

# PUBLIC AND COLLABORATIVE

EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF DESIGN,  
SOCIAL INNOVATION AND PUBLIC POLICY

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**DESI  
NETWORK**

**PUBLIC & COLLABORATIVE  
EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF  
DESIGN, SOCIAL INNOVATION AND  
PUBLIC POLICY**

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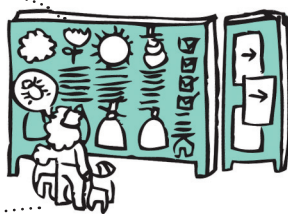
Christian Bason



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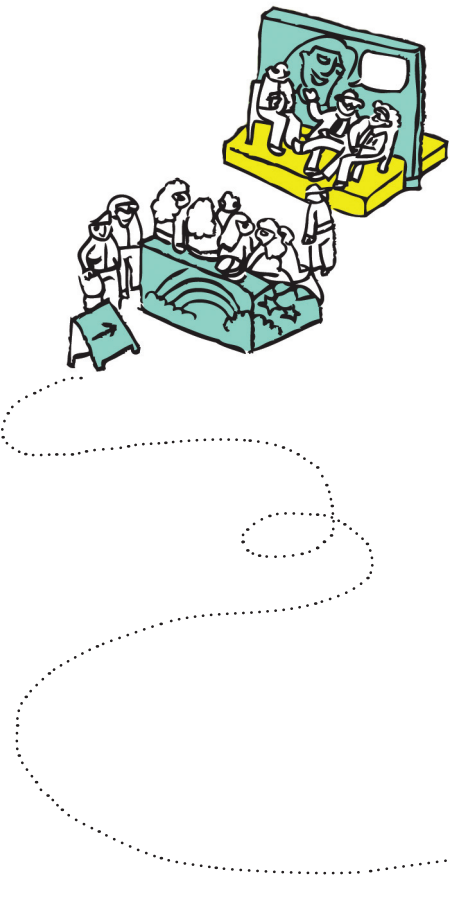
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# INTRODUCTION

Ezio Manzini and Eduardo Staszowski

## RESEARCH NOTES

**1. An interesting phenomenon is emerging worldwide: more and more people are organizing to solve daily problems together and are collaborating with each other to live more socially cohesive and sustainable lives.** This active and collaborative attitude, driven by several social and economic factors, is also based on a technological pre-condition: the diffusion of technologies that creates the conditions for new interactions and expands people's social networks. This connectivity enables people to establish direct links between interested peers and opens new opportunities for meaningful activism and effective collaborations. In turn, this link between active behaviors and new technologies is spurring unprecedented forms of organization in the arenas of economics, politics, and daily life. In brief, a large and deep wave of social innovations is emerging.

**2. When they occur, these everyday social innovations are fragile and highly localized entities.** To endure and diffuse beyond local communities, they must be recognized and supported. In other words, they would benefit from public actions that would facilitate peer-to-peer collaborations. The result would be a new generation of public services: collaborative services where end users become service co-producers. As a benefit, promising social innovations could then become powerful and positive drivers of public innovation.

**3. In the face of current economic and social challenges, many agree that the relationship between people and the public sector in general and public services in particular should be radically reshaped.** Of course, there is no one simple strategy to do this. But it appears clearer and clearer that to move in this direction a promising strategy could be based on the opportunities opened by these collaborations, the creative use of existing technologies, and the brand new organizations they make possible.

**4. In short, current societal challenges are creating pressure for the public sector to increase effectiveness and deliver better services.** Greater public collaboration offers two promising paths for public service improvements:

The first could be called a *people-centered* approach—more intensive involvement of end-users in research, prototyping, testing, and implementation of services to be delivered by public agencies.

The second strategy may be called *people-led* services—engagement of agencies and citizens in a co-production process, whereby users design and implement their own service programs, enabled and supported by public agencies.

**5. In this context three main questions arise:** *How can emerging social networks influence the development of public services and innovation policies? How can innovation policies trigger, empower, and direct emerging social networks? What can design do to make these promising connections more effective and fruitful?* These same questions provided the starting point for the “Public & Collaborative Thematic Cluster,” a design research initiative started in October 2011 and promoted by DESIS Network, the international network of design labs committed to promoting design for social innovation and sustainability. (See also Box 1, DESIS Thematic Clusters, and Box 2, “Public & Collaborative Thematic Cluster.”)

