

# SYSTEMS MINDSETS + PRACTICE FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE



SOCIAL  
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Social  
Enterprise  
Australia

 **Griffith** UNIVERSITY  
Queensland, Australia  
Yunus Centre

## PREAMBLE

The **Social Enterprise World Forum (SEWF)** is a global annual event, running since 2008 with a focus on celebrating, showcasing, connecting, and sharing learning. It offers an opportunity to cultivate the big conversations that will help the sector develop and move forwards as a progressive movement contributing to real and lasting social change. SEWF 2022 will be held in Meanjin / Brisbane.

In preparation for this event, the local hosts convened a **Social Enterprise Unconference** in July 2021. Almost 600 people attended the participant-led event, contributing to co-designing the vision and agenda for the World Forum. The **Yunus Centre Griffith University (YCGU)** was engaged to generate a short **report**, providing some reflections and interpretations of the key themes that emerged. The four key themes participants identified to consider more fully were: decolonising social enterprise; data and impact measurement; complexity and systems change; and social procurement.

YCGU was subsequently engaged by the SEWF 2022 co-hosts, **White Box Enterprises**, to develop a Provocation Paper around complexity-informed and systems change approaches to social enterprise. The YCGU project team included Matt Allen, Dr Joanne McNeill, Alex Hannant, and Dr Ingrid Burkett. We also engaged Dr Sharon Zivkovic, of **Community Capacity Builders** and **Wicked Lab**, in a peer review capacity and are grateful for her input to helping shape the material presented below.

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## INTRODUCTION

Systems thinking and complexity have emerged as key areas of focus for the social enterprise sector, and the application of systems and complexity-informed approaches is beginning to have some impact on the way that social enterprises, intermediaries, and sector supporters frame their work. At the same time, there are now a plethora of terms floating around – systems change, complexity, wicked problems, network organising – which are often vaguely defined, and risk becoming ‘buzz words’ that lack any real meaning. Additionally, while there is a small growing library of academic literature about social enterprise and systems thinking, the insights from these publications are not always readily available or accessible to social enterprise practitioners.

This paper brings together some current reflections on systems thinking, complexity, and social enterprise. It is intended to explore some key terms and themes, help social enterprise practitioners and supporters to reflect on their roles, and provoke discussions and dialogue on this emerging theme in the social enterprise sector at SEWF and beyond.

# 1 SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVES

At its core, systems thinking requires a holistic and relational worldview. This means understanding that, at a fundamental level, *everything* is inter-connected. This doesn't mean everything is the same – nor does it mean that everything is connected equally. It's just stating a basic precept which is both intuitive and scientifically validated, which is that any phenomenon – whether it be a natural ecosystem, a community, or a society – exists in an intricate web of relationships and connections, which it is influenced by, and in turn influences.

*“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”* – John Muir (1911).

Taking a systems-thinking approach to social enterprise means more than just considering the broader structural challenges and issues the work connects to. It means understanding ourselves, our social enterprises, and the sector as existing in a complex web of relationships - to Country, to community, and to the planet. It also means understanding that the principal failure of a 'profit first' modality of running businesses is that it persists *despite*, instead of necessarily in harmony with, these relationships.

These ideas are not, of course, new. Holistic epistemologies and worldviews, developed over millennia by First Nations peoples around the world, are almost universally concerned with place-based, holistic, and relational perspectives. Thus, it is important to understand that a systems view of life, and other forms of scientific holism, are not 'new' frameworks, but rather the expression of some very basic precepts of life in a format that is compatible with modern Western worldviews. At the same time, it is important to understand that 'systems thinking' and 'Indigenous worldviews' are not one and the same thing – as Goodchild (2021) writes, “a journey to the nexus of Indigenous wisdom and Western thought begins with an important realisation, that both are equal but differentiated”.

Evidence of relational worldviews is scattered throughout recorded and oral histories all around the world, including Australia (Graham 2009; Yunkaporta 2019), North America (Goodchild 2021), Aotearoa (Harmsworth & Awatere 2013),

ancient China (Capra & Luisi 2014), and ancient Greece (Jackson, 2019). Wherever you are from, and wherever you stand when you read this, there's probably a long history and tradition of relational thinking, but one that you might not have been exposed to in school.

All this to say, systems thinking is not a new science or skill that social enterprise practitioners need to learn; it is a call to begin the increasingly critical work of co-weaving a future that sustains life, respects the owners, knowledges, and laws of the places where we live and work, and strengthens connections with community and place.

