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The experience of becoming a member of a systemic design team

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A one-day workshop for experiencing systemic design teams as self-organizing social systems.

Participants in this workshop were presented with a series of guiding schema for the overall workshop and for each of three exercises. The exercises were a combination of individual and group work. The exercise were critiqued on how well participants thought they did meeting the objective of the exercise, which was to *experience* a change in interrelationships of an emerging systemic design team. The workshop was focused on creating an experience of three significant transformations in the evolution of a design team. It also included each individual reporting out reflectively the essence of their experiences—i.e. what would each participant take away from having had such experiences with others? Prospective participants were given the following descriptions of the workshop's intention and design:

After you have been invited to work collaboratively with others on a design project how should you proceed? How do you become a catalyst in the self-organization of a systemic design team? Several key transformations between stable social systems states—individual, group, team and design team— determine the ideal systemic process for design team formation. The focus of this workshop is on three qualitatively different transformations that you would experience sequentially in becoming a full-fledged systemic design team member.

Premise and intention of workshop

Many things can be accomplished best when done collaboratively if the outcome of the collaboration is clear and simple. For example, Habitat for Humanity in the United States depends on motivated individuals showing up at the same place and time to build a home. Each day different individuals show up to donate a day of their time to a collaborative process. These strangers collaborate to accomplish something that is demanding yet straightforward. However, some things need to be done by groups of individuals working together as a high performance, and functional social system. When a challenge is complex, ambiguous, uncertain and consequential a whole new type of 'collaboration' is required—i.e. a systemic design team.

A systemic design team is not something you step into as an individual. It is something you, along with other participating individuals, transform into. A team does not automatically form as a result of a group of people—even highly skilled and intellectually competent people—gathering together (literally or virtually) in the same place at the same time. The existence of a team, particularly a systemic design team, is the consequence of a series of sequenced transformations in the interactions among a group of individuals—i.e. the resultant of the dynamics of a self-organizing social system.

The intention of this workshop is to have participant's experience, in an abbreviated way, the transformation of an individual into a member of a group and a group becoming a team and a team becoming a systemic design team—three of five fundamental and necessary transformations. The intention of the workshop is not to have participants experience being a group, a team or a systemic design team. The intention is to experience the transformation between these systemic states.
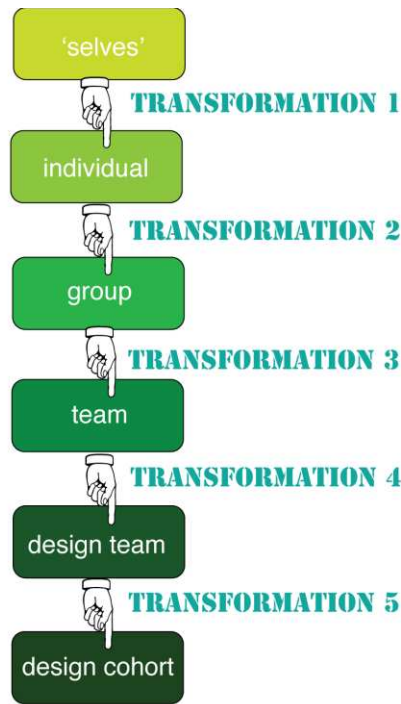
SELF-ORGANIZING TEAM

Design of workshop

The transformations focused on in this workshop occur in-between the system states of group, team and design team (although there are other transformations in the full self-organizing process). Time constraints (one day workshop) requires that the workshop would focus on only three transformations and that the experiences would only be foreshortened simulations of what would take place in real time during an actual team formation.

The workshop is a balance between preparation and action. The theoretical foundation of the workshop as a whole is introduced at the beginning of the workshop followed by three experiential activities, each focused on a particular type of transformation. The exercises developed to facilitate the experiencing of these transformations are limited to three of several that could be used in a longer, more enhanced workshop or in an actual facilitated process of team development.
Each of the three exercises is preceded by the presentation of a guiding schema for that exercise.

