communication, February 22, 2013).

1.2 The challenge of spreading social innovations: Applied Dissemination of solutions to Complex Problems

While the idea that we already *have* the solutions for our biggest problems may be heartening, it doesn't mean that we are close to *solving* these problems. While a successful approach may have been developed in one city, province, or country, that doesn't mean that it will spread to the other places where it is needed — even if is widely recognized as a success and is being picked up by others. In *Disseminating Orphan Innovations*, Evans and Clarke (2011) offer a reminder "that spectacularly effective social programs often fail to take root in other places ... [and] the sector urgently needs insights explaining how to migrate effective solutions from one place to another" (p. 43). They suggest that our inability to spread innovations can be traced back to two flawed beliefs: that 1) spreading solutions is relatively straightforward when compared to the expertise needed to develop the original idea, and that 2) dissemination is simply making copies of the original idea. Instead, they argue that "dissemination takes a distinct, sophisticated skill set, and that successful dissemination is a process of *customizing* [emphasis added] the program to new circumstances, not replicating" (p. 44).

Complexity science helps to explain *why* trying to simply replicate a social innovation isn't likely to work. As the Zimmerman matrix outlines (see Figure 1, below), we can think of most problems as fitting into the three categories of *simple, complicated, and complex*. Solving social large-scale social problems includes activities and situations that fit into each of these categories, however, the toughest problems to tackle and the one for which we most urgently need solutions are the complex ones (Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton, 2006). However, the typical approach to disseminating solutions, spreading 'best practices', doesn't work for complex problems. As Michael Quinn-Patton, former President of the American Evaluation Association, has pointed out, the idea of best practices rests upon an assumption that solutions can be carbon-copied into new contexts. While this may be easy in simple situations like baking a cake, and difficult but doable in complicated situations like sending a rocket to the moon, this type of replication simply isn't possible in complex situations like raising a child (personal communication, February 25, 2013). Sharing approaches for making change to complex problems requires a different approach, and this new approach is badly needed since the majority of problems that our society faces are complex ones.

Baking a cake	Sending a Rocket to the Moon	Raising a Child
Simple	**Complicated**	**Complex**
The recipe is essential	Rigid protocols or formulas are needed	Rigid protocols have a limited application or are counter-productive
Recipes are tested to assure easy replication	Sending one rocket increases the likelihood that the next will also be a success	Raising one child provides experience but is no guarantee of success with the next
No particular expertise is required, but experience increases success rate	High levels of expertise and training in a variety of fields are necessary for success	Expertise helps but only when balanced with responsiveness to the particular child
A good recipe produces nearly the same cake every time	Key elements of each rocket MUST be identical to succeed	Every child is unique and must be understood as an individual
The best recipes give good results every time	There is a high degree of certainty of outcome	Uncertainty of outcome remains
A good recipe notes the quantity and nature of the "parts" needed and specifies the order in which to combine them, but there is room for experimentation	Success depends on a blueprint that directs both the development of separate parts and specifies the exact relationship in which to assemble them	Can't separate the parts from the whole; essence exists in the relationship between different people, different experiences, different moments in time

Figure 1. The Zimmerman Matrix. Retrieved from *Getting to Maybe* (Westley, Zimmerman, & 2006, p. 9).

1.3 New approaches to solving complex problems: Lab models for social innovation

Change and Design Labs are increasingly popular way to tackle complex problems. As the SiG Knowledge Hub introduces them, "labs are intense meetings of diverse groups of people who are searching for break-through solutions to serious problems. Some labs run over days and others have ongoing gatherings and activities that last for years. Almost all lab processes strive to make space for new, creative collaborations and to stimulate new ideas for change" (Sig, 2013b). Labs are being run successfully around the world by government, higher-education, consultancies, and civil society. These approaches have grown out of insights from group psychology, whole systems thinking, and design. The recent model proposed by the University of Waterloo's Institute for

Social Innovation and Resilience, Labs for Social Innovation, provides a clear set of principles for new Lab processes being developed in Canada (Westley, Goebey, and Robinson, 2012). The core elements they identify are:

> a) Broad-based research [bringing] a variety of information sources together ... to build a holistic understanding of the problem space ...
>
> b) Co-creation of solutions across sectors and silos ... with careful attention paid to recruiting diversity of key participants and stakeholders ...
>
> c) Specialized physical environment - a space conducive to creativity ... that also signals a complete departure from routine ...
>
> d) Clear process design and facilitation provide all participants with a sense of where their workshops are going and how the work they are currently doing researching, sense-making, or prototyping will fit into broader system change ...
>
> e) Rapid prototyping ... provides "tactile models that can help participants quickly think through the implications of a wide variety of system interventions ...
>
> f) Multi-disciplinary support staff ... key expertise needed include "design skills (both technical and process), facilitation skills, ethnographic skills and political/ collaborative skills ...
>
> g) Continual learning by Change or Design Lab staff allows the Labs to build upon the supports they offer ... [they] develop libraries of tools and methodologies ... [and] support the roll out of solutions, and in the process, learn and adapt the solutions (Westley, Goebey, and Robinson, 2012)

A defining characteristic of complex systems is that they have no leader, and are constituted by constantly evolving relationships. When trying to change a complex system, this means that it can't be directly controlled, but the relationships within it can be influenced and directed. Lab models build off this by focusing on bringing together a diversity of relevant actors — 'getting the system in the room' — and providing the context, facilitation, research, and prototyping capabilities to create their own solutions. Labs create a closely controlled space and process, but focus on creating the conditions for new ideas, relationships, and solutions to emerge.

For many labs, the ability to learn and carry forward the results of each problem they tackle is central to their design. Because solving a complex problem in one situation doesn't mean that this solution will carry to another context, each context needs its own attention. Labs provide a structure for providing this in-depth, individualized attention on each situation that it tackles, while also collecting and carrying learnings between situations.

1.4 New approaches to measuring impact on complex problems: Developmental evaluation

Because gathering learnings is a core part of Lab models, they tend to focus heavily providing evaluation services for the problems that they tackle. However, *how* they do this evaluation is also central. Most evaluation is focused on providing accountability, and assumes that going from planned strategy to planned outcomes is what is most important to measure. However, as Michael Quinn-Patton argues, these typical evaluation techniques work best for simple and complicated problems. For complex problems, this tends to create a very narrow scope and can lead to missing some of the most important learnings and outcomes of the work. In response to this shortcoming of traditional evaluation approaches for working in complex systems, Michael has pioneered the methodology of developmental evaluation. A number of central tenets of developmental evaluation include:

- In complex situations, each phase of project development should also be an opportunity for evaluation and shifting course based upon what has been learned

- It's important to integrate check-in points to balance the lack of control in complex problems. Simulations, reflection time, and group feedback are some useful ways for accomplishing this.

