Supporting the Development of a Social Connections Movement in Vancouver

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project is about continuing the momentum in collaboratively building social connections across the Vancouver region. **The goal was to explore how to build an enduring platform for sustaining and strengthening linkages between various change-makers to create a larger combined impact.** The project was sparked by an event called CONNECT: Catalyzing a Social Movement, held in late 2016. This event brought together over two hundred regional change-makers who understand how important social connections are to individual and community wellbeing, and whose work helps fosters greater social connectedness throughout Metro Vancouver. As these change-makers work towards this end in a variety of ways, an opportunity was identified in connecting them to one another to share ideas, wisdoms, and lessons learned, and to together develop a deeper understanding of how best to enhance social connections collaboratively.

This report provides a summary of the process, findings, and outcomes of this project. The first section outlines the process, which began with research into movement building, communication & collaboration platforms, and three organizational structures including collective impact, sociocracy, and networks. Case studies are provided for each organizational structure. Next, stakeholder engagement consisted of interviews, meetings, and a survey, to ensure that the platform created would best suit its users. Stakeholders consisted of a range of social planners, community organizations, funding agencies, non-profits, and others involved in enhancing social connectivity. Towards the end of the project, the preliminary findings were presented during a workshop to those who had been identified as core participants. This workshop created an opportunity to achieve some consensus for how to collaborate, and was itself one of the first next steps in moving forward.

Key themes heard during stakeholder engagement are consolidated in the next section into a summary of findings. It was found that while it is too early to adopt a formal organizational structure, there continues to be strong interest in collaborating for a larger, combined impact. For now, the movement will be best served by building on its members' existing networks. Within this broader network, somewhat of a central hub has been created by the core participants who are willing to help convene and stay more closely connected. Interest was indicated in several communication and collaboration platforms to serve various functions, which will be trialed for keeping change-makers connected. One of these functions is to update each other on upcoming events, gatherings, and opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing, which was identified as the most desirable outcome.

The final section provides suggestions for moving forwards. The agreements that were reached and next steps that have been planned are outlined. Both short-term and long-term recommendations are offered for how to address some of the remaining uncertainties. It was beyond the scope of this project to answer every question, especially as more and more arose through its progression. Some of these questions are included as important considerations that could guide future movement-building.

Inevitably, the nature of a movement is that it is flexible, porous, and should be open to change, which may result in this movement taking a new direction than that suggested here. This is characteristic of any complex, multiscale, challenge; this report was crafted with that in mind and aims to establish basic foundations upon which uncertainties can be transformed into new

opportunities. The intention behind this final report is to both serve as a toolkit and provide direction for continuing to collaboratively enhance social connections throughout Metro Vancouver.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The concept of social connection has generated rising consideration over the last few years as it's increasingly being recognized as a critical component of health and wellness. One's sense of social connection impacts one's physical and mental health; a community's sense of social connectedness impacts its wellness, cohesion, and resilience. The below infographics highlight some of the recent research surrounding social connections.

Benefits of social connection[2]:
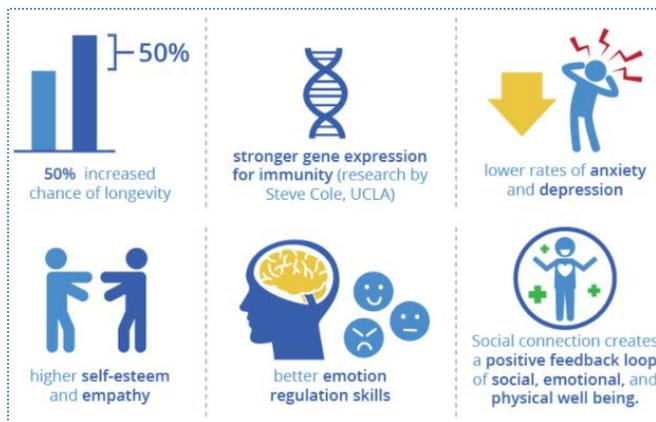
However, the Vancouver Foundation's 2012 Connections and Engagement survey identified various barriers to social connection throughout Vancouver, including high levels of social isolation and loneliness.

Risks of low social connection[1]:
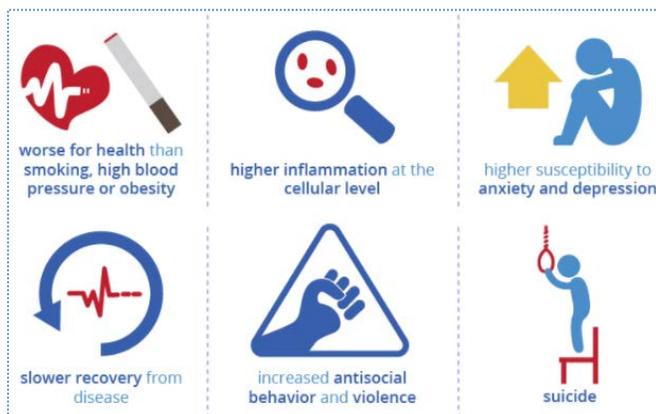
"In 2011, we polled 275 charitable organizations. We talked to over 100 community leaders across metro Vancouver. … What people said concerned them most was a growing sense of isolation and disconnection."[2]

[2] Emma Seppala. *Connectedness & Health: The Science of Social Connection INFOGRAPHIC.* (2014) http://www.emmaseppala.com/connect-thrive-infographic/
[2] The Vancouver Foundation. (2012). *Connections and Engagement.* Retrieved from www.vancouverfoundation.ca/connect-engage

The City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy (2014) includes "Cultivating Connections" as its seventh goal, recognizing this element as an important determinant of health and well-being. Within this goal is Action 12, to "create new social connection initiatives, connect existing initiatives, and magnify their collective impact in collaboration with partners."[3] This came largely as a response to the identified importance of and need for increasing social connectivity between Vancouverites, and the recognition that working with partners in collaboration is more likely to have a greater impact than tackling this issue in isolation.

12. Build on the Engaged City recommendations to create new social connection initiatives, connect existing initiatives, and magnify their collective impact in collaboration with partners.

Outcomes: Vancouverites have social connections and feel a sense of belonging.

City Outputs: Vancouverites participation and sense of belonging is increased as a result of better alignment and leveraging of city resources and/or activities.

In the fall of 2016, a one-day forum called CONNECT: Catalyzing a Social Movement brought together over two hundred change-makers working towards building social connections throughout Metro Vancouver. Social connectivity is currently being fostered in many ways through the work of community and non-profit organizations, neighbourhood centres, foundations, local governments, funding agencies, etc. The idea of the forum was to bring a variety of these change-makers together to learn about each other's approaches to this work, share knowledge about the value of social connections, and build new connections. In recognizing linkages between change-makers and their various approaches to this work, a drive to work together to create a larger combined impact emerged.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The goal of this project was to investigate how to create an enduring platform to support collaborative efforts for increasing social connections. It aims to continue the conversation that was

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[3] City of Vancouver. *Healthy City Strategy* (2014) http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/healthy-city-strategy.aspx

started at the CONNECT forum between various social connections-makers, and explore how they can collaborate to create a larger, combined impact.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this project were to:

1. Identify **key players** leading the field in supporting social connections, and determine if/how they would like to be part of this movement.

2. Explore **movement-building** in order to help various social connection-building initiatives **maintain momentum** and work together.

3. Investigate organizational structures and other infrastructure tools to support these efforts.

4. Compile a catalogue of communication & collaboration platform options.

5. Determine what the **next steps** should be and how **challenges** can be overcome.

PROCESS

The workload fell into three phases: Background Research & Literature Review; Interviews & Data Gathering; and Report Writing & Recommendations. Research into social movements, organizational structures, and communication and collaboration platforms was performed for the first portion of the project. Information and data gathering was conducted next, through an iterative series of:

- × 14 interviews
- × two presentations
- × one survey (with 49 respondents)
- × one workshop (with 16 core stakeholders)

Finally, all of the feedback received was consolidated into this final report, to provide recommendations and direction for establishing a strong and sustainable platform for collaboratively building social connections.