Three 'ways of thinking' might be useful for social enterprise practitioners adopting a systems perspective: thinking in plurality, developing network mindsets, and learning to see complexity.

## Thinking in Plurality

Pluralism has different meanings in different contexts, but for the purposes here, it can be summarised as meaning that there are always multiple 'truths' and that there is no one 'right' way to think or to act. Again, while this might seem elementary, it is a significant and potentially radical step. Thinking in plurality requires us to accept that multiple, equally valid ways of viewing the world can coexist in the most literal meaning of the word, without needing to compete for the position of 'truth'. For example, Western science and First Nations cultural and scientific knowledge. Similarly, pluralism encourages the blending and combination of different methods and techniques, potentially from unlikely and disparate sectors and traditions. In the context of social enterprise, this framing compels us to accept that the sector will always contain a multitude of different organisational forms, operating models, priorities, and perspectives. None of this means that it is not possible to debate, critique, or take issue with anyone else's worldview, methods, or actions. Indeed, creating the conditions for this kind of challenging but respectful dialogue is critical to the development of a robust and cohesive sector. It simply means that we need to avoid the trap of arguing about 'the one best way' to do things.



## 'Seeing' Complexity in Systems

In addition to the interconnectedness discussed above, none of these factors are standing still – they're all constantly moving and changing in relation to each other, in ways that are difficult – and often impossible – to predict, and certainly to control. This is complexity, and it is one of the most important concepts to understand when thinking about how systems operate. While a Westernised worldview tends to try and understand things in a structured, ordered, and linear way, this is simply not how the world works, particularly when it comes to social and environmental issues.

Linear, cause-and-effect approaches are very common in the social enterprise domain. This is heavily influenced by common tools, like the logic model - which outlines a series of actions and interventions and the sequence of outputs, outcomes, and impacts that are predicted to follow. Such approaches are useful when we are hypothesising an approach and/or seeking to understand and measure an organisation's outputs, particularly where the relationship between actions and outputs is fairly straightforward. In a complexity-based view of social enterprise, it is also important to consider how our actions and interventions are only a small part of the overall system, and the potential influence they have will most likely not be fully predictable, measurable, or attributable directly to singular enterprises or their activities. Additionally, despite our best intentions, the things we are doing to address social and environmental issues might be glossing over, or even perpetuating, deeper structural factors that contribute to causing those issues.

## Developing Network Mindsets

Developing a network mindset, or what Ehrlichman (2021, p.31) calls "an evolution of focus from *me* to *we*", provides another concept central to a systems-thinking approach. To take a network mindset is to see the world relationally – to understand the web of relationships that our own work and organisations exist within, to identify opportunities for cooperation, and to prioritise building relationships of trust rather than of top-down control. A network mindset views the connections between the parts of a system – individuals, organisations, etc. – as being just as important as the parts themselves. This has significant implications for how we think about power and influence. While many organisations and initiatives are structured as hierarchies, with centralised, top-down decision-making, a network mindset is inherently dynamic and non-hierarchical; focused on collective decision-making, distributed leadership, and an orientation towards impact and relationships rather than the outputs and successes of any single person or organisation.

## Reset & Recovery Queensland

The 'Reset & Recovery' project emerged as part of the Queensland Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Queensland Social Enterprise Council providing support to social enterprises in three regional areas – Far North Queensland, Darling Downs, and Central Queensland. One of the project's unique features was that it engaged local social enterprise practitioners in each region, with paid roles to engage with their local communities, mobilise support from local social enterprises and other stakeholders, and promote events and workshops. The project was grounded in a community development model, which prioritises the skills and knowledge of local actors in creating sustainable, place-based change. By resourcing critical network infrastructure in regional communities, QSEC aimed to use the limited time and resources available to spark social enterprise activity in these communities and foster a distributed and grassroots-led model (The Yunus Centre, rest of ref).