- Tight feedback loops are important to be able to respond to newfound opportunities and barriers as they emerge. There are lots of thing we know we won't be able to know until after we've started tackling a complex problem. We need to build in ways to capture and learn from what we find out through our interventions (personal communication, February 26, 2013).

With their focus on bringing together stakeholders to develop solutions, prototype their effectiveness, and learn from this experimentation, Labs provide a platform for a developmental evaluation approach to solving complex problems. As Frances Wesley has pointed out, in tacking a complex problem, it's difficult to predict the success of an intervention. Actors need to *start* somewhere*,* see how their intervention changes things, and learn from the experience. Their actions should be as deliberate as possible but it is essential they focus on *doing*, then learning and readjusting (personal communication, February 27, 2013). This is precisely what Labs provide a space to do, and is why they are becoming such a popular model for tackling big social problems.

1.5 How Labs contribute to changing systems: building reservoirs of alternatives, and 'making hope visible'

In sum, SI Labs provide a model for developing solutions to complex problems. Whether they are used as an approach for short-term, situation specific projects, or created as physical facilities that will host many projects over the long-term, Lab models all share the common focus on providing a carefully facilitated and well-resourced platform for

breakthrough solutions to problems that aren't being adequately addressed by existing decision-making structures. The breakthrough solutions that Labs develop can be at whatever scale the Lab is operating. Denmark's MindLab is focused on solutions to federal policy and programs. The Sustainable Food Lab is focused on solutions to international supply chains. Other Labs may focus on municipal, or organization-specific solutions. Regardless of the level, SI Labs provide a platform for developing "reservoirs of alternatives". As Westley, Goebey, and Robinson (2012) write:

> Part of what social, cultural, and economic systems do is they maintain limitations and boundaries. These limits come to seem natural and necessary, but the space of what is possible is actually much larger. During periods of disruption, one means of recovery and reintegration is to access genuine alternatives. This requires that the society create stores of alternatives to draw on and keeps them in circulation. These alternatives are threatening within the normal social space because they challenge habit and the flow of resources. Alternative spaces can make them safe, and can offer grounds not just for developing but also for testing alternatives so that there is a deep rich store to drawn on. (p. 14)

In other words, while SI Labs develop breakthrough solutions, they may not be able to be implemented right away. However, the act of preparing the solution and having it ready for when there is an opportunity to put into place is a very important contribution to the long-term goal of systems change. Or a solution may be developed and implemented in the context for which it was created (e.g. changing policy within Denmark) but may also be drawn upon for inspiration later when opportunities emerge in other contexts (e.g. policy change in another country). Though we know the solutions that come out of SI Labs can't be replicated directly to other situations, they provide a tangible example and open up our thinking to what is possible. As designers including Bruce Mau have argued, this process of 'making hope visible' is an essential contribution to changing systems (Berger, 2010). SI Labs both provide a repository for solutions that can be drawn upon when opportunities come up, wherever those opportunities are, and open up the realization of the types and depth of change that are possible.

We will now turn to discussing how these insights can be applied to Farm to Cafeteria Canada's Learning Lab Program.

1. **Learning Lab Program** design principles

The purpose of Farm to Cafeteria Canada's Learning Labs program is to *develop, apply and disseminate* new solutions for public institutions to purchase, prepare, and serve

more local, sustainable, and healthy food. In other words, it is to spread social innovations that will transform institutional foodservices.

While the F2CC national survey demonstrated that there are a significant number of institutions across our country ordering *some* local sustainable food (76% of Schools, 92% of campues, and 66% of Healthcare institutions that responded), it also demonstrated that across the board, all institutions wanted to be doing more, but are hitting significant barriers and are looking for help overcoming them. The top forms of assistance requested included identifying sources of high quality and affordable local food; addressing contract, insurance and liability concerns; and developing and advocating for policies that address local food (Farm to Cafeteria Canada, 2013b). Though there are clear examples of institutions who have been able to overcome these challenges and transform their foodservices, including half-a-dozen campuses across the country (for example, UBC, University of Winnipeg, and McGill), many schools in BC and Toronto, and Scarborough Hospital in Toronto, the survey results demonstrate that the mere presence of these innovative examples is not enough to help other institutions follow their path. Most institutions surveyed are still at the point of starting small and are trying to make even incremental changes to do more, and are struggling with issues that these leading institutions have already figured out how to overcome. This resonates with the challenges described by Evans and Clarke (2011) of Orphan Innovations, and the difficulty of spreading solutions to complex problems articulated by the Zimmerman Matrix (figure 1).

We know that food systems involve an incredible diversity of interrelated actors, organizations, government departments, and policies from the level of local communities to international trade and governance. In the context of foodservices in public institutions, a simple problem would be how to make a specific recipe. A complicated problem would be how the food gets food for that meal through global supply chains to that institution. A complex problem would be determining how to get the necessary staff, administrative, governance, client, community, and industry representatives working together to leverage the institution's purchasing power to change those supply chains. Recipes and distributor relationships can, with different levels of difficulty, be replicated. Convening the multitude of actors needed to transform an institution's supply chains will look different in every context.

This resonates with the challenges highlighted by social innovation practitioners, and suggests the following design principle and supporting insight:

> *Design principle 1.A:* **The F2CC Learning Lab Program will provide the time, resourcing, and customization needed to transform foodservices at individual institutions. It is based on the recognition that there are many success stories and examples across Canada, but that these approaches can not be directly replicated to new institutions because of the unique characteristics of each institutional setting and their supply chains.**

Supporting Insight: Social innovations provide solutions to complex problems. Complex problems are unique in each instance, therefore solutions to them can not be directly copied or replicated. Therefore, spreading social innovations requires customization to each new context.