## DESIGN SCHOOLS AND THE PUBLIC REALM

### **1. Design schools can act as drivers for the diffusion of design for social innovations.**

In other words, design schools (and, more generally, design-oriented universities) can become places where new visions are generated, new tools are defined and tested, and new projects are started and supported. If a worldwide movement towards sustainability calls for the best possible use of all existing resources, design schools, with all their social capital in terms of students' enthusiasm and faculty experience, should be considered a very promising social resource and a promoter of sustainable change.

- **Opportunities:** design schools can bring fresh ideas into the social conversation, have the tools to build prototypes, and, most importantly, have the freedom to ask questions and think critically.
- **Limitations:** when students are involved there are problems of timing (i.e., academic calendar) and maturity. While some activities can be accomplished very well by students, others are very difficult if not impossible.

**2. The DESIS network and the DESIS Labs in particular—the teams of faculty, researchers, and students who orient their teaching and research activities towards social innovation and sustainability—**offer extraordinary possibilities to bring into the social conversation fresh ideas and **visions**, to develop original research projects, to realize working prototypes, to define special tools, and, most importantly, to elaborate critical thoughts.

## OPEN QUESTIONS

This book documents and presents some reflections on efforts of DESIS Labs in Europe, Canada, and the United States that are participating in the “Public & Collaborative Thematic Cluster.” Here, in the spirit of open-ended discussion characteristic of the DESIS Thematic Clusters, we would like to conclude this introduction with several observations presented in the form of three questions.

### **Open Question #1: How do public agencies change when people are not considered a problem but instead part of the solution?**

DESIS Labs in Europe, Canada, and the United States learned how complicated it can be to openly discuss the role of the state in people's lives and the sensitivity of

proposing new partnership models between governments and a number of different actors to effect social change in the public realm. These are politically loaded issues, causing concern among policymakers and skepticism among the public.

Reflecting on different experiences, while trying to discuss and promote service co-production ideas, the labs realized that the challenge is not only to learn how to empower the public in order to transform public services, but also how to empower public agencies and civil servants. Thus, we would like to start this conversation by reframing our initial “Public & Collaborative” question in this way: How do public agencies change when people are considered part of the solution—i.e., when people become main actors in the process of conceiving and delivering public services?

In the current stage of our cluster’s activities this question appears to be more and more important. Several public sector partners involved in different projects and cities considered the “Public & Collaborative” principle on which this question is based as a promising direction for highly needed innovations in the public sector. However, this approach appears to be politically infeasible or difficult to implement in some contexts, especially when the burden is on public agencies to take the lead (i.e., when they are required to do more than react to the demands of strong bottom-up initiatives) or when proposals do not fall directly within the agency’s mandate.

Nevertheless when discussing social innovations and institutional change in the public sector, the political dimension of these themes emerges with great controversy. In fact, when it is suggested that supplementing conventional public services with collaborative co-produced services, these proposals can easily become,

### BOX 1: DESIS THEMATIC CLUSTERS

*Thematic Clusters are groups of design teams, based in different DESIS Labs, that are working on similar topics. Their aim is to build arenas for discussing ongoing projects, comparing tools and results, and provide a site where new joint initiatives can be started.*

Thematic Clusters are initiatives of the DESIS Network which aim to create focused design research environments where specific *design knowledge* is produced and accumulated, where—in relation to a given design theme—a common language is built, a set of conceptual and practical tools created, and scenarios and solutions developed. A Thematic Cluster emerges from *ongoing activities*, thanks to the initiative of the *DESIS Labs* who, recognizing their common or converging interests, decide to align ongoing activities, establish a coordinated program of events, and, when possible, start up future joint activities.



or at least be interpreted as, ways to reduce the role of public agencies rather than ways, as our work suggests, to change their nature. We propose to change public agencies' responsibility or commitment to the public. To change public agencies' nature means to shift their role from one chiefly of service providers towards one chiefly of people's active partners (i.e., agencies capable of supporting and, if needed, triggering and orienting people's collaborative participation).

## **“To change public agencies' nature means to shift their role from one chiefly of service providers towards one chiefly of people's active partners”**

### **Open Question #2: Social innovation can trigger public sector innovations. Is the opposite possible too?**

When a particularly strong grassroots initiative appears and, in its early stages, asks for the support of public agencies, it may attract support from agencies capable of understanding and acting on this request. As an example, we can refer to the Community Gardens in New York City where the Parks Department created the Green Thumb program to provide technical, material, and financial support to community gardeners.