***"In a top-down approach, you need a lot of resourcing to be able to control every single moving part. We just don't have the resources, and the will, to do that... we need to develop feedback loops and create genuine connections and relationships with the members who are actually at the forefront of everything that we do... We can resource people on the ground to be able to do what they need to do in areas that are distinct to them, without us having to control every single moving part."***

Elise Parups, CEO, Queensland Social Enterprise Council (2022)

## 2 FINDING OUR WAY

Given the above, when a complexity-informed systems lens is applied, a range of challenging issues and questions are raised. However, the scale of the social and environmental crises now being faced around the world are such that systemic approaches are not only desirable, but essential. As such, one of the challenges for the social enterprise sector and its participants is to develop skills and capacities that will help to effectively navigate, and intervene in, systems. To do this, it is important to understand how *framing* can help us articulate different layers of complexity, how systems thinking can help us better understand the problems we are working on, and how social enterprises, networks, intermediaries, and funders can identify 'sensitive points of intervention' where their efforts could potentially contribute to systemic shifts and transitions.

### Framing in Complex Systems

As we highlighted at the beginning of this piece, 'everything being connected' doesn't mean everything is connected equally. Furthermore, just because everything is implicated in a web of complexity, doesn't mean that we must approach every phenomenon through the fullness of this complexity. A critical skill for social enterprise practitioners is 'zooming in' and 'zooming out' – recognising that social and environmental issues are almost infinitely complex, but also recognising the impossibility of holding all this complexity at any one moment.

In a complex world where everything is interconnected, framing is a conscious act of drawing a boundary around one aspect of a system and zooming in on it. This act of framing can be tricky; it's not always immediately clear which elements of a system are most relevant or important. So in our programs, projects and research we need to 'design in' opportunities to explore, learn, iterate, and experiment so as to (over time) better understand our place within a system, and the kinds of actions that might help to shift it. Just as systems thinking involves a shift in focus from the parts to the whole, framing is making a choice about which parts to focus on, without losing sight of the larger picture and how our framed parts connect to this.

For social enterprise practitioners, framing is particularly significant. Many social enterprises are naturally focussed on big issues – poverty, inequality, climate change, waste, unemployment etc. The kind of population-level, generational change that is needed to shift these issues isn't going to be made by a single enterprise, so it's important to have a sense of which part of the problem we're focussing on, how this might relate to other parts, and what that might mean for how we engage with the overall system.

### From Simple to Wicked Problems

There are lots of different ways of categorising and defining the kinds of social and environmental problems our world is currently facing. Below is one such framework, based on the work of authors including Ritten & Webber (1973) and Zivkovic (2021). Another significant contributor to this field is David Snowden (see, for example, Snowden & Boone 2007), whose Cynefin framework distinguishes between clear, complicated, complex, and chaotic problems, and proposes ways of acting that accord with each. As with any field of knowledge, there are different approaches. The key point to hold in mind is that as the level of complexity we're dealing with changes, so should our approaches and ways of framing the problem.

- A **simple** problem is characterised as having relatively straightforward relationship between cause and effect, that is reasonably easy to identify and fix. Simple problems usually have a single cause, and the pathway to an effective solution is usually obvious.
- A **complicated** problem still has a logical and understandable relationship between cause and effect, but the problem typically has more than one cause, and in order to arrive at the best solution, some degree of expertise or training is usually needed.
- A **complex** problem has multiple contributing causes, some of which might be hard to see, and some of which might be hidden from view. Some of the causes might, themselves, be symptoms of other problems. While it is possible to study the problem and its causes in detail to develop ways forward, there is no blueprint or 'right way' to address it. Working on complex problems by their nature requires, sensing, learning, and iteration rather than deciding on one solution and implementing it.
- A **wicked** problem also has multiple causes and effects, and it is difficult to define exactly what the nature of the problem is. As with complex problems, there are too many variables to accurately map out cause-and-effect relationships. Wicked problems also involve entrenched structural factors that work to compound the problem and hamper change; these structural factors, which typically include social and public policy settings, reflect different views and perspectives about what the issue at hand really is, and how to address it. To work on wicked problems, we need entire 'solution ecosystems' (Zivkovic 2021) that increase coherence and collective action among multiple initiatives and organisations working on any of a wicked problem's causal factors.

The key thing to understand as a practitioner is that a systems perspective on social enterprise is about recognising and making sense of the types of problems we are working on, their interconnections, and what sorts of actions make sense in relation to the different types of problems we are likely to face as we design our business models. There is no 'natural' hierarchy of importance in relation to the problems we grapple with as social enterprise practitioners – it's not that 'wicked' problems are better to focus on than simple problems, it's just that there are different types of problems, that problems can be framed in different ways, and there are different methods that can be developed to address or engage with them effectively. Whatever problem domain you are working in, there is always valid, useful, and important work to be doing.