The model and rationale for Labs for Social Innovation proposed by the team at SiG@Waterloo fits well with the Learning Lab plans of F2CC. Both focus on new approaches of decision-making and problem-solving to overcome the inadequacies of those currently in place. This suggests the following design principle and supporting insight:

Design principle 1.B: **The F2CC Learning Lab Program will develop a new model for transforming institutional foodservices. It will bring together and facilitate the diversity of stakeholders, research, resources, and testing needed to develop breakthrough solutions.**

Supporting Insight: Complex problems involve a myriad of actors and interdependent issues which influence each other in unpredictable ways, making it hard to plan or predict effective interventions. New models for decision-making need to provide broad participation in the iterative development, prototyping, and evaluation of solutions.

The results of the F2CC national survey make clear that the problem is not only one of spreading existing successes, but also of refining and deepening existing approaches, and developing new ones. Even the current champion schools, campuses, and hospitals in Canada still have a long way to go in terms of refocusing their foodservices to local, sustainable, and healthy food. However, their examples have caused interest and action from peer institutions, the public, and government across the country. This fits with the social innovation theories of developing reservoirs of alternatives, and making hope visible.

From it's beginning, the vision behind the F2CC national Learning Lab Program has been twofold. First, to bring the expertise and resources of the F2CC network to build the capacity of institutions to transform their own foodservices and become leaders in the movement. And secondly, to develop success stories and of what can be done, and resources for how to do this to share broadly throughout F2CC's member organizations, as well as through media and political channels. This suggests the following design principle and supporting insight:

Design principle 1.C: **By providing a space for the continuous development, testing, and evaluation of breakthrough solutions, the F2CC Learning Lab Program will both transform foodservices at specific institutions and provide examples, inspiration, and precedents for change across the country.**

Supporting insight: Fully solving a complex problem often requires making change at many levels: from the individual, organizational and community, to the national and cultural. Establishing successful examples of how to overcome the complex problem at the organizational and community levels doesn't directly change the others, but is essential for redefining what is possible.

Having established the preceding three design principles, we will now turn to the second design question for Farm to Cafeteria Canada's Learning Lab Program.

Question 2: Who should Learning Lab Projects target?

As Farm to Cafeteria Canada sets out to develop a national Learning Lab Program, a second fundamental question to be answered is ... who will it work with? How should the institutions to participate in this Program be selected, and who should be involved in the specific Learning Lab Projects that are hosted at these institutions? This section of the paper will first identify and discuss relevant concepts from social innovation that will help to answer that question (points 2.1 - 2.3), and then apply these insights to specific recommendations for the Learning Lab Projects (points 2.A - 2.B).

*2.1 How to know when institutions are ripe for change: Identifying timing for systems interventions with the **Adaptive Cycle** and **Opportunity Contexts***

One of the key insights of Resilience Theory is how to understand when living systems are likely and vulnerable to change, and when they are stable and unlikely to change. The Adaptive Cycle model charts this process as a continuos figure-eight loop, from growth to conservation, to release and reorganization, back to growth (See Figure 2, below). The model predicts that as systems get more entrenched and more difficult to change, they also start to become more brittle. Eventually, this brittleness leads to a collapse, or creative destruction, in which the system releases the resources it has built up. This leads to the potential for deep, systemic change, because these resources can be recombined in very different ways. The strength of the Adaptive Cycle model is that it can be applied to living systems of all types, and at all scales in both ecological and social systems (Walker and Salt, 2006). Take provincial politics, for instance. It contains a number of built-in cycles, such as party election periods, budget creation, term limits for committee membership. It also has a number of unstructured, but frequent changes such as the retirement of longstanding administrator. It is also impacted by similar changes at the higher level of federal and international politics, the lower levels of municipalities, and parallel changes in other provinces. Each of these transition points represents a weakening of the established order, and an opportunity for transformational change.

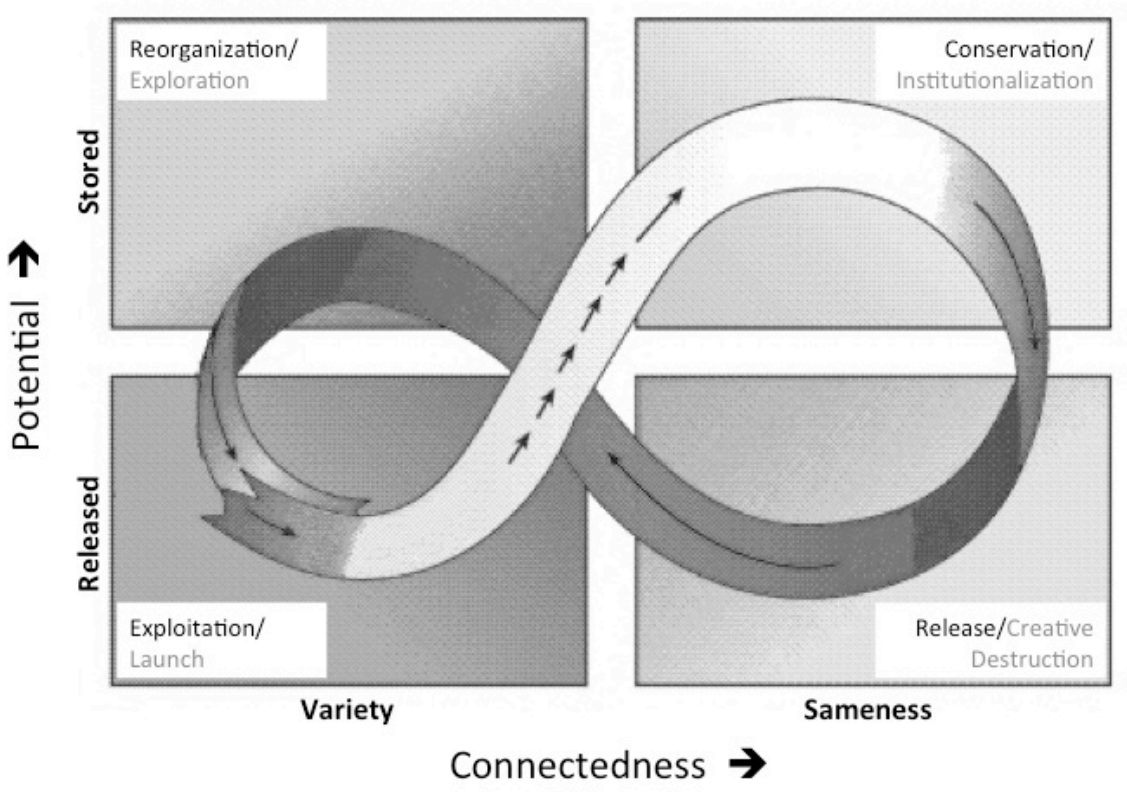

Figure 1: The Adaptive Cycle, adapted from Holling, 1986

Figure 2. The Adaptive Cycle. Retrieved from *A Theory of transformative agency in linked social-ecological systems. Ecology and Society* (Westley, 2012).