In order to leverage the energy generated by similar initiatives to promote innovations in public services and policies, we suggest that public agencies could respond in several ways: (1) recognize the value created by these promising grassroots initiatives, (2) listen to their explicit or implicit requests, and, consequently, (3) decide what to do (and do it) in collaboration with them. Of course, every case is different and this capacity to listen, recognize, understand, and collaborate needs to be cultivated. Nevertheless, the labs found that in many public agencies there are often several enthusiastic civil servants who, if presented with the opportunity, are happy to rethink the way public services are delivered.

### **Open Question #3: Should we create experimental spaces where conceiving and prototyping new solutions would be easier?**

On the basis of the experiments done to date and the discussions we had around several public lectures promoted by the cluster, we suggest that to embrace the “Public & Collaborative” approach—i.e., to promote co-created and co-produced solutions—public agencies could (directly or indirectly) create “testing environments,” or spaces where these new proposals can be tested.



In fact, this proposed new role of public agencies asks for a systemic transformation that cannot be accomplished in the normal conditions of their daily business. In order to make it possible (at least in the early phase of this transformation), an extraordinary environment has to be created: an experimental space where different actors, civil servants included, can meet, interact, discuss different possibilities, and develop prototypes to test them.

## BOX 2: “PUBLIC & COLLABORATIVE THEMATIC CLUSTER”

**1. The “Public & Collaborative Thematic Cluster” developed from the empirical observation** that several design schools and DESIS Labs in Europe, Canada, and the United States were already doing research on public services and public realm-related topics and that it would be possible--and advantageous--to connect them and create the first DESIS Thematic Cluster. Their research topics included affordable housing social integration, neighborhood improvement, healthcare and, more generally, public sector innovation policies.

**2. The cluster includes the following design schools and DESIS Labs:** Parsons The New School for Design, New York (coordinator); Politecnico di Milano School of design, Milan (coordinator); Aalto University, Helsinki; Designmatters at Art Center College of Design, Pasadena; Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh; Central Saint Martins, London; ENSCI, Paris; Institute without Borders, George Brown College, Toronto; La Cambre, Brussels; Mad Faculty, Campus Genk, Genk; Malmö University, Malmö. These DESIS Labs worked in partnership with several local organizations and with the endorsement of MindLab, la 27me Region, Fondazione Housing Sociale, ENOLL-European Network of Living Labs; SIX-Social Innovation Exchange and Reciprocity.

**3. These labs converged on three main hypotheses:**

- The current economic and social challenges have resulted in a crisis of public sector organizations' ability to effectively provide various forms of public service.
- Social innovations and, in particular, people's emerging active and collaborative attitude can be among the most promising drivers of change of public services.
- Design-led innovation and practices, such as co-governance, co-design, or co-production where citizens, experts, and governments can work closely to provide better public services, hold a disruptive potential for public sector organizations, but the role designers will have in this context is still open for exploration and experimentation.

4. The efforts of the “Public & Collaborative Thematic Cluster” during the 2012-2013 period included:

- connecting and comparing their ongoing research activities
- sharing pedagogical tools and resources
- promoting public lectures

The outcomes and results of these activities are available on the cluster website: <http://www.desis-clusters.org>.

5. In October 2012 a public seminar was organized in partnership with Reciprocity in Liège, Belgium, where various DESIS Labs discussed their interactions with local partners and shared processes and results. Now, in June 2013, the “Public & Collaborative Thematic Cluster” program is still in progress, but some initial outcomes are already evident and are presented in this booklet. The chapters include reviewed and updated versions of the papers discussed in Liège.

On the basis of the experiences to date some challenges and opportunities have been identified. At the end of their articles, each author offers specific recommendations for designers, educators, civil servants, and policymakers.

This idea is based on the DESIS Labs' experiments, but also, and more importantly, on phenomenological observations. Looking at worldwide efforts of active organizations trying to promote radical innovations in the public sector, we can observe that they have built, or are debating how to build, the types of environments that foster experiments. They may have different names in Europe, Canada, and the United States (Living Lab, Fab Lab, Change Lab, Innovation Lab), but they share common characteristics: they are experimental sites where active and collaborative people (i.e., grassroots groups and social innovators) can meet other interested actors (i.e., public agencies, planners, designers, investors, etc.) and work together towards innovative solutions to public problems.