## Points of Intervention

Most social and environmental problems are in some way connected to bigger structural issues, and consequently it is beyond the power of any single individual or organisation to address them alone. Furthermore, many interventions don't get it right – dealing with wicked problems as if they were complicated ones, complexifying clear problems, or intervening in ways that compound or perpetuate issues. The question for social enterprise practitioners must be: how do we act, with the urgency that is required, without making a bigger mess of things?

One way of thinking about systems-level change is in terms of leverage points; places within systems where "a small shift in one thing can create big changes in everything" (Meadows, 1999). These places have also been described as 'sensitive

intervention points' where an intervention can trigger or amplify system-level changes (Farmer et. al. 2019), or as 'multiplying intervention points' where an intervention can amplify positive effects and value flows (Yunus Centre Griffith University 2022a). In any case, attempting systems change means considering the dynamics and relationships in a system, including our own roles, and seeking to find the places where an intervention might stimulate positive shifts and flow-on effects.

*"We can't solve a problem by ourselves – our money and our time is limited. We have to look at an issue and look for the best possible way that we can help, leverage, get others involved, and unlock resources..."* – Belinda Morrissey, CEO English Family Foundation (2022).

Building on Meadows (1999)'s work on leverage points, Drew et. al (2022) propose four ways to approach intervening in systems:

- Scaling (an) idea, and creating a sustainable business model which means it can reach more people (this is the usual route for creating impact)
- Using (an) idea to shift a policy or regulation that makes it easier or unlocks something for everyone else
- Amplifying a new or undervalued logic, mindset, or way of working, that can inspire others, for example a new power dynamic, a circular or regenerative mindset, a new way of thinking about an issue
- Making new connections between organisations, including unusual ones, and creating more interdependence, from which further ideas and innovation can emerge



***"Change happens at the speed of trust... But it can also change a lot quicker than that if there's enough understanding in the system, and enough actors in the system working towards the same goal and reaching those tipping points."***

Emma-Kate Rose, Executive Director Food Connect/ Project Manager The Next Economy (2022).

# 3 CAPABILITIES FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

From the above, the underpinning concept is that systems are about *relationships*. Nurturing the kinds of relationships that help to shift systemic challenges is going to require us to develop our skills as network participants, as interdisciplinary thinkers, and as mentors and mentees. These skills aren't necessarily new ones, but they will become increasingly important as the scope, scale, and impact of our responses to the world's wicked problems continues to grow.

## Networking for Impact

While it's clearly beyond the power of any individual organisation to solve the systemic challenges we're facing, everyone – including social enterprises, intermediaries, policymakers, and funders – can be a *part* of working towards better outcomes and shared goals, including engaging in experiments that may generate learning through which to improve practice and (potentially) impact. If we're going to move beyond piecemeal approaches based on dispersed, potentially contradictory efforts, we need to start thinking about how we harness networks and engage in more collaborative approaches to innovation.

In recent years, the social enterprise sector has begun building more formal networks at the state – and now, national – level. The Social Enterprise National Strategy (SENS) directions report (Hannant *et. al.* 2021) highlighted the potential for developing collaborative networks around particular 'impact themes' or 'challenges' which bring together a diverse range of enterprises and stakeholders to focus on a common problem. This attention to relationships has also informed the development of Social Enterprise Australia (SEA), a peak body that will focus on developing the conditions for social enterprises to thrive in Australia - including by strengthening network and learning infrastructures across the country.

**Moving Feast** is an Australian systems innovation project catalysed by the social enterprise sector to transition the food system to become fair and regenerative. Moving Feast's initial focus was to provide emergency food relief in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In Year 2, Moving Feast moved beyond pandemic food relief toward its longer-term goal of transforming the food system. Understanding that this would require an ecosystem of responses, Moving Feast has supported the formation of a holistic, relationship-based innovation food network. This 'solution ecosystem' comprises more than 50 social enterprises and community organisations, and leverages funding from more than 25 different funders (Wicked Lab 2022; Moving Feast 2022).

As an example of network organising, Moving Feast has successfully brought together stakeholders and funders with a wide variety of roles and interests in Victoria's food system – including growing food, delivering produce, preparing meals, delivering food, and supporting vulnerable people and the health of the network. The scope, scale and complexity-informed nature of the initiative means that participants – and funders – can be involved at multiple levels, from supporting a specific element of food preparation and delivery, to providing the organising infrastructure that allows the entire initiative to function.