Research → Interviews → Survey → Workshop → Final Report
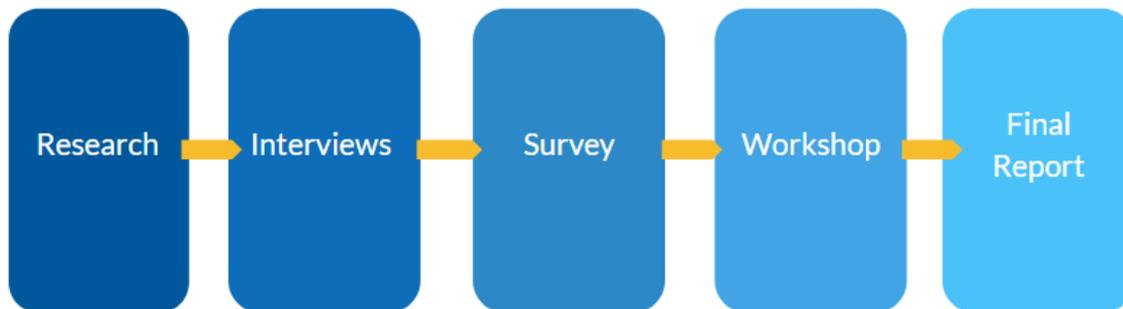
RESEARCH & LITERATURE REVIEW

MOVEMENTS: WHY & HOW

There are evidently countless initiatives, organizations, and efforts aimed at building social connections; yet, no single organization can alone support all of the connections that need to be built. It will be the sum of all actions that together as a whole makes the biggest impact. Connecting all of these initiatives that are already mobilized around a common goal has the potential to become a movement.

Whether this work should be considered a "movement" or not depends on one's definition of a movement. Here, it will be used here to describe the process of bringing social connections-makers together to align efforts.

How? Based on a literature review of movement-building, there are 4 common steps to successful movement building:

1. A community forms around a common goal.
2. The community mobilizes its resources.
3. The community finds or creates solutions and puts them into action.
4. The movement is accepted by or replaces the established norm.

A key point here is that the starting place is gathering around a common goal. For a movement to be successful, decisions and actions should all align with and contribute to that agreed-upon goal.

Leadership: Movements require a fine balance of leadership. On one hand, there needs to be a driving force, someone to ensure that what needs to happen happens. At the same time, a movement should remain fluid and open to emergent leaders. The nature of movements is that anyone should be able to join simply by committing to pursuing action within the overarching objective. In this way, leadership of a movement should be distributed and agile as more individuals and organizations become more engaged. The benefit of this is that movement-making becomes less work for the initiators. Their role can be to plant a seed, create the right conditions (e.g. providing a gathering space for people), and if successful, it will take off on its own!

> *"Movement building requires leadership that understands that movements take on a life of their own."*[4]

SYSTEMS THINKING

As a "discipline that helps us understand interdependent structures of dynamic systems,"[5] systems thinking is a highly appropriate lens to apply to this project. Systems thinking is based on the idea that singular interventions are not enough to foster significant and sustainable social change, and that more holistic, systems-oriented strategies are needed. This discipline provides tools for

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[4] Mark Holmgren. "Movement Building and Collective Impact." *Tamarack Institute.* (2017). *http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/movement-building-and-collective-impact*
[5] Srik Gopal, Donata Secondo, & Robin Kane. "Systems Thinking: A View from the Trenches." *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (2017). https://ssir.org/articles/entry/systems_thinking_a_view_from_the_trenches

addressing complex problems, and often encourages focusing less on data and events, and more on patterns of behaviour and their underlying structures and interrelations. Systems thinking takes a big picture approach to more completely and accurately examining problems, which provides better potential for generating creative solutions.

In this case, enhancing social connectivity throughout Metro Vancouver is a massive endeavour that pertains to many different sectors, actors, environments, and actions across various scales, spanning individual, neighbourhood, city and regional levels. A whole host of organizations are implicated, and with that, a whole variety of opinions and voices are relevant and should be included. Figuring out how to sustain collaborative social connections-building across these scales is a complex and chronic challenge that must be addressed creatively. As such, both the process and products (e.g. options for organizational structures) of this project reflect, as best as possible, a holistic and whole systems approach.

ECOSYSTEM MAP

Ecosystem mapping is a tool commonly used in systems approaches. In aiming to move towards a certain goal, it is helpful to visualize current players and conditions. The ecosystem map displayed below helps demonstrate how social connections play out in many different realms (related to three themes of people, places, and practices), and the interconnections between them. This is a tool that can be helpful for identifying who or what initiatives are working in which capacities. This version is only just the beginning of mapping out all that really exists currently, and is static. Future iterations could be digitalized and made to be interactive so that change-makers could add themselves to the map where they see fit. By enabling it to be a living, evolving map, it could reflect the reality of constant change.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS ECOSYSTEM MAP

+ Where, how, and with whom do social connections happen?
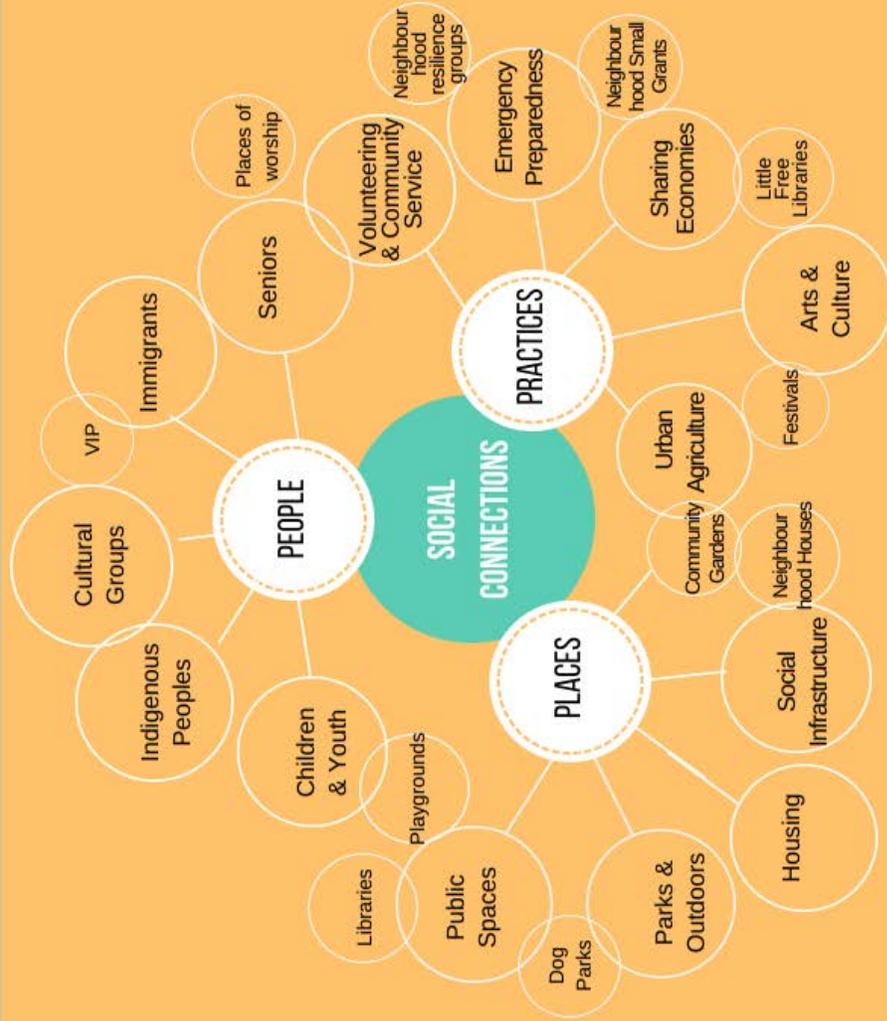
ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

The below three organizational structure models are presented as options for supporting the social connections movement. Tying back into the 4 steps to building a successful social movement, having some form, organization, or structure is helpful for consistently being able to address challenges and find solutions. The models are varied in how structured they are, ranging from more flexible to more structured. Yet, all three models are appropriate for dealing with complex and chronic societal challenges that involve multiple players and require creative solutions.