This workshop consists of a sequence of systemically integrated exercises that simulate the different transformational states a group of individuals experience as they transition between being a gathering of individuals, to being a cohesive group, to being a productive team, to becoming a systemic design team. This is just a simulation of course since in reality such transformations would typically take a considerable amount more of time to complete. However participants will leave having experienced the essence of such transformation along with an intellectual framework—i.e. schema—tying the experiences into a coherent systemic whole.
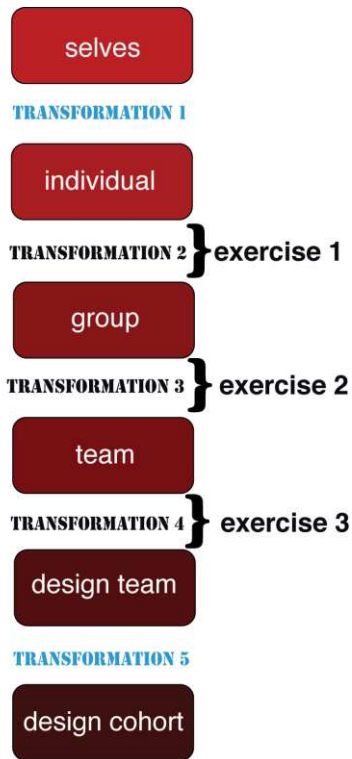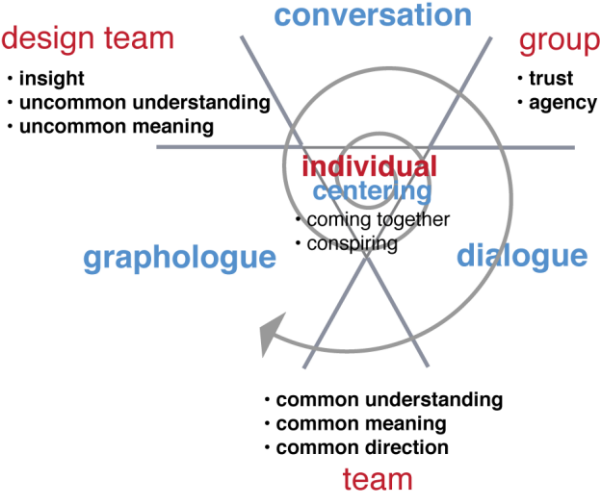
WORKSHOP EXERCISES

This experiential learning event will be a simulation of the experiences of shifting from the role of a highly competent individual to becoming a member of a functioning group—a social system—to becoming an integral member of a team—an organizational system—to becoming a constituent member of a systemic design team—a purpose driven social system.

The exercises are based on three forms of formal design communication that facilitate systemic transformations—i.e. conversation, dialogue, and graphologue.
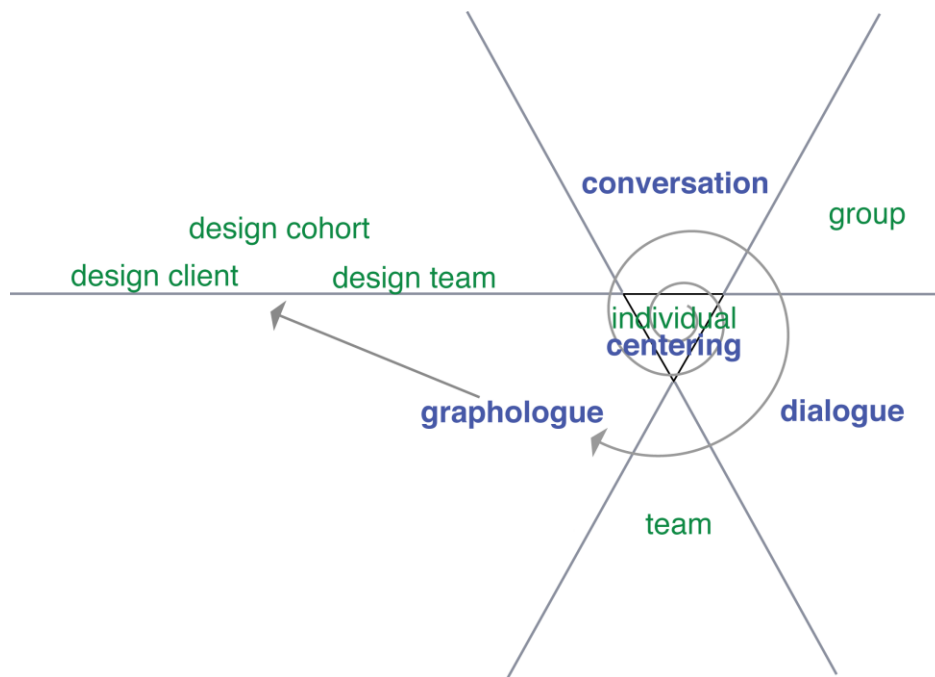
A transformation that occurs from the beginning of the process—centering—is highly personal and is not included in this workshop although it would be essential to include in a more comprehensive workshop as well as for any real world project. In this workshop this transformational activity is assumed to be in place sufficiently to support the next transformation of individual to group.