The experiments that these spaces facilitate open two symmetrical opportunities. One is the possibility for bottom-up social innovations to move faster in their trajectory from the first 'heroic' stage (when social inventions are still prototypes) to the following stages when more mature enterprises are created and, if necessary, when enabling products and services are conceived and enhanced. The other opportunity is for public agencies to meet with people and other organizations and experiment together with new policies and governance tools. Most importantly, this possibility exists because these are places where, as François Jégou said in his public lecture at Parsons (spring 2012), there is the "right to fail."

Summarizing, in these experimental spaces it is possible to trigger and support positive loops between bottom-up initiatives and public agencies' innovations and, therefore, to promote the complex systemic innovations that today are critically needed.



# FOREWORD

This book maps the DESIS Labs' efforts to date and their degrees of success. It includes 11 articles that present from a critical perspective the labs' projects and activities during the 2012-2013 period. In our attempt as editors to organize these very unique experiences and contributions, four key topics emerged as particularly compelling and established the structure for the book:

**1. Designing New Relationships Between People and the State:** *Peer-Production in Public Services? Emerging Themes for Design Research and Action*, by Andrea Botero, Joanna Saad-Sulonen (Finland); *Service Design for Intercultural Dialog: Making a Step Forward Towards a Multicultural Society*, by Margherita Pillan, Irina Suteu (Italy); *Reflections on Designing for Social Innovation in the Public Sector: A Case Study in New York City*, by Eduardo Staszowski, Scott Brown, Benjamin Winter (US).

**2. Design Schools as Agents of Change:** *Seven Reflections on Design for Social Innovation, Students & a Neighbourhood*, by Nik Baerten (Belgium); *Learning Together: Students and Community Groups Co-designing for Carbon Reduction in London Borough of Camden*, by Adam Thorpe, Lorraine Gamman (UK).

**3. Experimental Places for Social and Public Innovation:** *Participatory Design for Social and Public Innovation: Living Labs as Spaces of Agonistic Experiments and Friendly Hacking*, by Per-Anders Hillgren (Sweden); *Experimenting Towards a Partner State: Public Innovation Places as Places of Exception*, by Virginia Tassinari (Belgium); *Innovation without Boundaries: Ecology of Innovation and Municipal Service Design*, by Luigi Ferrara, Magdalena Sabat (Canada and Ireland).

**4. Collaborative Design Methods and Tools: The Teen Art Park Project:** *Participatory Design Tools for Envisioning Public Spaces for Artistic Expression*, by Mariana Amatullo (US); *Acupuncture Planning by Design*, by François Jégou, Clara Delétraz, Giovanna Massoni, Jean-Baptiste Roussat, Marie Coirié (France and Belgium); *Physicians as Co-designers: Changing the Practice of Care*, by Kristin Hughes, Peter Scupelli (US).

The book opens with Christian Bason's paper, *Discovering Co-production by Design*. In this paper Bason, Director of Denmark's MindLab, proposes a broad view of how design is entering the public realm and the policymaking processes. His essay offers updated and stimulating context for the entire book.

**Note:** this book is the result of a collaborative endeavor and produced with minimum resources. For that reason a simple set of guidelines was provided for each author on how to submit their articles. Unfortunately, professional copyediting and proofreading of each article was not possible. The authors made their best efforts to provide their texts in clear English. All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in the articles are those of the respective authors.

## DESIS NETWORK

DESIS is an international network of design schools and organizations focused on design for social innovation and sustainability, in which research labs based in different cities are developing parallel projects at the intersection of public services, social innovation, and design.