A recent article by Francis Wesley (2012) takes these insights from Resilience Theory and applies them directly to the question of how we *recognize* and *act upon* the opportunities described by the adaptive cycle. She argues that

> agency in social-ecological transformation must act in concert with the evolving context of the system in question. However, this evolution is not random. Just as social-ecological systems experience the phase changes captured by the adaptive cycle, the opportunity context experienced by agents goes through familiar stages (p. 11).

She suggests that Dorado's model of *opaque, hazy, and transparent* opportunity contexts can help us understand these stages. The opaque context is characterized by only a few dominant, stable organizations or actors. In this situation, opportunities for change, Dorado argues, will not be clear or accessible. A hazy opportunity context, however, is characterized by a shared understanding of the need for change, the emergence of a common vision and values between actors, and the identification of opportunities or possibilities for change. However, hazy contexts often occurs after changes in leadership, and can also be characterized by uncertainty and a

corresponding reluctance to take risk. In a transparent opportunity context, there is a diversity of actors and organizational forms, and an openness to these different possibilities. Though there may be tension between these competing paths forward, opportunities for how to develop them are clear.

The challenge, Westley suggests, is to figure out which strategies to use in the appropriate context, and that mapping Dorado's opportunity contexts onto the phases of the adaptive cycle can help to clarify this (See Figure 3, below). For example, opaque opportunity contexts correspond to the conservation phase, during which it is difficult to introduce novelty. Actors looking to make change in this phase may want to create disturbances to the current organizational structures, or prepare alternative structures for when there is more openness in the system. Disturbances or shocks can move a system from an opaque to a hazy opportunity context, similar to the release and reorganization phases of the adaptive cycle. As Wesley writes,

> [after] a perception of crisis undermines the rules, meanings, and authority systems on which earlier stages relied (pg. 7) ... organizational forms will be fragmented and loosely connected to resources, hampering the ability to mobilize resources and the willingness to take risks necessary for social innovation. In this hazy opportunity context ... [actors working to make change] will employ convening and sensemaking strategies to bring organizations together in order to create common interpretations, meaningful narratives, visions, and goals that provide the platform and focal point for collective action and the flow of resources. Once such a platform is in place, [actors] can begin to facilitate relationships between ideas, resources, and organizations in response to an increasingly transparent opportunity context (11)

The transparent context is linked to the reorganization phase of the adaptive cycle, and is where agents working for change move from "experimental to the political" in their strategies (pg.10). Clear alternatives to the past system are developed and gain support, and begin to become part of the water supply. This in turn leads back to the stability of a new system organization. Figure 3 below summarizes these relationships.

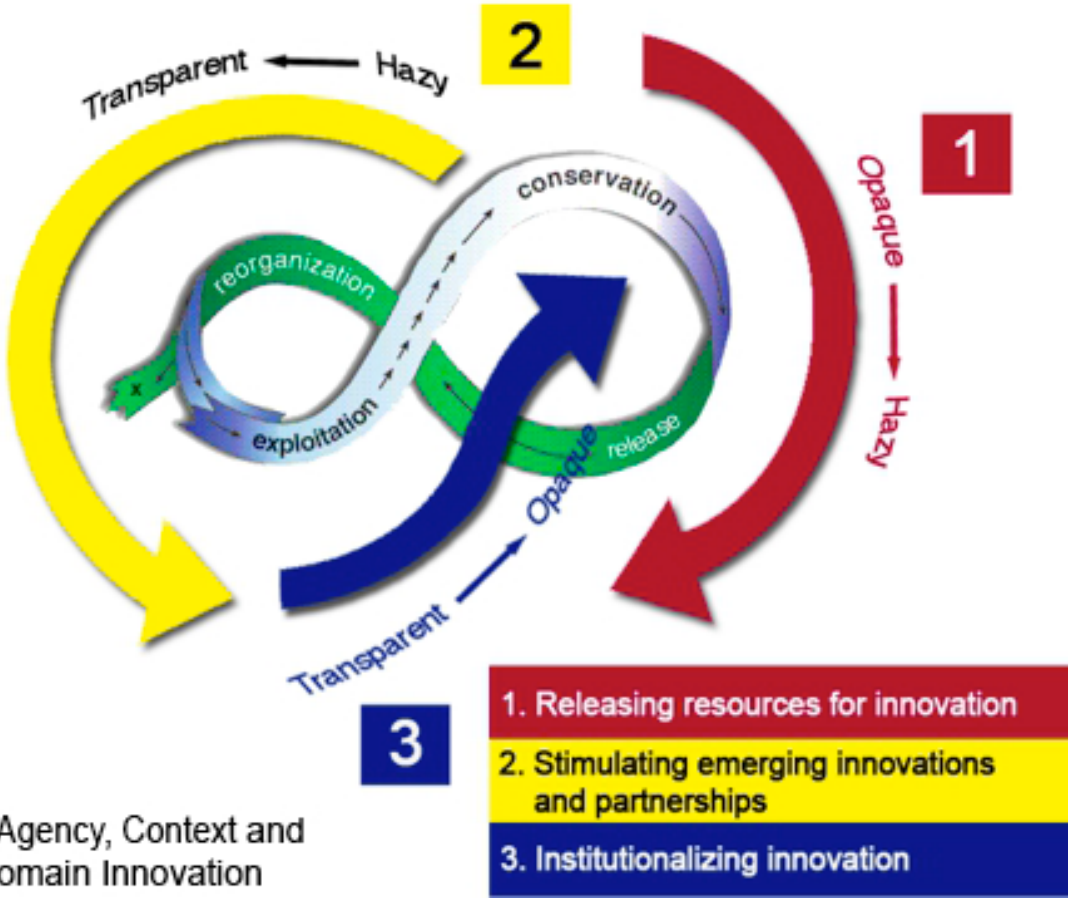

Figure 2.
A Model of Agency, Context and Problem Domain Innovation

Figure 3. A model of agency, context and problem domain innovation. Retrieved from *A Theory of transformative agency in linked social-ecological systems. Ecology and Society* (Westley, 2012).