NETWORKS
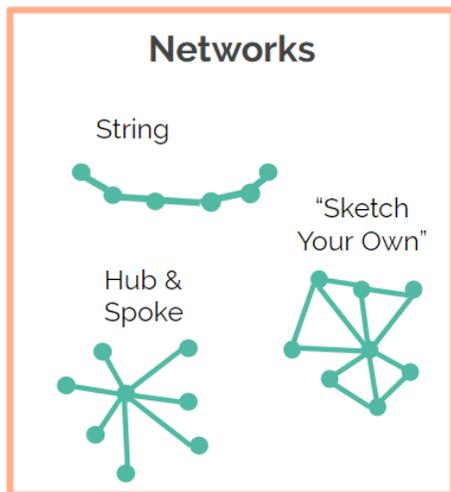
Networks can take many shapes and forms, and because of that, they can be hard to pinpoint. Essentially, a network is "a social structure made up of groups of people who are connected by one or several types of relationships"[6]. Networks often become the natural form of organization when the social structure is composed of various actors all working towards a common goal.

"In a complex and increasingly connected world, movements and networks are cornerstones of the organizational strategy of the future. They are the best way to bring about massive, scalable, and sustained social impact."[7]

While the form itself is dynamic, multifaceted and sometimes loose, networks are increasingly being recognized as an organizational structure that can help facilitate collaboration for long-term change. The actual organization would depend on who was involved, and what sorts of relationships exist between nodes. A string network, for example, relies on lateral connections, whereas a hub and spoke network connects all nodes through a central hub. There are ups and downs to both: for example, a hub and spoke has more nodes and therefore more redundancy than a string network, but is completely dependent on the hub.

Movement networks:

× include multiple organizations, often linked through a central organization or hub;
× are movement-oriented, with the aim of their goal catching on and spreading to others;
× share a long-term focus; and,
× have porous, flexible boundaries.

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[6] Bernardo Gutiérrez. *Network movements and the new 'social atmosphere'* (2014).
https://www.tni.org/en/article/network-movements-and-new-social-atmosphere
[7] Charlie Brown. "Networks: The New Organizational Strategy." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. (2015).
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/networks_the_new_organizational_strategy

Pros:	Cons:
✕ Foster linkages within and beyond the initial network ✕ Enables collaborative action, efforts, and information-sharing ✕ Creates a force that is larger than the sum of its parts (e.g. by sharing resources and capacity) ✕ Allows new leaders to emerge ✕ Helps identify and fill gaps in a movement's coverage ✕ Reflects an increasingly networked world	✕ Less leadership can lead to less clear direction ✕ Roles are loosely defined, as are linkages between some nodes/participants ✕ Decision making processes and communication procedures are less formalized

Case study: 100Resilient Cities (100RC) was initiated by the Rockefeller Foundation to strengthen urban resilience to social, physical, and economic challenges. Seeing this task as global challenge that requires a systemic approach, 100RC galvanized one hundred cities across the globe to join together and form a network for taking action. As part of this network, cities are provided with guidance and resources from the central hub, 100RC, and are connected to partners in public, private, and NGO sectors. Each city receives funding for a Chief Resilience Officer who takes the lead on local resilience efforts, and acts as the main liaison between their city and the broader network. Cities are also encouraged to learn from and help each other within their global network of member cities. In this way, the network spans various levels from local individuals, to 100RC as the central hub, to other cities around the globe, with an aim of "building a global practice of resilience".[7]

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

As both an organizational model and a process, collective impact (CI) is when a group of actors, often from different sectors, commit to a common agenda for solving a specific problem. CI is not about finding a pre-determined answer (this doesn't work under complexity); it's about finding emergent solutions through a variety of people who are looking for a solution through the same lens.

What distinguishes CI from any other form of collaboration is its five key components, listed in the table below. These five components act as guidelines for interactions between players, and together create a certain amount of structure to produce synchronized, emergent results/actions.

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[7] 100 Resilient Cities. *About Us.* (2017) http://www.100resilientcities.org/about-us/#section-2

Table 1: Principles of Collective Impact		
1	Common agenda	Everyone shares a vision for change, based on a mutual understanding of the issue as well as an agreed-upon approach to solving it.
2	Shared measures	Participants collect data and measure results consistently to ensure efforts remain aligned and everyone is accountable.
3	Mutually reinforcing activities	Participant actions are distinct yet coordinated, and all mutually reinforce the agreed-upon approach.
4	Continuous communication	Communication between participants is open and consistent to maintain trust and shared motivation.
5	Strong backbone	A separate organization of staff and skillsets serves to support and coordinate the entire initiative and all of its participants, and ensure common action.

| Pros:	Cons:
× "Many hands make light work" – increased strength and vigilance of multiple players and organizations searching for solutions through the same lens	× Challenges of bringing together a variety of participants who may not know each other, let alone ever have collaborated before
× Greater resources and assets when pooled together	× Difficulty of agreeing on shared metrics
× Quicker and more thorough learning due to continuous feedback loops	× Burdensome for backbone organization, or conversely,
× Ability to mobilize for immediate action when all participants are unified	× Over-control by the backbone organization
	× Human tendency to have preconceived notions of what the "right" solution is

Case Study: Vibrant Communities Canada is a poverty reduction initiative that links together various cities working to this end. It is organized around the common agenda of connecting 100 cities and communities to reduce poverty for one million Canadians; each regional initiative develops its own theory of change to apply this agenda to its local context. They also each have a local evaluation plan that contributes to a national evaluation system, which is based on four shared measures. As for mutually reinforcing activities, each local context varies but is linked to the national goal through five core principles that underlie the common agenda. Continuous communication is supported through monthly phone calls, an annual summit, a website and an e-newspaper. Finally, backbone support is provided by the Tamarack Institute, which facilitates meetings, administers evaluations, and manages granting, and links local and national efforts. Each region also has its own backbone to help meet the local context. As such, Vibrant Communities demonstrates all five principles of a collective impact model.[8]

SOCIOCRACY

[8] Vibrant Canada. "Collective Impact Case Study: Vibrant Communities." (2013).
http://vibrantcanada.ca/content/collective-impact-case-study-vibrant-communities
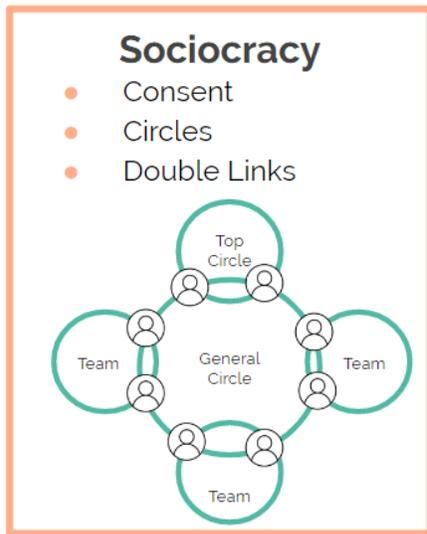
Sociocracy is a whole systems approach to designing and leading organizations that provides both a structure and a governance process. It is based on distributed leadership, and is designed to encourage creativity, increase productivity, foster harmony amongst participants and all together establish resiliency.

> *"Sociocracy vests power in the "socius," the companions, the people who regularly interact with one another and have a common aim ... Each person has the power and responsibility to make the decisions that govern their own participation in the organization."*[9]

In contrast to autocracy, or democracy, sociocracy is based on the principle that each participant gets to determine their own actions and establishes equivalence between all participants in decision making.

Principles of sociocracy:

1. Consent: each participant supports each policy or decision that affects the entire organization.
   a. This means that consent must preclude every role or responsibility assigned within the organization, with the aim of assigning the participant best suited to it.