# DISCOVERING CO-PRODUCTION BY DESIGN

Christian Bason

## ABSTRACT

CO-DESIGN // CO-PRODUCTION // PUBLIC MANAGEMENT // COLLABORATION // CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

*Over the past decade design has increasingly been viewed by private firms as an approach that is central to innovation. This is also the case in public sector organizations. Although still in its early phases, terms such as design thinking, service design, co-design, human centered design and strategic design – which signify more collaborative approaches to design practice – are gaining prevalence in a growing number of countries, and at all levels of the public sector.*

*This article explores how such design methods, including user research and involvement, ideation, prototyping and experimentation, are experienced and used by public managers. As public managers utilize design processes in their quest for more innovative policies and services, what models for public service provision arise as a result? The article argues that design-led innovation processes appear to lead to more co-productive approaches to public service provision, which build on the motivation and resources of both end-users and other key stakeholders. By using design, public managers are enabled to shift their organizations towards a more networked and inclusive model of governance and service provision. If that is indeed the case, design-led innovation holds a radical and disruptive potential for public sector organizations, which may lead to better outcomes at less cost.*

### PROJECT TITLE:

Discovering Co-production by Design

### UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:

Copenhagen Business School

### CITY/COUNTRY:

Copenhagen, Denmark

### MAIN PARTNERS:

Oxford University,  
Stanford University,  
Case Western University

### SERVICE AREA:

Public design

### PROJECT WEBSITE/BLOG:

[www.mind-lab.dk/en](http://www.mind-lab.dk/en)

### PROJECT LEADERSHIP:

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Public managers are under almost unprecedented pressure to deliver more value while reigning in cost. From Europe to the UK and the US, austerity measures have been put in place which leave no doubt that governments will be severely cash-strapped for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, “wicked” societal challenges abound, spanning from youth unemployment, chronic healthcare issues such as diabetes, and to new patterns of globalization, immigration and social differentiation. All this requires smarter solutions in increasingly turbulent, complex and interdependent societal and human settings<sup>1</sup>.

This growth in both turbulence and complexity has been associated, perhaps coincidentally, by an increasingly systematic exploration of what design can do for government. We appear to be seeing a period of rapid experimentation, often framed in the context of new forms of citizen involvement: “Citizen engagement aims at opening up new avenues for empowering citizens to play an active role in service design, service delivery and, perhaps most importantly, the ongoing process of service innovation”<sup>2</sup>. Public sector organizations in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, France, Denmark, the UK, Canada and the United States have to varying degrees and in different forms taken up such design approaches as a tool to drive innovation and change. Just within the past year, several of these governments have even set up their own Innovation Labs and Design Centres. The application of design in the public sector is none the less still highly emergent and points to the flexibility, if not the indeterminacy of design, so that “much confusion surrounds design practice”<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.1 Design as an emerging field

As the late Herbert Simon proposed already in the 1960s, design can be understood as the human endeavor of converting actual into preferred situations.<sup>4</sup> Richard Buchanan argues that design can be thought of as *a liberal art of technological culture*. In this definition, design is viewed as an integrative, supple discipline, “amenable to radically

different interpretations in philosophy as well as in practice”.<sup>5</sup> Current developments in design certainly seem to indicate that design has not one, but many shapes. According to Buchanan, design affects contemporary life in at least four areas: Symbolic and visual *communication*, the design of material objects (*construction*), design of activities and organized services (*strategic planning*), and finally the design of complex systems or environments for living, working, playing and learning (*systemic integration*).

**“Current developments in design certainly seem to indicate that design has not one, but many shapes.”**

It is Buchanan’s latter, service- and strategy-oriented application of design that are of main interest in this article. Elizabeth Sanders and Jan Pieter Stappers<sup>6</sup> argue that design as a discipline is indeed undergoing a significant transformation, which places it more squarely at the heart of an organisation’s ability to create new valuable solutions. Disciplines such as service design, which focuses on (re)designing service processes, or experience design, which focuses on designing a particular user experience, are in rapid growth. Similarly, there is a growing interest of design for ‘social good’, which in part is captured by the movement of social entrepreneurship and social innovation<sup>7</sup>, and in part by the growing interest in innovation within the public sector itself.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.2 Design in public management

On the one hand, public administrations are intended as stable and reliable vehicles for expressing the values and preferences of citizens and communities. On the other hand, however, “high-level government executives are pre-occupied with maintaining their agencies in a complex, conflict-ridden, and unpredictable political environment (...)”<sup>9</sup> Thus public