2.2 Who acts on these opportunities: identifying institutional entrepreneurs

While Dorado's opportunity context theory and the Adaptive Cycle provide guidance on *when and how* to create change, neither answers the question of *who* does this work. In their *Orphan Innovations* article, Evans and Clarke (2011) argue that the process of spreading innovations requires local champions. In their work to spread a new model for linking foodbanks to the left over food of wholesale distributors, they found that:

> Each adopting site moved forward on the energies of a single individual willing to take personal risks to make a produce program happen. These champions were good at building coalitions and wouldn't quit easily ... [who held this role in the] organizations varied. Sometimes, a food bank's executive director stepped up to the plate, but we also found allies among subordinate staff members, wholesale

> donors or their spouses, and philanthropic contributors to the food bank—and elsewhere (p. 47)

The theory of Institutional Entrepreneurship helps to identify the common characteristics of champions like these. As the SiG network defines it, institutional entrepreneurs are:

> individuals who actively work to change the broader social system – the political, economic, legal or cultural arenas. They are highly skilled at identifying and connecting to opportunities that help a particular social innovation to flourish.
>
> Institutional entrepreneurs notice rhythms and patterns in systems. They usually have deep understanding and trusted relationships that allow them to connect really effectively with powerful champions, political opportunities or unexpected resources. In this way, they gain "system sight" – and they significantly make a difference in helping innovative strategies reach full potential (SiG, 2013c)

It should be noted that the 'institutional' in institutional entrepreneurship is that of large-scale cultural and economic systems, rather than the public organizations that are referred to as 'institutions' throughout the rest of this paper.

The concept of institutional entrepreneurship is involved in an interesting debate about agency, and how social change happens. Traditional management theories and popular culture focus on the role of the strong leader whose individual vision and skill is responsible for big changes, and a 'great individuals' view of history. Institutional entrepreneurship, on the other hand, focuses on "non-directed, iterative change in causing systemic shifts" (Westley, 2012, p. 2), and sees a diversity of actors across scales providing *leadership* as a much more common cause of change, rather than the top-down 'command control' role of a single *leader.* The skillset and tactics of institutional entrepreneurship focuses on mobilizing energy, seeing and acting on windows of opportunity all the while creating networks and connecting resources to create change. As Francis Westley (2012) writes,

> Successful change agents in complex systems work to change beliefs (in particular, by convening all stakeholders around a common vision), change the flow of political authority and resources (in particular, by playing key roles in networks and mobilizing social capital), and challenge technical and legal frameworks (in particular, by encouraging integration of local knowledge, experimentation, and new scientific frameworks) (pg. 3).

As Al Etmansky, founding member of the SiG Collaborative has pointed out, the concept of institutional entrepreneurship suggests that when trying to bring stakeholders together to solve a complex problem, the most effective focus isn't necessarily on bringing together *all stakeholders,* but instead focusing the people who most eager to work together and who aren't too tied to their existing position or organization to be able to think big picture and collaborative creatively. However, because institutional

entrepreneurs are not traditional leaders, they are not necessarily in positions of traditional power, the figureheads of movements, or the loudest voices. This can make it difficult to identify them from far away. One method for identifying institutional entrepreneurs is looking for instances of social innovation, and tracing that change back to find the person or people who 'knit' it together. Another approach suggested by Michael Quinn-Patton is *inviting* people, rather than paying them or otherwise incentivising them to come to a multi-stakeholder project. Because participants need to be invested in the process for it to work, he suggested that if they need incentives to participate, then they're likely not the right people (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

We will now turn to discussing how these insights can be applied to Farm to Cafeteria Canada's Learning Lab Projects.

2. Learning Lab Project design principles

As mentioned before, the purpose of Farm to Cafeteria Canada's Learning Labs program is to *develop, apply and disseminate* new solutions for public institutions to purchase, prepare, and serve more local, sustainable, and healthy food. Key to this goal, is the fact that the institutions that the Learning Lab Programs work with are not already leaders in this work, but have an openness and a readiness to do things differently, and are eager to *become* leaders. In other words, the institutions that F2CC is looking for know that they want to change their foodservices, know that they have a lot to learn from the successes of other institutions, and want to develop their own innovative solutions. While this sounds good on paper, the Learning Lab Program needs to be able to actually assess these characteristics. The preceding social innovation theories can help articulate what the Program is looking for.

The adaptive cycle suggests that the Learning Lab Program should be looking for institutions who have recently had, or are about to go through, major transition periods, rather than being in the middle of a long period of stability. These transitions could look like the end of a foodservice or distributor contract, a change in the administrative or governance leadership of the institution, the development of a new white-paper or mission statement, or at a larger level, the imposition of a new municipal or provincial strategy that the institution needs to respond to.

Frances Wesley's (2012) combination of Dorado's model of opportunity context and the adaptive cycle suggests that institutional readiness can also be gauged by the degree of divergent individuals and ideas within an institution, and suggests that the Learning Lab Program would be most strategic to focus on institutions that are in a hazy state where a new shared vision is emerging but next steps still are not clear. The Learning Lab Program would help to move them to transparent context where the way forward was clear, and build their capacity to champion these changes and move themselves back

into the opacity of a new system configuration with transformed foodservices. If there is homogeneity within actors and opinions (opacity), it is likely that the Learning Lab Project would have to spend it's time focused on *convincing them of the need for a change*, versus with a diversity (haziness), the Project can focus on convening this diversity, and *developing a shared vision and plan for how to change* between them, then connecting existing initiatives and resources to take this new direction from planning through to institutionalization. This suggests the design principle and supporting insight that:

> *Design principle 2.A:* **F2CC Learning Lab Program will focus on identifying institutions that are interested in transforming their foodservices, are in a transition period and open to these changes, but need support developing a shared vision and prioritizing strategies for how to make these changes happen.**
>
> *Supporting insight:* Complex problems involve many interrelated levels and actors. These can be grouped and understood as systems. Systems go through predictable cycles of growth, stability, decline, and reorganization. Periods of decline and reorganization are when systems are most open to change, and are thus essential opportunities for intervening in complex problems. However, they can also be times of chaos and confusion, making change difficult to direct without careful facilitation and time for creating cohesion.