2. Circles: the organization is structured into various decision-making or working groups centered on a certain goal or characteristic shared in common (e.g. those focusing on building connections through public space; or, based on participant type such as non-profit or public sector). Each circle leads, implements, and measures its own goals and therefore creates self-regulation through this feedback loop.

3. Double links: to ensure feedback and communication between all circles and across the organization, circles are arranged to be overlapping. The overlap occurs through a central circle, composed of representatives from each working circle who are elected (with consent) to that position.

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[9] The Center for Dynamic Community Governance. "Sociocratic Principles and Methods." http://www.dynamic-governance.org/library/resource-library/sociocratic-principles-methods/

Pros:		Cons:	
✕	Strong leadership & clear roles	✕	Many bureaucratic layers
✕	Self-governance, self-organization	✕	Initial set up of organization (e.g. electing members to roles, establishing circles) could be difficult and time-consuming
✕	Promotes cooperation	✕	Attaining mutual consent for every decision could be time consuming

Case Study: The Center for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC) is a global organization that supports the learning and sharing of nonviolent communication, and whose organization demonstrates elements of sociocracy. Its primary organization is into three main circles: the Board of Directors responsible for finances and legalities, policy and strategy, and regular evaluation; the Administrative team who guide day-to-day operations; and the Leadership team, a combination of the first two circles. There are also various other circles who carry out functions such fundraising, information technology, educational services, etc. Representatives selected by these teams will join meetings with the Leadership team every three months, to contribute the voices of all to discussions of overall operations and to provide consent on any changes to be made. The overlap between both main circles, as well as through representatives from all other circles, creates double links that help maintain communication throughout. As such, CNVC's both organization and mode of operation demonstrate the three principles of consent, circles, and double links.[10]

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION PLATFORMS

One of the objectives was to determine how to best keep those within the movement connected by giving change-makers a tool for reaching each other, sharing information, and potentially collaborating. Research into various communication and collaboration platforms was conducted, with an aim of catering to a diversity of users with varying needs, intentions, constraints (e.g. organizational restrictions on downloading cloud-based programs) and levels of digital literacy. The "Tech-savvy Scale" was included to provide an indication of how intuitive an option may be versus having to learn a new program. Those on the heavier end of the tech-savvy scale may be more time-consuming to learn initially, but include more features that could save time in the long run. Alternatively, those on the lower end of the tech-savvy scale may offer fewer features, but could be easier for people to take up. Options were later presented to future potential users for feedback to help determine which would best suit their needs and which they would be most likely to use. The below table outlines these options.

Table 2: Communication & Collaboration Platforms

Platform	Description	Features	Cost	Tech-savvy Scale
Trello	"Trello is the easy, free, flexible, and visual way	✕ Based on 'cards' where you can add	Free for up to 10MB	Tech-heavy

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[10] Robert Gonzales. "Sociocracy." (2009). *The Center for NonViolent Communication.* http://www.cnvc.org/sociocracy.htm

	to <u>manage your projects and organize</u> anything."	comments, files, checklists, discussions, etc. × Shared with many people/teams × Upload files & sync with other programs		
Basecamp	"Basecamp <u>organizes your projects, internal communications</u>, and client work in one place so you have a central source of truth."	× Based on "Home Screen" for organization or team × Tools: To-dos, message board, "Campfire" chatrooms, schedules, docs & files, automatic check-ins × Syncs with Google Docs	$99/month, no limit on users; 50% off for non-profits & charities	Tech-heavy
Slack	"Team <u>communication</u> for the 21st century."	× Create group chats × Useable via web browser, desktop app, or smart phone app; × Allows file sharing; × Syncs with other apps like Google Hangout, Dropbox, etc. × Video call feature	Free for 10 apps/service integrations; or $6.67/user/month for unlimited messages/apps	Tech-heavy
Google Plus	Social network app from Google	× Share photos, messages, links, comments, etc. × Based on circles and communities based on your contacts × Moderators control whether circles are private or public	Free	Med-tech
LinkedIn Groups	"LinkedIn Groups provide a place for professionals in the same industry or with similar interests to share content, find answers, post and view jobs, make business contacts, and establish themselves as industry experts."	× Group owner/manager can control content, members, & send announcements × Group members can start a discussion × Members can share links, make posts with photos, but not share files 　× Members can opt in/out of receiving	Free	Low-tech

		email notifications		
Email List Serve (LISTSERV)	"Electronic mailing list that allows a sender to send one email to the list"	× Simple, straightforward e-mail list × All members can easily contact each other	Free	Low-tech
Digest/ e-news	Regularly circulated overview of activities and/or events; could include profiles	× Content could reflect whatever members want it to × People could e-mail in submissions × Would need someone in charge	Free	Low-tech

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Who are we trying to engage?

Service Providers & Program Leaders

Non-Profits / Community Organizations

Funders

Social Planners & other Policy Makers

"Stakeholders" of this project were defined broadly, as essentially any individual or organization that associates their work as supporting people to build social connections. As illustrated in the figure to the left, this could include a variety of players who provide resources, programs, policy or space to facilitate connections-building. The broadest spectrum of stakeholders was targeted using a survey. Certain key players, based on those who had participated or indicated interest in previous social connection activities, were targeted more specifically with interviews.

The purposes of this stakeholder engagement included:

× discussing some of the options researched for organizational structure and communication platforms;
× hearing directly from users what would best meet their needs;
× generating ideas for next steps;
× exploring if and how they see themselves being involved; and,
× stimulating momentum by continuing this conversation and strengthening relationships.

INTERVIEWS

Initially, a list of questions was drafted to loosely guide one-on-one interviews (found in Appendix A). Due to the conversational nature of these interviews, they were intentionally unstructured and allowed to follow their own natural course. Since the project is centered on what stakeholders want or need, the conversations and project both inevitably changed along the way as more and more stakeholders were brought into the conversation.

As displayed in the table to the right, an attempt was made to interview a variety of actors who have been intimately involved with the movement so far or do highly relevant work. A **total of 14** interviews were held. The project was also presented to an even broader audience at two meetings.

Table 3: Interview Log	
6	Social Planners
	1 Metro Vancouver
	1 non-Vancouver municipality
3	Healthy City Strategy advisors
2	Funding agencies
2	Health Service contacts
2	Neighbourhood House contacts
2	Meetings

SURVEY

A short survey (found in Appendix B) was sent out to approximately 270 contacts, based on who attended or expressed interest in the CONNECT Forum in 2016. The survey had several aims:

1. to evaluate whether the first CONNECT Forum had had a lasting impact on those who attended;
2. to get an idea of what actions in support of the movement would best suit respondents;
3. to assess who was interested in being part of the movement, and how.

To the third aim, respondents were given options of varying levels of involvement, based on the Stakeholder Wheel of Engagement (pictured in Appendix B). The idea behind this was to obtain a more nuanced indication of how involved people would like to be, and also to provide an option for those who are slightly interested but have barriers to fully committing time or resources.

WORKSHOP

Respondents who indicated either "Core" or "Involved" levels of interest were invited to attend a 1.5-hour workshop. Others were invited who had played an ongoing or key role in the movement to date. At this workshop, key findings from the surveys and interviews were highlighted, and options for next steps were discussed. The below graphic illustrates the three questions that underlined the purpose of the workshop.
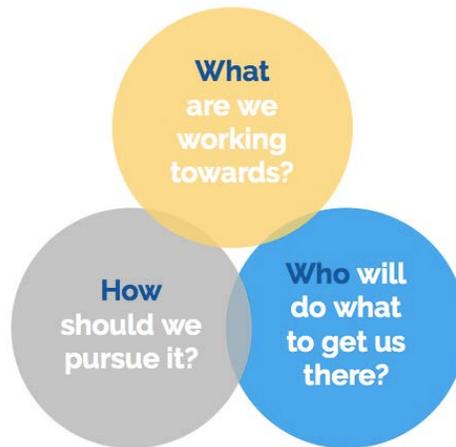
A high-level, overarching vision was put forward that was based on what was heard from stakeholders. This vision was put to consensus, to ensure that everyone could agree to the same general idea of *what we are working towards*. The proposed vision was: *connecting our efforts to create a larger combined impact on building social connections.*

Next, ideas were shared that had been generated throughout the summer in terms of what actions/outcomes could be pursued. Participants were asked to place any upcoming events or notable dates with potential for collaboration along a timeline, as a start towards *who will do what to get us there*. The idea was to map out what events and opportunities are pre-existing in order to build on those, strengthen collaboration between them, and possibly identify opportunities or needs for new gatherings or events.