1 Rittel & Weber, 1973; Ritchey, 2011

2 Bourgon, 2008

3 Heskett, 2002:2

4 Simon, 1969

5 Buchanan, 1990:18

6 2008

7 Mulgan et al., 2006; Murray et al., 2009; Ellis, 2010

8 Mulgan & Albury, 2003; Eggers & O’Leary, 2009; Bason, 2010, Boyer et al. 2011

9 Wilson, 1989

organizations must strike a balance between stability and dynamism, between managing the status quo and creating new futures. Given the current environment, the main challenge for public managers may very well be the latter. But creating new and better solutions pose new demands. In my own most recent book I argue that there are a range of barriers to innovation in government at numerous levels: The political context (which means that objectives are usually politically given and prone to significant change outside of the public manager's control); the lack of regular market competition and multiple 'bottom lines', making it difficult to measure and assess success or failure; limited ability to make and shape long-term strategy; hierarchical and bureaucratic organisational structures; limited and often inefficient leveraging of new information technology; and (too) homogenous a composition of managers and staff, just to name a few.<sup>10</sup>

## **“Lawyers, economists and political scientists are expert analysts but less comfortable with more “designerly”, interpretive thinking styles.”**

Introducing design – and, more generally, the concept of innovation – to the public sector thus constitutes a challenge. Lawyers, economists and political scientists are expert analysts but less comfortable with more “*designerly*”, interpretive thinking styles. Emotion and intuition is hardly recognised as a basis for decision-making. None the less, as Henry Mintzberg<sup>11</sup> has pointedly argued, ‘judgement’ is, at the end of the day, what managers have to rely on, since the traditional notion of decision-making as the process of choosing between a given set of alternatives is increasingly untenable.<sup>12</sup> Public bureaucracies may have to alter how they deal with the notions surrounding traditional ‘economic man’ theories of decision-making, which

prescribe a logical sequence of intelligence (research or data), design (plan) and choice (decision among a fixed set of alternatives) – in that order. There seems to be a contribution to be made by exploring how design approaches are applied in public sector organisations, and what it means.

## **2. TOWARDS CO-PRODUCTION AS GOVERNANCE MODEL?**

This article explores a potential shift in the underlying governance model of many public services, from a model that is largely designed around the *delivery of services to people*, towards a model that is designed to better enable *co-production of services with people*.

### **2.1 Aligning the public sector with the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The wider context can be viewed as a shift from a classic ‘bureaucratic’ model over ‘new public management’ to what has more recently been termed ‘networked governance’.<sup>13</sup> However, as Bourgon<sup>14</sup> points out, in spite of the emergence of new articulations of what governance is or could be “Public sector organisations are not yet aligned in theory and in practice with the new global context or with the problems they have for their mission to solve”.

The point of departure for this article therefore is that there are several alternative paradigms in which to view and interpret models of public governance. How might the design approaches influence public managers’ ability to identify models that are better suited to their mission (or indeed, drive change in that mission itself) in order to produce more value for the public service system and for end-users?

This article is not about theory-testing, but about theory-building; however, in order to put the research focus into context, I will briefly consider what might characterise such a new model, or paradigm of public governance, which is related to Hartley’s notion of networked governance as a model where citizens become co-producers.<sup>15</sup> As Aalto University’s Andrea Botero states in a recent publication on peer-to-peer production of public services, “There are changes taking place in how the role of citizens in society is

<sup>10</sup> Bason (2010). See also Osborne and Brown, 2005 and van Wart, 2008

<sup>11</sup> 1990

<sup>12</sup> Boland & Collopy, 1994

<sup>13</sup> Hartley, 2005

<sup>14</sup> 2008:390

<sup>15</sup> Hartley, 2005

experienced – in terms of how they feel responsible for things happening – and also in what is expected from them.”<sup>16</sup> If this is truly an emerging trend, could design have something to do with it, or even amplify it?

## 2.2 Defining co-production

Peer-to-peer production, or co-production, is by no means a new concept. In fact, the term was originally coined in the early 1970s by Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom. She developed the term to describe the “relationship that could exist between the ‘regular producer’ (such as street-level police officers, social workers or health workers) and their clients, who wanted to be transformed by the service into safer, better-educated or healthier persons.”<sup>17</sup> Over the last couple of decades, various more elaborate definitions of co-production have been offered. Dr. Edgar Cahn defines co-production as a framework and set of techniques used by social service organizations to enlist active client participation in service programming.<sup>18</sup> Boyle and Harris describe co-production as “delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbors. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighborhoods become far more effective agents of change.”<sup>19</sup>

What might be driving this renewed interest in co-production is the depth of the economic crisis governments currently find themselves in, and thereby the need to identify different, better and (not least) cheaper ways of getting things done. Co-production promises this by leveraging other resources than those of the public sector. I explore this as “the growth of new and different ways to involve users of social services as co-producers of their own and others’ services.”<sup>20</sup>

