

## **Co-constructing Justice: Citizen-centered design for public service complaint systems**

### **Project Team**

Tara Ney, University of Victoria; Carol Brennan, Queen Margaret University; Chris Gill, Queen Margaret University; Michelle LeBaron, University of British Columbia

### **Overview**

Dispute Systems Design (DSD) involves the creation of processes and systems to deal with repeated or systemic disputes. This project focuses on public service complaint systems that inhabit a crucial and constitutionally significant space within public service organizations and administration. We are specifically concerned with how individual citizens' (consumer) grievances and demands for human-centered public services can be better channeled to the ears of those in power, so that public organizations may effectively adapt and serve user needs.

Involving citizens in the design of public complaints policies and services has long been established as a key principle in the DSD literature. However, recent challenges facing complaint systems suggest that complaint systems are not necessarily doing what they are intended to do, and that policymakers and practitioners may struggle to find meaningful and effective strategies to include citizen voice in DSD. To make the justice journey more manageable and accessible for users, this project asks: *How can citizen voice be brought more prominently into the design and delivery of 21<sup>st</sup> century public service complaint systems?*

The proposed workshop will convene European and North American scholars, practitioners, policy experts, and consumer advocates who have collective expertise in the here-to-forth distinct disciplines of 1) DSD and, 2) user-centered design strategies such as Human Centered Design (HCD), "design thinking", and service co-creation. To date, European and North American scholarship on DSD has developed separately though in parallel, ensuring that the potential for comparative learning and insights have not been fully realized. As well, the evolving work in HCD has not yet been incorporated into the DSD field. Our goal, therefore, is to convene interdisciplinary scholars and practitioners from different disciplines and national jurisdictions to develop a critical, theoretical basis for citizen involvement in DSD and, at the same time, to produce practical guidance for Canadian public service complaint-practitioners and policymakers.

**Day 1** (Sept 11) will begin with roundtable discussions with invited participants on designing complaint systems. Invited Workshop Participants will include European and North American scholars from the fields of law, socio-legal studies, history, consumer policy, and public administration.

The morning session will review Complaint Systems and Analytic Frameworks from North American and British jurisdictions, while the afternoon panel will highlight Innovations in Complaint Systems. Day 1 and Day 3 workshops will include in-depth critical discussions, case studies, and experiential learning to examine the current state of DSD internationally, and how to ensure DSD work addresses user needs.

**Day 2** (Sept 12) will consist of two three-hour workshops, as well as an early evening Keynote.

The morning workshop, *Transforming Complaints Systems by Design* (9am-12 pm, September 12), will be open to School of Public Administration graduate students as well as Roundtable participants. This workshop will be an experiential learning opportunity introducing participants to key Design Thinking concepts and activities that may have relevance to designing complaints systems.

The afternoon session (1-4pm September 12), *Public Service Complaint Systems in Europe, the United States and Canada: Trends and Innovations in Research, Training, and Practice* will hone on the comparisons of DSD work in three international jurisdictions. There will be five brief presentations, each followed by interactive discussions. The focus here is on practice and innovations in complaints systems. In addition to Roundtable participants, invitations will be extended to public sector workers in local government as well as the BC Ombuds Office.

The Keynote speaker ([Jesper Christiansen](#), NESTA) (5-7 pm) will speak on *Transforming Public Service by Design*.

**Day 3** (Sept 13) will consist of two half-day workshops with roundtable participants that continues the discussion and development of Day 1, on designing complaint systems, and integrating practical and experiential learnings from the Day 2 workshops. The two workshops are: Considerations for Human-Centered Complaint Systems (morning) and Consolidation of Theory and Practice (afternoon).

The Events will result in an edited compendium and a separate academic paper, and a web page for academics, public service policy makers, and practitioners to access resources (e.g. compendium, DSD Toolkit, webcasts) and training announcements.