Identifying the readiness of an institution is a central part of figuring out whether they are right to host a Learning Lab Project. However, another important selection criteria is whether they have the right leadership to participate in and lead the Learning Lab Project. Evans and Clarke's (2012) example of the diversity of champions that have lead the dissemination of their program to link up foodbanks and wholesale distributors provides a good reminder that this selection criteria shouldn't be narrowed to a specific role, but focused on the characteristics of the individual champions wherever in the institution or community they are placed. The theory of institutional entrepreneurship helps identify these characteristics, suggesting that the Learning Lab Projects should look for champions who have extensive networks, strong understandings of the context they are in, and have already been bringing people together around a common vision, opportunities, and resources to change this context. However, it also recognizes that finding these institutional entrepreneurs can be difficult without knowing their context well.

F2CC is planning on using a Request for Proposal and application process to find the institutions that it will work with. This fits well with the above theories, because institutions who are outside of an opaque opportunity context seem most likely to self-select themselves to apply, and institutional entrepreneurs seem most likely to step up and lead this application process. This suggests the design principle that,

> *Design principle 2.B:* **F2CC will identify champions who are ready to lead Learning Lab Projects at their institution through a self-selection process.**

Criteria for lead applicants will include a strong understanding of their context, broad networks, a sense of current opportunities and available resources, and past experience in convening stakeholders around a vision for change.

Supporting insight: Common approaches for changing complex problems have been identified. The characteristics and skillsets of the people working most effectively to create these changes have been too. Identifying, supporting, and connecting these people is essential for solving complex problems.

Having established the preceding two design principles, we will now turn to the final design question for Farm to Cafeteria Canada's Learning Lab Program.

Question 3: What happens during the Learning Lab Retreats?

As Farm to Cafeteria Canada sets out to develop a national Learning Lab Program, a third fundamental question to be answered is ... what will actually happen in the three Learning Lab Projects, and specifically during the three Learning Lab Retreats that provide their central structure? This section of the paper will first identify and discuss relevant concepts from social innovation that will help to answer that question (points 3.1 - 3.2), and then apply these insights to specific recommendations for the Learning Lab Projects (points 3.A - 3.B).

3.1 Developing breakthrough solutions through convening and facilitating: Generative Relationships, Investigative Negotiation, and finding the "golden string"

A central theme of social innovation theory is that breakthrough solutions come from the integration of previously unconnected and unreconciled perspectives. As mentioned earlier, Al Etmanski has argued that we have have the technical solutions and processes needed to solve our largest social problems, and that the real work and competency needed for social innovation is building trust, understanding, and collaboration between a wide range of stakeholders - friends, strangers, and enemies - and getting to know and connect with them on the level of *people,* rather than *positions* (personal communication, February 22, 2013).

Brenda Zimmerman's Generative STAR model (1998) provides an articulation of *how* these dynamics emerge and the necessary conditions, proposing that Generative Relationships, and the novel ideas that come out of them, are an important means for creating social innovation. She defines a Generative Relationship as one that "produces

something, which one of the members of the relationship could not have produced alone ... [and for which] the source of value (whether it be a new product, service, form of distribution or idea) could not have been foreseen in advance. It was created by the interaction between the parties" (p. 281). The Generative STAR model provides a heuristic for understanding how Generative Relationships are created, arguing that the conditions necessary are individuals with very different perspectives (Separateness) taking the time to really listen to and understand each other (Tuning) while working together on a concrete project (Action) with a shared goal (Reason).

A related concept to the Generative STAR is that of Investigative Negotiation, introduced by Malhotra and Bazerman (2007). As they define it, Investigative Negotiation is "both a mind-set and and a methodology ... [and] encourages negotiators to enter talks the same way a detective enters a crime scene: by learning as much as possible about the situation and the people involved" (3). They argue that not only does this approach lead to much more successful deal-making, it "can help you transform competitive negotiations into ones with potential for building trust and cooperation, creating value, and engendering mutual satisfaction" (p. 7).

Etmanski, Zimmerman, and Malhotra and Bazerman all speak to the power of convening: the importance of a diverse range of stakeholders coming together around a common goal, getting to know each other deeply, and starting to see their differences as opportunities, rather than barriers to working together. Al Etmanski suggests that a lot of people are already "holding the golden string" of a common vision, but don't yet know that they're not alone, and don't fully understand where they are going. Because of this, convening people and providing the space for them to figure out their shared interests and goal can be a powerful intervention (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

3.2 How to work together more effectively: Labs for co-creation and co-learning

The model of Labs for Social Innovation (SI Labs) proposed by Westley, Goebey, and Robinson (2012) provides an example of how to design a process based upon the above insights. As they write, SI Labs are specially "designed to bring together particular people and foster relationships that can directly support the propagation and development of innovations".

Figure 4 outlines the key steps in the SI Lab model. They start with selecting the right mix of individuals to bring together around a common issue that the Lab is focused on solving. Next, they work to bring out the diversity of perspectives and assumptions held by these participants, and open their understanding of the situation. This creates the space to start envisioning solutions together, and then moves to prototyping selected strategies. This can, in turn, circle back to surfacing different perspectives and opening up space for discussion, starting the process again.