To learn more about Moving Feast, visit <https://movingfeast.net/>.

## Interdisciplinary Mindsets

Social enterprise itself is an interdisciplinary activity, drawing upon skills and techniques typically associated with for-profit businesses to achieve the kinds of social and environmental change that have traditionally been pursued by non-profits. As the practice of social enterprise has evolved, practitioners have drawn upon insights from diverse fields including design thinking, social movement theory, and of course systems/complexity science. This interdisciplinary spirit is described by Domenico, Haugh & Tracey (2010) as a kind of social bricolage – making do with the resources that are available, improvising where necessary, resisting external constraints and limitations, creating social value, meaningfully engaging stakeholders, and persuading others to assist with acquiring new resources and support. This make-do-and-borrow approach that characterises the social enterprise sector lends itself well to the continual cycles of experimentation and learning that are critical to a systems-informed approach.

## Peer Support and Mentoring

Something it is easy to forget, as we explore the challenges of systems change is the relationships we have with each other within the social enterprise sector. It's also easy for us to forget to value this aspect of our relational work, instead prioritising a focus on big wins and 'program-level' activity. Peer support and mentoring could be one of the most important capabilities for influencing systems transitions over the coming years and decades. A question for the sector then is how do we nurture rich, ongoing relationships of peer support, mentoring, and skill-sharing between people, including those who wouldn't usually engage with each other? Doing this well could help to break down knowledge hierarchies, encourage de-siloing, and ultimately broaden and diversify involvement in and with the social enterprise sector.

## Mentoring

When thinking about systems-level change, relationships are at the core of everything. It's great to imagine our work contributing to sweeping, generational social changes, but one of the key mechanisms for this change occurring is through individuals and organisations making unexpected and generative connections. For several organisations, mentoring and peer support has emerged as one of the key methods for delivering on their vision for systems-level change.

**AIME** is an Indigenous-led global organisation that is working towards "unlocking the imagination of the human race to forge unlikely connections that lead to a different set of outcomes, a different world, a fairer world." (AIME 2022). Their work is built on the understanding that structural inequalities are maintained and reinforced when people's connections and relationships confirm their biases and concentrate wealth and resources. Their mentoring programs operational since 2005 focus on relationships as a two-way exchange between people who otherwise would be unlikely to connect and have so far led to over 25,000 Indigenous students achieving educational parity in Australia (ibid), with their global reach now spanning 52 countries. AIME's work, driven by a desire to intervene in structural disadvantage via the 'grand challenges' of Indigenous disadvantage and global educational inequity, also encompasses a media lab, fashion label, free university, and social relational network in the form a new digital nation, all based on accelerating unlikely connections and exchanges. To learn more about AIME and look at independent research on its impact visit [www.aimementoring.com/about/impact/](http://www.aimementoring.com/about/impact/).

**Wicked Lab** is a social enterprise that aims to equip social change-makers with the knowledge, tools and support to address 'wicked problems'. One of their key mechanisms for sharing knowledge is via mentoring, with participants in their learning programs being supported by experienced systems-change scholars and practitioners who assist participants to apply a systems-change lens to their projects. Wicked Lab has also developed a digital Tool for Systemic Change that several social enterprise initiatives are using to track systems-level changes and transitions (to learn more about Wicked Lab, visit [www.wickedlab.co](http://www.wickedlab.co)).

# 4 WHERE TO NEXT?

Hopefully, this paper has raised more questions than answers, and provides some food for thought for social enterprise practitioners who are interested in 'systems' approaches. Some specific domains of activity that could help accelerate the transition towards more systemic approaches in the social enterprise sector are outlined below.

## Towards Economic Alternatives

Social enterprise is often understood – including by its own champions – as a means to an end. Enterprises are set up for specific impact purposes, or to generate funds for non-profit activities that are untied to government or philanthropist requirements. At the same time, it is generally accepted that social enterprise will, at least in the medium-term, remain a footnote to the broader economic system – one that, by and large, operates in pursuit of profit, with regard for human wellbeing and environmental sustainability at best as secondary considerations. However, it is also this system – with its inequalities, structural discriminations, and short-sightedness – that is largely responsible for creating and perpetuating some of the social and environmental crises we are seeking to shift towards better futures.