## Event Schedule

**September 11 (DAY 1)**                      **Designing Complaint Systems  
ROUNDTABLE**

**Faculty Club, University of Victoria**

9:00 am                      **Introduction and Orientation** [Tara Ney](#) (University of Victoria)

9:30am-12:30 pm **Panel 1 Complaint Systems and Analytic Frameworks**

[Chris Gil](#) (Glasgow University)

“DSD analytic frameworks and challenges: A European perspective”

[Aaron Leakey](#) (BC Ministry of Justice)

“The status of complaint systems in BC local government”

[Lisa Amsler](#) (Indiana University) (by Video Conference)

“DSD analytic frameworks and challenges: An American perspective”

**Discussant:** [Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly](#) (University of Victoria)

12:30 pm –1:30pm LUNCH (provided)

1:30 pm-4:30 pm **Panel 2 Innovations for Complaint Systems**

[Carol Brennan](#) (Queen Margaret University)

“Consumer focus in DSD in the UK”

[Mariana H.C. Gonstead](#) (University of St Thomas)

“New frontiers DSD: innovations and challenges”

[Jane Williams](#) (Queen Margaret University)

“Supporting public service employees in the design and delivery of effective complaint systems”

**Discussant:** [Richard Simmons](#) (Stirling University, UK)

4:30 – 6:30pm **Reception – Faculty Club**

**September 12 (DAY 2) Open Workshops** (Union Club, 805 Gordon St, Victoria, BC V8W 1Z6)

9am-12pm **Transforming Public Service by Design TRAINING WORKSHOP**  
– Trainers: Jesper Christiansen ([NESTA](#) UK) and [Irene Guglielmi](#) (BC Public Service)

A half-day workshop for public service employees interested in how to use Service Design in their organization. Participants attending for morning only.

LUNCH

1-4pm

*Public Service Complaint Systems in Europe, the United States and Canada: Trends and Innovations in Research, Training, and Practice*

Complaint System Practices WORKSHOP – Workshop Leaders:, Carol Brennan (Queen Margaret University), Jane Williams (Queen Margaret University), Chris Gill (Glasgow University); Dave Murray and Rachel Warren (BC Ombudsman Office); Darin Thompson & David Merner (Attorney General, BC Government), and Michael Litchfield (Facilitator, University of Victoria)

A half-day workshop for public sector employees to advance understandings of issues and innovations in designing complaint systems.

4:30-6:30 **Transforming Public Service by Design (Legacy Art Gallery)**

**Keynote:** [Jesper Christiansen](#) (NESTA, UK)  
“Transforming public service by design”

**Panel Discussants:**

- Irene Guglielmi (Director, Strategic Business Transformation, BC Government Communications & Public Engagement)
- Heather Devine (Behavioural Innovations, B.C. Public Service Agency)
- Evert Linqisdt (Professor, School of Public Administration)

**Community Participants:**

**September 13 (DAY 3)**

**Designing Complaint Systems (con’t)**  
ROUNDTABLE (Invitees only)

**Oak Bay Beach Hotel**

9am – 12pm

**Panel 3 Designing Human-Centered Complaint Systems**

**Learnings from Day 2 – integrate into session**

[Michelle LeBaron](#) (UBC)

“Culture, creativity, and DSD”

[Jennifer Llewellyn](#), Dalhousie University (by Video)  
“Redress innovations in DSD”

[Richard Simmons](#) (Stirling University)  
“The challenges of human-centered complaints systems”

**Discussant:** Chris Gil (Glasgow University)

12pm – 1pm

**LUNCH**

1 pm - 3 pm

**Panel 3 Consolidation of Theory and Practice**

Jesper Christiansen (NESTA, UK)  
“What can Design Thinking bring to DSD work?”

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly (University of Victoria)  
“Critical issues in DSD”

**Discussant:** Carol Brennan (Queen Margarets University)

3- 4 pm

Where to go from here?

---



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

**Canada**