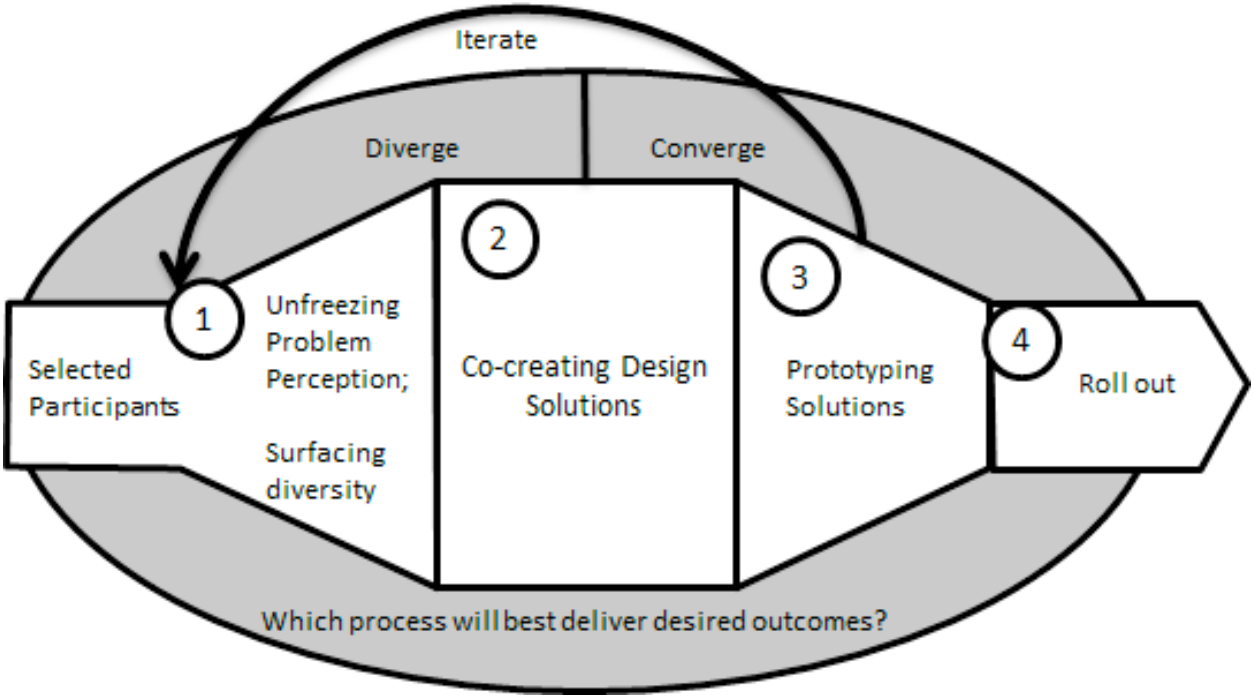

Figure 4. From *Change lab/design lab for social innovation: A Thought piece for the development of a new approach for building capacity for social innovation in Canada* (Westley, Goebey, & Robinson, 2012).

This cycle of Lab activities focuses on helping participants experiment, learn from the results, and keep iterating until they reach a truly effective solution (see figure 5). Providing strong research support and quickly taking these proposed solutions from concepts to prototypes are techniques to keep the discussion of participants' grounded, practical, and reality-tested, and help both to surface different assumptions and move past them to finding common ground.

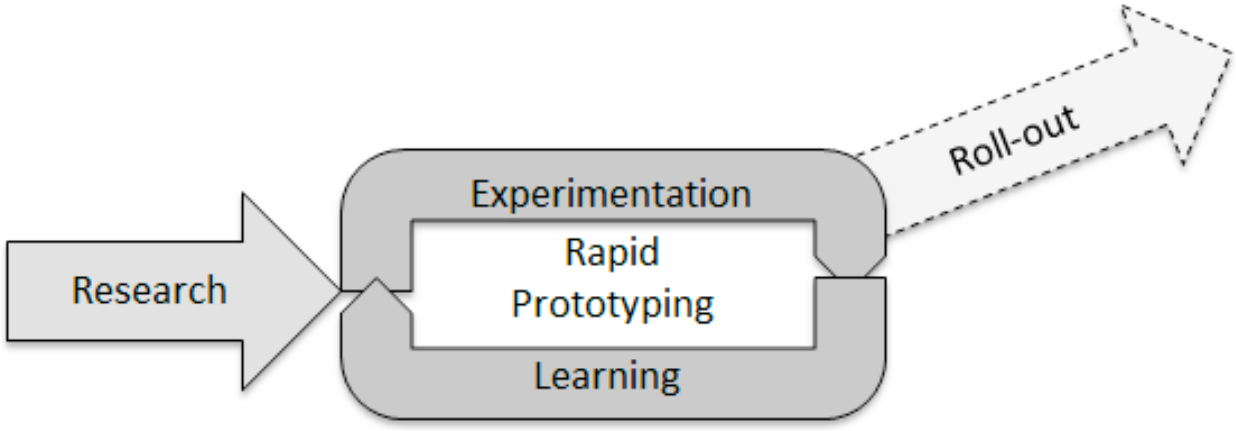

Figure 5. From *Change lab/design lab for social innovation: A Thought piece for the development of a new approach for building capacity for social innovation in Canada* (Westley, Goebey, & Robinson, 2012).

This approach fits well with the principles of developmental evaluation, as articulated by Michael Quinn-Patton and introduced at the beginning of this paper. He notes that it is essential to build in the time to be *able* to learn and then *use* what was learned to adapt plans going forward. Without this level of intention and real-time feedback, it's easy for busy individuals and organizations to lose the lessons that are coming out of their work. Michael suggests that the most effective way to avoid this is not to see evaluation as an *additional* piece of a project but to design it into the very DNA of the process itself (personal communication, February 26, 2013). Part of the beauty of the SI Labs model is that it does this — building feedback mechanisms, and the space to analyze and use the information gathered, into the work of every problem that is used to tackle.

In sum, the SI Lab model can be seen as providing a clear process for building generative relationships proposed by Zimmerman (1998) by bringing together a diversity of actors around a common goal, providing a carefully designed process to develop deep understanding and communication, and helping them identify concrete solutions they can use achieve together. It also provides the space and support to do the emotional processing needed to work together, and helping them realize that they "hold the golden string", as discussed by Etmanski, and embeds a developmental evaluation approach as discussed by Michael Quinn-Patton.

We will now turn to discussing how these insights can be applied to Farm to Cafeteria Canada's Learning Lab Retreats.

3. Learning Lab Retreat design principles

F2CC's Learning Lab Projects will each happen over a two year period, and will comprise three Learning Lab Retreats at six month intervals. These Retreats will convene stakeholders for multiple days outside of their normal work environments. The first Learning Lab Retreat will focus on providing a space for stakeholders to get to know each other, find their common vision and goals, and identify meaningful priorities for transforming the foodservices of their local institution that they can realistically tackle within the duration of the Learning Lab Project they can work together on.