Finally, as for *how we should pursue it,* options were presented for communication methods along a scale, pictured below, that indicated how technologically-advanced they were, and participants were asked to indicate which they would prefer.
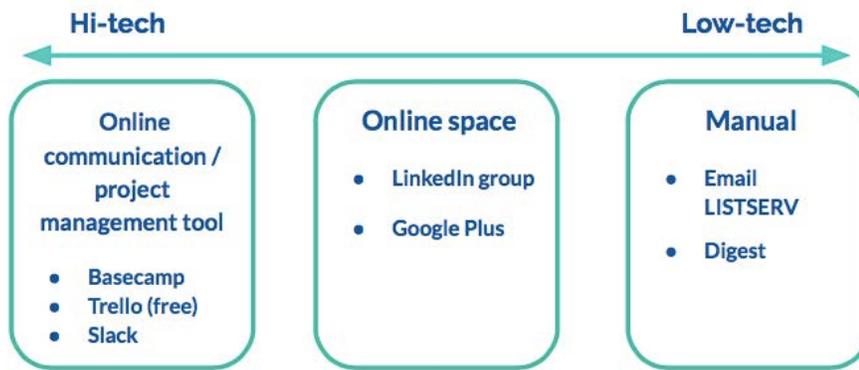
FINDINGS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table 4, below, summarizes the main findings from both surveys and interviews. The main, recurring topics or areas of conversation are broken down into the three fundamental questions of who, what and how. In some areas, there was a general consensus; in others, there was complete divergence of opinions. There were also many points of uncertainty and unanswerable questions.

Table 4: Summary of Findings

		Agreed	Disagreed	Uncertain
What?		There is value in working together	Is this a movement? Should we focus on action or research?	Why are we working together? What goal are we working towards?
		Regular gatherings are the preferred outcome (based on survey results)	What is their format & purpose?	How can we make them actionable/practical enough to be worthwhile? How frequent is "regular?" How do we decide what to focus on?
Who?		Less structure = better; form to follow function	--	Who takes on what roles? Who leads? What function are we following? How many people should be at the "table," and who? How representative does any "structure" need to be?
How?		Some parameters should be set, and scope defined	How do we define social connections? Should we? How do we measure impact?	How narrow should we make the scope, and does this risk excluding people?
		Resources and capacity are needed	--	Who can contribute what?
		Communication method: the simpler, the better	--	What platform do people prefer?

INTERVIEW RESULTS

(Who) **Organizational models** In discussing the three organizational structures with key stakeholders, almost everyone interviewed was quite hesitant about trying to establish a formal structure at this point, as displayed in Table 5. Who would comprise any such structure was unknown, as was the exact purpose of it. Further, establishing and maintaining anything more than a very simple structure would require time and capacity that could detract from working towards the actual goal. Simply put, form should follow function.

Table 5: Reactions to each model

Collective Impact	Sociocracy	Networks
✕ Backbone organization: too burdensome, and who would it be? ✕ Tends to gather like-minded people and reproduce the same ideas, rather than new solutions	✕ Too many layers of bureaucracy ✕ Unfamiliar	✕ Most people and organizations already have well-established networks

While collective impact and sociocracy were largely considered non-options, there was general consensus that a network, or multiple **networks already exist.** The question then becomes how to ensure that these networks stay connected, and whether there needs to be a central hub that helps support continued conversation. Further, the exact roles that need to be filled, and more importantly, by whom, was questioned repeatedly.

(What) Next Steps A whole host of ideas were generated, as displayed in the graph below, from starting a campaign to holding another forum. Beyond actual ideas for what should happen, bigger questions surrounding the form and purpose of any next steps repeatedly arose. For example, some respondents felt strongly that we need more research and answers before we could move forwards, whereas others felt we should focus on action. Some felt that we should focus on supporting projects and initiatives that are already happening in the community, whereas others thought efforts should go towards supporting new projects.

Gatherings

- Research series, maybe based on 5 Forum themes
- Profile projects as "best practices"
- Idea Jams or Conversation Cafes
- CONNECT Forum 2.0
- Linking up with existing gatherings (e.g. HBEA)

Action-Oriented

- Set specific action plan & goals
- Grassroots-generate action plan or project ideas
- Host competition for relevant projects to win funding
- Start a campaign to spur movement (e.g. Just Say Hello)

Communication

- Digest: people email in submissions/notifications about events, updates, ideas, questions, research, all compiled into one place for circulation
- Videographer/embedded journalist to tell story that could eventually land on a blog or website
- Up-to-date LISTSERV, people email each other with events, updates, ideas, etc.

(How) Scope & practicalities Very diverse opinions arose around exactly what it is that is being worked towards. Some interviewees felt quite strongly that certain parameters needed to be set (for example, defining what "social connections" means). Others were inclined to leave things open

to interpretation, and worried that setting any firm parameters at this point could be limiting. Many questions also arose concerning practicalities such as where capacity and funding would come from to support any future endeavours, or what communication & collaboration platform would be most suitable.

SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 268 who were invited to complete our survey, 49 responses were received, for a response rate of 18%. Here are some highlights of the feedback received:

1. To what extent have things changed for you as a result of CONNECT in your social connections work, such as new partnerships, initiatives, integration of learnings, etc.?

Analysis: A majority of respondents, roughly 60%, experienced either a slight or great positive change in their own social networks. This is encouraging, as part of the purpose of the CONNECT Forum was to provide change-makers with an opportunity to meet each other and build their own new connections.
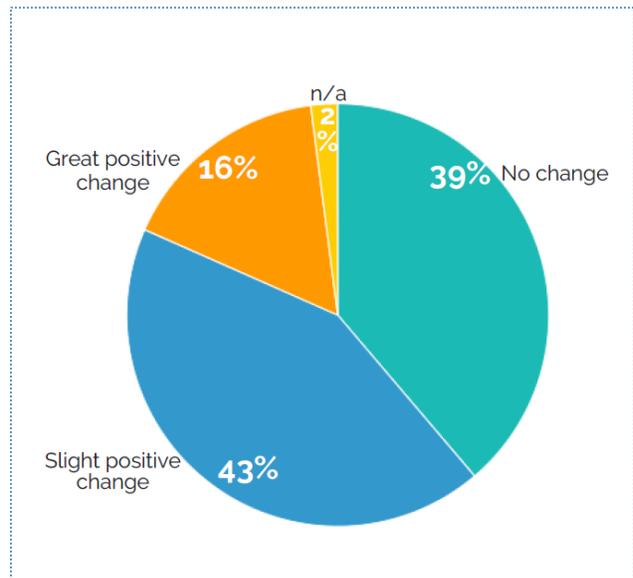

n/a 2%
Great positive change 16%
No change 39%
Slight positive change 43%

2. To what extent have you integrated learnings or actions arising from CONNECT more broadly into your organization, such as conversations with colleagues, integration into work plans, etc.?