Successful engagement in a formal systemic design conversation, dialogue and graphologue results in qualities and attributes necessary for the vital performance of each systemic state—such as trust and agency for group activity for example. These are necessary outcomes whether the transformation process concludes in an intermediate terminal state such as a functional group, or as a team, or continue on to become a systemic design team.

The exercises chosen for this workshop include sharing personal design critiques, formulating a shared understanding of systemic design and determining a set of desired protocols for team interactions. At the end of each exercise participants will reflect on the experience of the exercise in both professional and academic terms. A brief discussion will be held to tie the experiences together into a coherent whole and to contextualize them in the larger more comprehensive process beginning with deeper personal transformations and ending in the work of a design cohort—a holistic interrelationship between clients and a systemic design team.
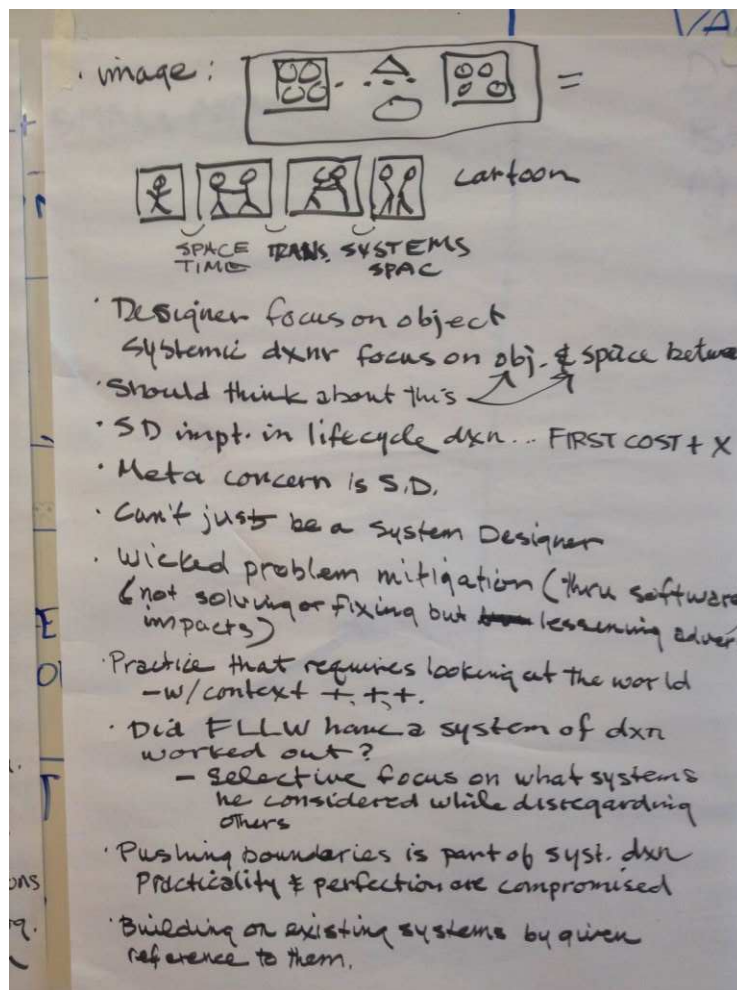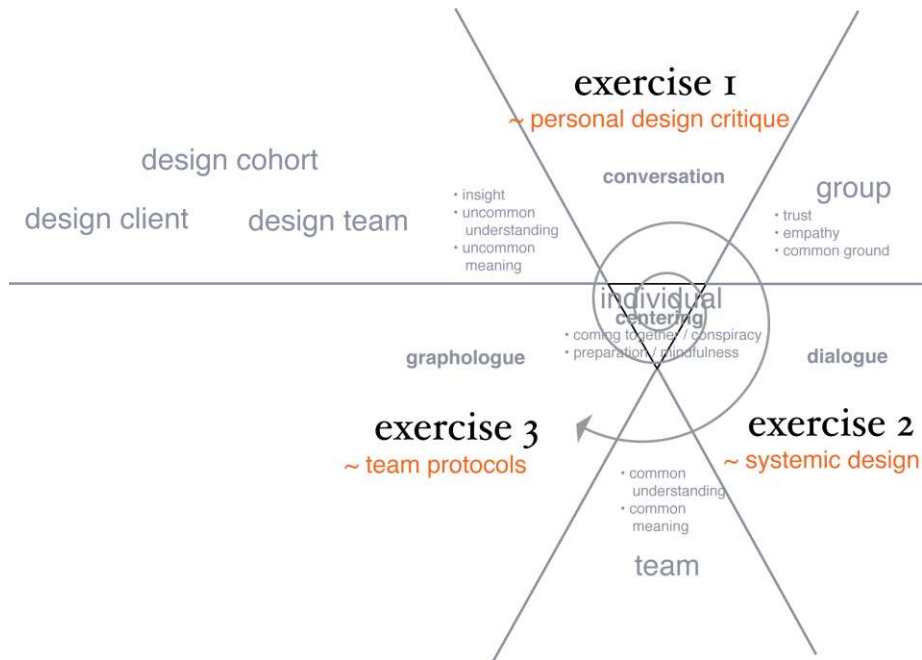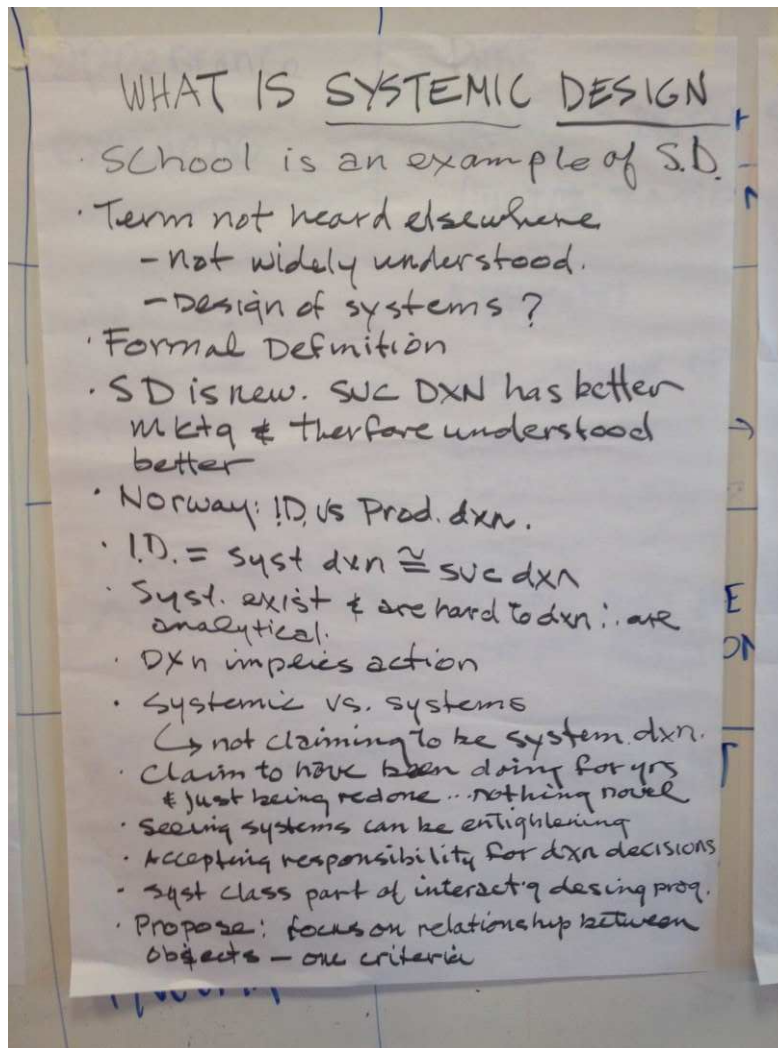
- DXn w/ constraints
  - client
  - tradition
  - budget
  - initial conditions
  - behavior
  - rules
- Being cognizant of constraints

- POSS DEF.
  - Meta practice
  - Specific application of systems
  - Patterns & Patter recognition
  - focus on constraints w/ sensitivity to <u>Syst.</u> constraints
  - it's a philosophy, more than something tangible

WHAT IS SYSTEMIC DESIGN

· School is an example of S.D.
· Term not heard elsewhere
     - not widely understood.
     - Design of systems ?
· Formal Definition
· SD is new. Suc DXN has better
   mktg & therfore understood
   better
· Norway: ID vs Prod. dxn.
· I.D. = syst dxn ≅ svc dxn
· Syst. exist & are hard to dxn ∴ are
   analytical.
· Dxn implies action
· Systemic vs. systems
   ↳ not claiming to be system dxn.
· Claim to have been doing for yrs
   & just being redone ... nothing novel
· Seeing systems can be enlightening
· Accepting responsibility for dxn decisions
· syst class part of interact'q desing prog.
· Propose: focus on relationship between
   objects — one criteria

(participants in the workshop at the RSD2 symposium are invited to share some of the pictures they took of the material outcomes of the exercises)

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