The theories from social innovation suggest that relationship building and emotional development should be a higher focus for F2CC's Learning Lab Retreats than spreading or developing specific technical solutions. Further, they suggest that relationship building should not be confused with simple networking, and that reaching breakthrough solutions requires taking the time and attention to be able to surface and navigate tensions between stakeholders, not just giving them a chance to meet. Overall, this points out that if the Labs are going to have a profound impact on the participating individuals and institution, they should follow be carefully designed to meet the following design principle:

Design principle 3.A: **A F2CC Learning Lab Retreats will create a facilitated space for previously unconnected stakeholders to come together around a common goal, develop trust, integrate diverse perspectives, identify concrete actions to take together, and build capacity for long-term collaboration.**

Supporting insight: New ideas are central to solving longstanding problems, but so are new ways of working together. Breakthrough change comes from individuals with very different perspectives taking the time to really listen to and understand each other's perspectives and needs, identifying their shared visions and goals, and finding a concrete project to work together on.

F2CC Learning Labs have been planned as in-depth participatory action research projects. F2CC's National Learning Lab Program Coordinator will work with local Learning Lab Project Coordinator and the Institutional Lead to identify what foodservice changes would be most impactful, and realistic, to try to change over the two year period of the Lab. For instance, if a priority is to change the sourcing of a particular product category, they will then spend time working with supply chain stakeholders to figure out what the Institution is buying now, what the price points and what quality are, where are they getting them from, and what alternative products would be available through what kind of supply chains. This will involve doing in-depth interviewing, but also takes the form of direct negotiation with distributors and manufacturers. F2CC's expectation is that this research will be essential to the success of the Labs, and will contribute to finding major opportunities and ways around logistical barriers that wouldn't have been identified otherwise.

After the priority actions have been identified at the first Learning Lab Retreat, the following six-month period will be used to do research and implementation, similar to the prototyping phase of the SI Lab model. Subsequent Learning Lab Retreats will be used to report-back, reflect, and refine plans. This structure will create space for continual learning, as recommended by developmental evaluation and used in the SI Lab model. However, since the SI Lab model is that of a permanent Lab with multiple long-term support staff, it should be cautioned how much staff capacity this research, prototyping, and implementation support will require, suggesting that F2CC will need to pay special attention to making sure that there is enough capacity at both the institutional level and national level to provide research and implementation support. However, when properly resourced, the Learning Labs should develop and capture some significant learnings that will be useful not only to the stakeholders of the specific Lab project, but for actors working to change institutional foodservices across Canada. This suggests the final design principle and supporting insight:

Design principle 3.B: **F2CC Learning Lab Retreats and Implementation Periods will create the space for strategies to be researched, developed, tested, refined, and delivered. Not only will they create meaningful changes in each institution's foodservices within a two year period and build the capacity of all stakeholders to continue transforming foodservices at their**

institutions, the lessons learned will also be captured to strengthen all future Labs and the movement at institutions across the country.

Supporting insight: Breakthrough solutions to complex problems are not developed in a single brilliant idea of an individual, but through the continual learning and iteration of a group. A well-structured and closely facilitated process is essential for creating the space necessary for busy people to be able to do this cyclical visioning, prototyping, and learning together. Building this habit of action and reflection is a powerful way to increase the effectiveness of individuals and organizations, and captures deep lessons which can be widely applicable.

In summary, this paper has focused on articulating the strategy and rational for a national Learning Lab Program which is currently being developed by the Farm to Cafeteria Canada (F2CC) network. If you would like to review the three design questions which have been answered, and the insights from social innovation which support each, the summary table is provided on page 8. For more information about Farm to Cafeteria Canada or an update about the progress of the national Learning Lab Program, visit farmtocafeteriacanada.ca, or e-mail farm2cafeteriacanada@gmail.com.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Process of Farm to Cafeteria Canada Learning Lab Projects

The following is a selection from Farm to Cafeteria Canada's national Learning Lab Program proposal to the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation (Farm to Cafeteria Canada, 2013c).

F2CC's National Learning Lab Program will provide a platform for the coordination and communication of Learning Lab Projects at institutions across the country. A National Coordinator housed within F2CC will coordinate the Program. This position will identify institutions whose work could be catalyzed by hosting a Learning Lab Project, oversee the development, implementation, and evaluation of these Projects, and coordinate the sharing of resources and learnings that come out of these Projects.

Institutions selected to host a Project will commit to participating in three Learning Lab Retreats and activities to implement the goals that come out of those Retreats, over the course of a two year period. Projects will be led by Institutional Leads from the host institution, who will also select a Project Coordinator from a regional organization that they would like to work with and feel is best suited to support them in the specific changes they would like to make. Each Learning Lab Project Coordinator will lead the coordination of the three in-person Learning Lab Retreats and three interceding Implementation Periods for their institution.

Each Learning Lab Project will begin with the selection of 3-4 priority interventions able to see meaningful change within two years, followed by a research phase to develop a strong understanding of current procurement practice, policy, and relationships within the institution, community, and industry related to these priorities. Once this data has been collected, the key stakeholders that have been identified will be invited to a first Learning Lab Retreat, along with a selection of individuals and organizations that can provide relevant technical assistance.

Learning Lab Retreats will be a carefully planned and facilitated three day convening that will provide a platform for stakeholders to identify a common vision and set of goals for transforming the foodservices at the host institution and the supply chain that provides to it. In the six-month Implementation Period following the first learning lab, stakeholders will work together to achieve the specific goals and activities agreed upon, through a combination of research, knowledge transfer activities (trainings, site-visits, events), and relevant negotiations (e.g. with new producers or existing

distributors). This cycle of Learning Lab Retreats and six month Implementation Periods will be repeat two more times within the Project. The second and third Retreats will be used to assess progress, refine goals and activities, and continue building trust, vision, and collaboration between the stakeholders.

Each Learning Lab Retreat and the activities during the interceding Implementation Periods will be well-documented to develop publicity materials and program resources for broad dissemination. A combination of graphic recording, videography, and developmental evaluation activities will provide data and audio-visual material that will be used to create midterm and final reports on the activities and learnings of each Learning Lab Project and the national Program as a whole. It will also be used to develop tools to facilitate the replication of learning labs in other regions – including a promotional video, a fact sheet, a business case, a how to guide, and webinars – which will be used and disseminated by the F2CC network.

The Learning Lab Program will ultimately focus on changing policy, both within the three institutions hosting Projects, as well as within their municipalities, provinces, and at the federal level. The networks convened through the Learning Lab Program will be well poised to act upon any emergent policy opportunities, and will be armed with concrete examples from the Learning Lab Projects.