Analysis: Roughly 40% of respondents reported some positive change, whether great or slight, and about 20% reported a negative change. While this leads to the questions of why or how any negative changes could have been incurred, the fact that the most common experience was positive is encouraging.


n/a 6%
Great positive change 16%
Negative change 22%
Slight positive change 27%
No change 29%
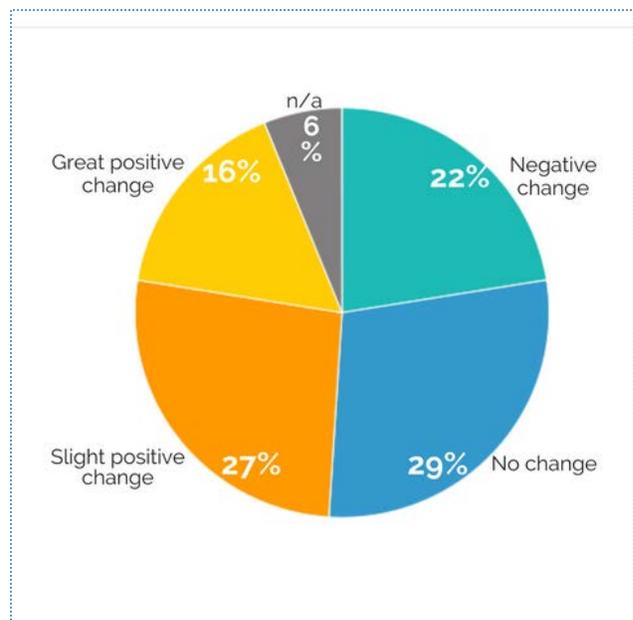
3. What actions/outcomes of being part of a social connections movement are most important to you?
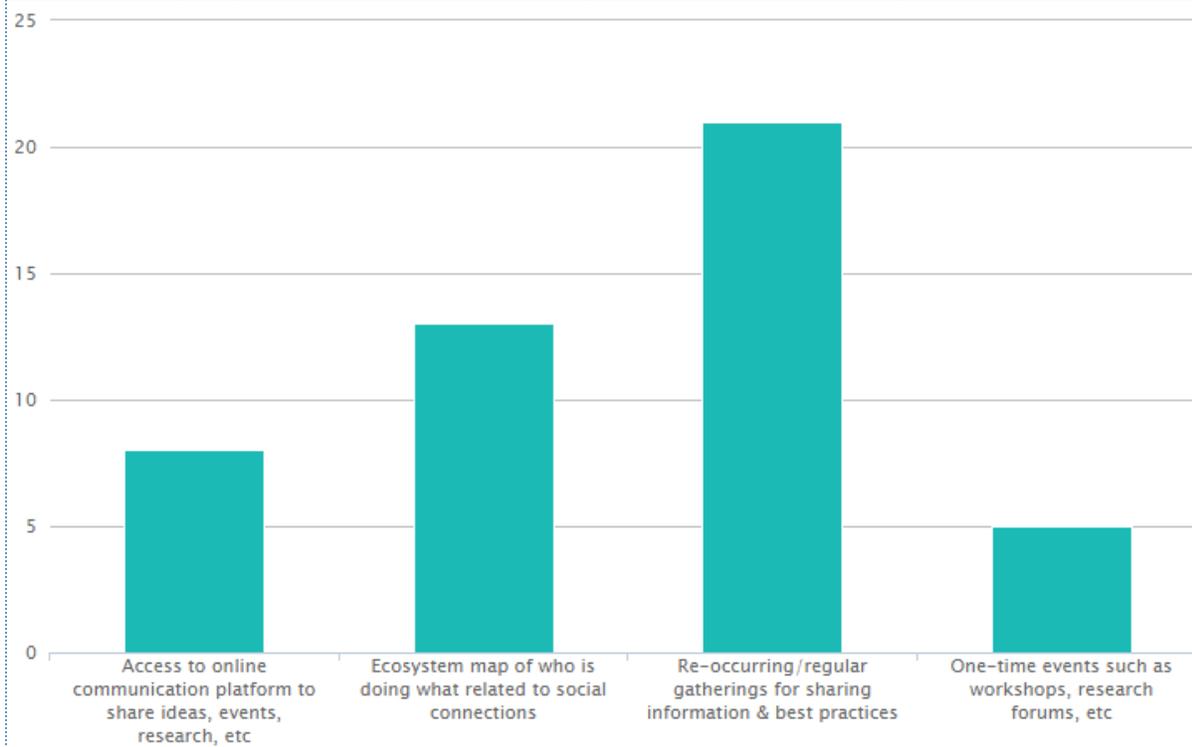
Analysis: The most popular action was "Re-occurring/regular gatherings for sharing information & best practices." The least popular, besides "Other," was "One-time events such as workshops, research forums, etc."

4. Based on the "stakeholder wheel of engagement" (source: Tamarack Institute), how interested are you in being part of a social connections movement?
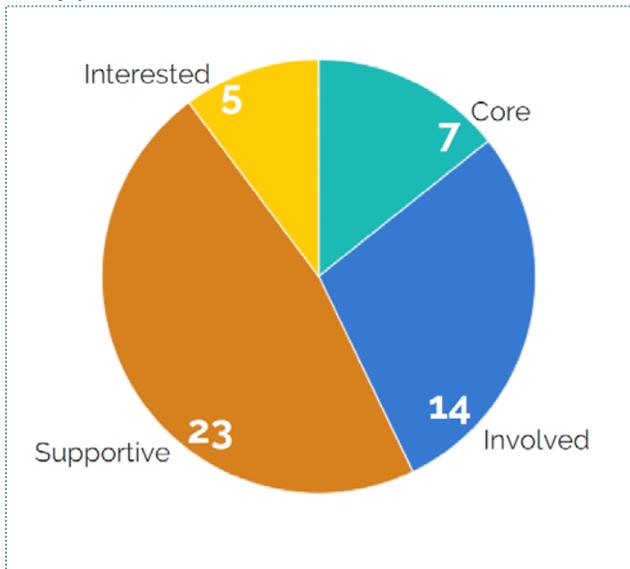
Core: lead movement (e.g. be on Executive Committee), organize events, help structure organization, coordinate communication, etc.

Involved: Help organize events, be part of movement's organizational structure (e.g. be on a working group), etc.
Supportive: Attend events, participate in information sharing, be associated with network, etc.

Interested: Receive updates and information related to events and activities.

Analysis: The most common level of involvement indicated was "Supportive:

Attend events, participate in information sharing, be associated with network, etc." There were also strong levels of interest in "Core" and "Involved" combined. No respondents replied "not interested".

WORKSHOP RESULTS

One of the main purposes of the workshop was to attempt to answer some of the uncertainties or areas of disagreement indicated in the Findings table. It was important to acknowledge that not every question could be answered that day, and that moving forward with some remaining uncertainty was inevitable. Out of roughly 30 invitees, there were 16 attendants, representing a broad spectrum of stakeholder types.

Vision: Connecting our efforts to create a larger combined impact on building social connections.

Some discussion was had over the proposed **vision**, with suggestions given for additions or changes. Discussion points included:

> *Vision: Connecting our efforts to create a larger combined impact on building social connections.*

× Questioning whether "to create a larger combined impact" could be removed to simplify statement; questioned who audience is and whether this language is accessible;

× Highlighting 'inclusion' as integral to social connection;

× Rather than "creating a larger combined impact," it's also about improving social connections through deepening, multiplying, and diversifying; and,

× It's not just about "creating" a larger combined impact, it's also about strengthening what already exists.

Despite these suggestions, the vision was accepted as a sort of draft for the purposes of the workshop, with the acknowledgement that it would need to be revisited before being formalized and fully put to consensus.

As for **next steps,** many upcoming events/opportunities for collaboration were identified. Building off of existing initiatives is an important aspect of this project, and the opportunities here are a good starting point. A table containing the full list of events/opportunities identified can be found in Appendix D. Later, analysis of the events/opportunities for collaboration listed by participants was performed to identify any particularly synchronistic opportunities for aligning or combining efforts, such as:

× Fall: various seniors-related events will be occurring, such as those listed by United Way, South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, and the West End Seniors' Network. Plus, it will be Seniors Day on October 1st!

× Winter: a research forum to be organized by the City of Vancouver could feature other current events such as the updated Connect and Engage report to be released by the Vancouver Foundation, or the latest research on building design for social connections.

× Summer: not many events or gatherings were identified, which creates an opportunity for initiating something new.