Taking a systems approach to social enterprise also means thinking about the sector's place in broader systems transitions that can – and must – occur in the coming years. This means conceptualising social enterprise as part of a viable macroeconomic alternative, wherein economic activity of all types is conducted in harmony with people, place, and planet. This framing explicitly draws on related traditions that take a social-movements approach to economic organising – including Community Economies, Social and Solidarity Economies, Wellbeing Economies, Doughnut Economics, Cooperativism, and so forth. It 'lifts the gaze' and provides a lens for thinking more critically about the impact of our own enterprises and activities. If we take up the challenge to work more intentionally in a systems-thinking approach, it will provide a framework for considering what kinds of economic futures our activities and enterprises are bringing into being, and how we can work in cooperation with other sectors and social movements for a fair and regenerative economy.

## Building the Knowledge Commons

Social enterprise practitioners have a wealth of accumulated knowledge – often hard won, through trial and error. In many cases, practitioners express a desire to see their knowledge distributed to others. At the same time, long-standing collaborations between academics, universities, and social enterprises have led to a wealth of published papers about social enterprises. However, the knowledge and insights in these papers tends to be pitched to academic audiences, and many practitioners lack the time – or inclination – to read them. In both cases, the key challenge is that there is a disconnect between the information available, and the people whom it could potentially benefit most.

A challenge here is for the sector to consider how it could begin to behave as a dynamic learning system – with relational structures that facilitate learning, and the currency of trust that enables real sharing and collaboration. This type of learning and experimentation, where emerging and established enterprises can pool the sector's incredible collective intelligence, could contribute to strengthening the sector's effectiveness, and creating the potential for further innovation and impact.

## Systems Infrastructure

As every social enterprise practitioner knows, achieving change requires time, energy, and resources. Systems change is no different – to foster strong relationships, networks, and collaborations, the social enterprise sector needs to invest in building the kind of infrastructures that makes these connections easier. This includes supporting and valuing the efforts of people who are playing key roles in network-building. In this vein, work is already underway to build some of the practical and relational infrastructures needed to support a systems-change approach to social enterprise, including state-based social enterprise networks, thematic collaborations, and a proposed Challenge-led approach to the Social Enterprise National Strategy (see breakout box below) that will highlight the role the social enterprise sector can play shifting some of our most challenging social and environmental issues, through its own work and in how it works with like-minded actors from other sectors.

## Challenge-led approaches

The idea of ‘challenge-led approaches’, most recently highlighted in the work of Mariana Mazzucato, emphasises the importance of setting big-picture, ambitious missions for societal change. These Missions, or ‘Challenges’, are not just relevant for the social enterprise sector, they provide critical points of connection with other social movements and actors and increase coherence across diverse – but related – efforts.

***“A framing that shapes action around diverse ‘challenges’ could help to create a coherent political narrative, a compelling R&D agenda, a catalyst for convening civic movements, and a platform for collaborative, cross-sector innovation. This in turn could create the foundations for making the SDGs and other such ambitious goals that address our current national and international challenges at least seem more attainable. The real questions of our time are focussed not only on whether we can achieve these goals, but how we can coherently frame the immense effort required to do so in a way that helps us to believe that it is possible, and to act collaboratively at multiple levels, in diverse spaces, simultaneously in accordance with that belief.”***

(Yunus Centre Griffith University 2022b)

Despite recent progress, there are still challenges in securing investment and support for network infrastructures, particularly when in themselves they won’t generate immediate and tangible impact, but rather will underpin and strengthen relationships and cooperation across the sector. A priority for the social enterprise sector over the coming years will be to ensure that development strategies include a focus on the infrastructures that nurture relationships between enterprises, between enterprises and other stakeholders, and between the social enterprise sector and other sectors working to shift the major systemic challenges of our times.





## 5 BEGINNINGS

Ecological and human crises of increasing urgency have come to define our lives in the 21st century, and it is unsurprising that a growing number of people in the social purpose sector are seeking to understand and address the root causes of climate change, economic inequity and social disadvantage. We hope that this provocation has highlighted the role that systems thinking might play in social enterprise and entrepreneurship, and how a relational worldview can help guide us towards a more sustainable and equitable shared future. Systems thinking and complexity approaches are not the answer to all our issues, but they are a welcome antidote to the kind of thinking that got us here. Whether at an individual, enterprise, network, or sector level, we hope that the end of this piece of writing marks the beginning of many more explorations.



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