 × Other: several significant events were identified for 2018, including anniversary celebrations for both the Vancouver Foundation ("On the Table") and the Association of Neighbourhood Houses B.C., which could have potential for alignment. There are also ongoing opportunities for collaborating with those beyond the organizations we engaged directly, such as the Healthy Built Environment Alliance's regular meetings.

In presenting three types of **communication methods** on a scale of low- to high-tech, participants were asked to indicate their preferred option. Roughly, the results were:

high-tech online communication and project management tool such as Trello

medium-tech online space such as LinkedIn Group or Google Plus

low-tech manual option such as a LISTSERV or digest

While some uncertainty remains, the most important result of this workshop was that it brought all of these key people into the same room to hold a conversation about how to move forward. This in itself was the next step in moving forwards.

MOVING FORWARD

By the end of this project, several next steps had been identified. Regardless of ongoing uncertainties, the most important outcome is that stakeholders continue to move forward together on the basis of what is known, rather than wait until all uncertainty is removed.

WHERE WE GOT TO

The conclusions that were reached in terms of agreed-upon next steps include:

 × **What:** while the vision that was put forward at the workshop remains in "working definition" state, it received thought and consideration, which is a good beginning for gaining some clarity around what exactly is being worked towards. As there is currently not much appetite for a formalized organizational structure, it similarly seems too early for a formalized, fully agreed upon vision. For now, this working vision can provide a starting point and be revisited later if need be.
 × **What:** over 30 upcoming events, gatherings, and opportunities for collaboration were identified during the workshop. These will be shared and participants of this process will be encouraged to act on such opportunities for collaboration, such as those specifically identified as potential synchronicities.
 × **How:** based on communication method preferences, several options will be tested. Each platform can serve different functions. These include:
   i. High-tech option: Trello to be used for **specific purposes** such as organizing an event (if and when someone takes the initiative to do so)
     ° Function: project-specific communication
   ii. Medium-tech option: a LinkedIn Group to be set up and used to share information, post events/articles, pose questions, etc. For now, it will be a closed group with all **core participants** invited to join. They can also invite new, relevant members.
     ° Function: maintaining ongoing communication between change-makers

     iii.   Low-tech option: email list of all who attended the Forum. This can be used for occasional, **broader communication** such as to notify people of big events.
         ° Function: one-way communication

Several of the workshop attendees agreed to help set up these platforms. After approximately 6 months (early Spring 2018), these options will be evaluated to see how well they have been working, and whether any changes should be made.

✕ **Who:** relationships between stakeholders will be considered in terms of networks, in the spirit of building on and strengthening what already exists. At this point, it was concluded that it would be premature to adopt a more formalized organizational structure (such as either sociocracy or collective impact). Some organization within these networks has already begun to emerge naturally, reflected in how the communication options will be used.

     i.   Those who attended/expressed interest in the workshop, and indicated a stronger interest in being connected to the movement overall, form a central, connecting node within the network. The primary role of those within this node will likely be convening. A list of these core individuals and organizations can be found in Appendix E.

     ii.   Anyone who takes on the task of organizing an event or gathering can organize a subcommittee for that purpose. These can come and go as needed.

     iii.   Those who indicated interest in the survey, as well as those who attended the first forum, will form an extended network and be connected through an email list.

✕ **How & Who:** a big part of how this work can continue moving forward, as well as what those involved can do to support it, will be about **convening.** The benefit of operating as a network structure is that those within it can draw on and reach out to their own extended networks, and bring together the right people at the right time (for example, to organize an event). This will, over time, help to grow and strengthen the network.

SHORT-TERM: RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

✕ Consider identified areas of potential synchronicities in planning future events or gatherings as opportunities for social connections-builders to gathering and share knowledge. For example, a Research Forum organized this fall/winter by the City could feature findings from the new Connect and Engage survey that is to be release around the same time, as well as the latest on building design for social connections such as that produced by Happy City and in another Healthy City Scholar project.

✕ Explore the option of linking up with existing structured gatherings, i.e. Healthy Built Environment Alliance. Preliminary conversations have already been had that established mutual interest in this possibility.

✕ Continue to use the ecosystem map as a tool for visually communicating the scope of this work as a broad, open container for collaboratively working towards social connections, in which people can insert themselves/their initiatives. This will continue to strengthen a shared understanding of who is doing what related to social connections, as well as to solidify an understanding of the breadth of how and where social connections-building can manifest.

✕ Continue to share and disseminate events, gatherings, and opportunities to collaborate as they come up and as more people are brought into the network. This is where a LinkedIn group will be handy, for people to share upcoming events as they arise. Bigger events can also be communicated by email list.

LONG-TERM: RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

- ✕ Revisit the idea of taking on a more formalized organizational structure, if and when enough momentum has been gained and the network has come to need it.
- ✕ Revise the stated "vision" if need be.
- ✕ Discuss whether there is an agreed-upon desire to define social connections or other questions of scope.
- ✕ Explore unanswered questions (such as those listed in the Conclusions section), particularly how to measure the impact of this work.

CONCLUSION

For a movement to truly ignite change, scattered pockets of influence or instances of change are not enough. Change needs to be scaled up and out, between and across geographic scales, groups of people, and areas of practice. This is where networks come in, as ideas spread naturally through peoples' preexisting connections and relationships. In order to increase social connections across Metro Vancouver as a whole, collaboration is needed.

After researching movement building, as well as generating options for organizational structures and communication/collaboration platforms, much of this project was centered on stakeholder engagement. These options were presented to and discussed with a wide spectrum of stakeholders through surveying, interviewing, and workshops. The engagement process itself helped to continue and widen the conversation, and reinvigorate peoples' interest in being part of something bigger.

What was found through consultation was that most social connections-makers, despite their interest in being involved in this sort of work, were reluctant to take on any sort of formal organizational structure. They believed that first it was necessary to determine what exactly such efforts are working towards. The vision that was put forward at the workshop can, for now, serve as a working definition of the overarching goal behind bringing these change-makers together, and can be solidified at a later date if need be.

As a group, it was concluded that it would be desirable to gather regularly to share knowledge and information. At the workshop, various upcoming events and gatherings were identified as opportunities for collaboration and cross-pollination of ideas. Core participants indicated interest in all types of communication platforms, so an agreement was made to test out two to three for a trial period of six months, at which point their utility and value will be reassessed.

While no official organizational structure has been adopted, what surfaced was peoples' willingness to build on their preexisting networks. Further, some organization within these networks arose through the process of this project itself. By engaging key change-makers in interviews and workshops, a central hub of conveners emerged who will, ideally, stay connected and gather to share knowledge and resources. A broader, extended network was brought in and engaged through the survey, who will continue to be associated through updates about large events or other opportunities to collaborate.

While many questions remain, this project helped established some initial building blocks for collaboratively increasing social connections across Metro Vancouver. As expected, the process followed an unpredictable trajectory; while not all original objectives were met with a measurable

end result (e.g. no official organizational structure adopted), other unexpected opportunities arose along the way, such as new relationships, synchronicities between efforts, and opportunities for collaboration. This process, especially with its emphasis on stakeholder engagement, produced a better sense of where people stand, and helped open a space for leaders to emerge. Some interesting questions arose along the way (some of which are listed in Appendix A) which should be seen not as hindering unknowns, but instead as seeds to continue the conversation and grow the movement.

While much of the focus in movement building is in spreading up and out, it's important to remember that "successful movements require personal change – changes in perspectives, changes in habits, and new ways to see what community health and well-being actually look like."[11] In other words, the whole movement will only be as successful as the sum of each of its participants!

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[11] Mark Holmgren. "Movement Building and Collective Impact." *Tamarack Institute*. (2017). *http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/movement-building-and-collective-impact*

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS TO BE FURTHER PURSUED

Why is it good to talk to strangers?
What is a neighbourhood?
What makes us feel a sense of belonging?
What is the role of technology in all of this? Does it bring us together or keep us apart?
How do we address people with psychological barriers to social connectedness?
Are barriers to social connection a pan-urban issue, or unique to Vancouver?
What is the impact of chance encounters or micro-interventions/disturbances that foster social connection?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Clarify their roles/works related to social connections
Explain project and show print outs of slides on:

- Who we're trying to engage
- Our ideas: systems thinking and 3 organization structures including collective impact, networks & sociocracy
- Themes (people, places, practices) – focus on strengths/assets as well as gaps

Questions:
1. Can you think of anything to add to the themes?
2. Do any of the organizational structure options particularly appeal to you or not, and why?
3. Have you seen other movements gain traction and take off? If so, how?
4. How interested in broader systems change are you?
5. (How) do you see yourself as being involved in a social connections movement? [have stakeholder wheel of engagement print out]
   a. What would it take for you to be involved? Is there something that would make it worth it?
6. What do you think should be the next steps? Overall outcomes?
7. Is there anyone else who you think should be brought in (that I should speak with)?

APPENDIX C: SURVEY

CONNECT follow-up survey

This survey is a follow up from the CONNECT forum held last December. The following questions will help us:

- explore how this particular event may have helped you in your work; and
- gauge who would like to be involved in growing a social connections movement, and how.

Over the next couple of months, we will be looking to assemble a network of changemakers (such as service providers, non-profits/community organizations, social planners, policy makers, funders, etc.) dedicated to building social connections. A UBC Masters student, Kathleen Heggie, has been hired as a Healthy City Scholar summer intern at the City of Vancouver to look into how to grow the momentum in a social connections movement, and with whom. With your help, we hope to identify organizational structures and communication tools (e.g. online platforms) that can best help those interested in the movement to stay connected. We are open to any and all levels of participation, and are curious about your level of interest.

SURVEY DEADLINE: July 10

1. To what extent have things changed for you as a result of CONNECT in your social connections work, such as new partnerships, initiatives, integration of learnings, etc.?
   Please rate.

   ◯ 1 Negative change
   ◯ 2 No change
   ◯ 3 Slight positive change
   ◯ 4 Great positive change
   ◯ N/A

2. To what extent have you integrated learnings or actions arising from CONNECT more broadly into your organization, such as conversations with colleagues, integration into work plans, etc.?
   Please rate on a scale of 1-4, with 1= very little and 4 = greatly

   ◯ 1 Negative Change
   ◯ 2 No Change
   ◯ 3 Slight positive change
   ◯ 4 Great positive change
   ◯ N/A

3. a) What actions/outcomes of being part of a social connections movement are most important to you?
Please rank in order of importance to you.

Access to online communication platform to share ideas, events, research, etc	1 1
Ecosystem map of who is doing what related to social connections	2 2
Re-occurring/regular gatherings for sharing information & best practices	3 3
One-time events such as workshops, research forums, etc	4 4
Other	5 5

3. b) If you answered "other" to the previous question, or have any other ideas for actions/outcomes you think are important, please describe:

Type here

4. Based on the "stakeholder wheel of engagement" shown below, how interested are you in being part of a social connections movement?
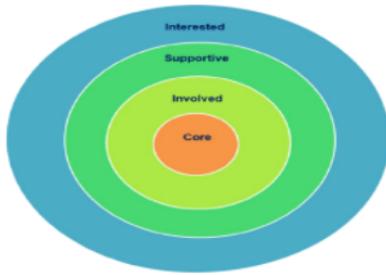
(source: Tamarack Institute)

◯ Core: Lead movement (e.g. be on Executive Committee), organize events, help structure organization, coordinate communication (e.g. using online platform), etc.

◯ Involved: Help organize events, be part of movement's organizational structure (e.g. be on a working group), etc.

◯ Supportive: Attend events, participate in information sharing, be associated with 'network', etc.

◯ Interested: Receive updates and information related to events and activities.

◯ Not interested: Prefer not to be involved.

5. Are you interested in speaking with our Healthy City Scholar, Kathleen Heggie, over the summer to share your thoughts on how a social connections movement could be organized and sustained?

If "yes," Kathleen will contact you to set up a time.

◯ Yes
◯ No

Contact information will be used to facilitate follow-ups (if requested) from Kathleen, as well as inform potential future correspondence depending on your interest level. Requests to "unsubscribe" will always be respected!

APPENDIX D: UPCOMING EVENTS & GATHERINGS

Table 6: Upcoming Events/Gatherings as Opportunities for Collaboration

Summer 2017	Fall (2017)	Winter (2017)	Spring (2018)	Summer (2018)	Other
Summer Learning Catalogue · In With Fwd (service provider) · August 2017 · Collaboration opportunity	Seniors Summit · Nov. 1-2, 2017 · Bev Pitman, UWLM	Public Engagement for Metro Vancouver Connect + Engage Report · Fall to winter · Opportunity to collaborate · Vancouver Foundation	Vancouver Design Week LEA Competition (Landscape Architecture, Education, Art) · Engage groups of artists, architects, landscape architects to create a space that enhances community connections · Robin Roseburgh, Symmetry	Pride 2018 Sunset Beach Festival · Vancouver Pride Society	Winter 2018: "On the Table" · Event Collaboration opportunity · Vancouver Foundation
	Field trip of best practice in socially connected multi-unit buildings · City of Vancouver · Looking for participants & co-sponsors	Research Forum · Need speaker suggestions, co-sponsors · City of Vancouver	Neighbourhood Small Grants · Collaboration opportunity · Vancouver Foundation	Britannia Community Site Revitalization · Community Conversations · Panel on Housing · Britannia Planning Committee	Marpole Neighbourhood House opening 2018/2019 · Opportunity for regional gathering · ANHBC as main host
	Queer Glossary Release · Qmunity	Plan H Community of Practice on social connections	Rethinking the Region · SFU Urban Studies	Tsawwassen Farm School · Ray Thunderchild	Feedback/report from survey about new seniors centre by Sunset Community Centre · Collaboration with CoV · Sophie Fung, SVNH
	Seniors Services Providers Network	South Hill mini survey – Report and	Meet & Greet Event · Koyali		Best Practice/Sharing opportunity -

	quarterly meeting · Sophie Fung, SVNH · Opportunity for senior-serving groups/initiatives	Engagement release · Koyali Burman, SVNH	Burman, SVNH	ongoing · Metro Vancouver Social Issues Subcommittee
	Release of 2017 Connect + Engage Survey · October 2017 · Vancouver Foundation		SFU Public Square, the Future of Work	ANHBC 125th Anniversary (2019) – big social inclusion party! · ANHBC will host
	Raising the Profile Meeting (& survey?) · Nov. 2-3, 2017 · West End Seniors Network		UWLM Public Policy Institute Alumni Forum · March · Bev Pitman	Cities of New West & Port Moody City of Learning program – social isolation in disability sector · Learning opportunity?
	National Seniors' Day · Oct. 1 · West End Seniors Network			Expansion / "New Center" · Greg Dreicer, VPL · Opportunities to partner, host, convene
	Release of My Health My Community report on Social Connections · Vancouver Coastal Health			Vancouver Seniors Services Providers Network quarterly meetings · Future discussion topic of social connections · WESN
				3+ /year meetings of BC Healthy Built Environment Alliance · VCH + PHSA
				Kudoz (Service

					Provider) — create connections between hosts and individuals with cognitive disabilities · Collaboration opportunity?
					Upcoming research on building design for social connections · Leigh Greenius, BC Housing · Date TBD
					Urban Indigenous Opioid Task Force · MVAEC
					Cannabis Substitution Project

SVNH: South Vancouver Neighbourhood House
UW: United Way
WESN: West End Seniors Network
VCH: Vancouver Coastal Health
PHSA: Provincial Health Services Authority

APPENDIX E: CORE STAKEHOLDERS

The following individuals and organizations were represented in our group of core participants who indicated high levels of interest in being part of the movement:

Vancouver Foundation
United Way
Vancouver Coastal Health
Metro Vancouver
Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia
South Van Neighbourhood House
Heart of Belonging
Simon Fraser University
posAbilities
Vancouver Public Library
Qmunity
West End Seniors Network
BC Housing
Happy City

North Shore Multicultural Society
Planned Lifetime Advocacy network
& several individuals.