## 3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This article builds on a qualitative study of individual public managers who have had key responsibility for, or the opportunity of, utilising design to address

certain problems, opportunities or to create one or more new solutions or actions within public policies or services. Methodologically I take inspiration from the grounded theory approach to qualitative research.<sup>21</sup> This implies amongst other things a focus on exploration, discovery, qualitative and idiographic research, empathy, judgement, social action and interaction, meanings, cognition, emotion, closeness to the empirical material and successive induction.<sup>22</sup>

The criterion for choosing a manager for interview has been that some combination of design approaches have been applied, usually labelled explicitly as “service design”, “co-design”, “co-creation” or “strategic design”. The research strategy has been to let the

**“The research strategy has been to let the analytical process drive data collection, which fits well with the highly emergent nature of this field of study.”**

analytical process drive data collection, which fits well with the highly emergent nature of this field of study. The target population – public managers – stem from both large and small organizations, from national government, from local (city) level and from institutions. They are from Denmark, Finland, the United Kingdom, the USA and Australia, covering eleven managers. The interviews have been largely open, following a loosely structured interview guide which as its main component asks the open question: *“Please share your own story of how the design project(s) unfolded, and how this made a difference to you as a manager, if at all.”*

This article builds on three particular stories from public managers, which are in line with the broader patterns in the interview material, and which give some more vivid illustrations of key aspects of design-led innovation and co-production.

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<sup>16</sup> Botero et. al., 2012, p. 6

<sup>17</sup> Pestoff, 2012, p. 16

<sup>18</sup> Cahn, 2004

<sup>19</sup> 2009:11

<sup>20</sup> Pestoff, 2012, p. 15

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<sup>21</sup> Corbin & Strauss, 2008

<sup>22</sup> Alvesson & Skjoldberg, 2000

## 4. REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH CITIZENS

Christina Pawsø is a social worker and manager of *Camillagaarden*, an institution in the city of Odense in Denmark which provides a sheltered working environment for adult mentally disabled persons. In reflecting on the current relationship between government organizations and citizens, Pawsø says that in her experience, it is designed around top down decision-making and implementation. Citizens, and in particular “vulnerable” people such as adults with a mental disability, are often perceived, and cast, as passive recipients of public services.

*There is [an image of] a staircase that goes up a hill with tiles, and it is very well constructed. ... And then beside the fine staircase there is a muddy path that people walk by. And it was a bit like what happened here. ... it is a really good picture of how our users actually went by a different path than the one we wanted them to walk on. And so, instead of trying to get them forced onto our path, we will have to follow them. It worked well for us to have that picture.*

Using the metaphor of the staircase versus the muddy path, Christina Pawsø explains how public employees and professionals have knowledge about how to operate in the system (bureaucracy, hierarchy, paperwork, procedures, ‘helping’), while citizens have knowledge about what motivates and engages them in their everyday life context (relationships, experiences, meaningfulness). Pawsø points out that both sides of this equation have their own knowledge – but it is a knowledge that isn’t necessarily being shared.

At Camillagaarden, this used to be the case even though the manager and staff work very closely with the users. Services were organized around one-way communication that missed out on feedback loops and that did not appreciate the potential in the everyday interactions between staff and citizens. In this respect



it perpetuated a relationship that was inefficient. In Pawsø’s words, the staff attitude was roughly “We come [to work] and we must pass the time until we go home”. The key challenge faced by Christina Pawsø, who stepped in as a young new manager, was how to change such an attitude, to create a more fruitful relationship between staff and users, and generate better outcomes.

### 4.1 A different dialogue

Starting in 2008, Christina Pawsø and her colleagues hired a professional design team to facilitate a different kind of dialogue between management, staff and the citizen-users. In a joint project with Local Government Denmark (an interest organization for municipalities) and the service design firm ‘1508’, the managers and staff at Camillagaarden were trained to apply design approaches such as cultural probes, photo diaries, prototypes, service analogies, testing and ideation to explore new ways of involving and engaging citizens. Through the year-long use of design in Camillagaarden, Christina Pawsø and her staff began to build a different kind of relationship with the users. The highly interactive methods allowed citizens to visually articulate their hopes, dreams, aspirations and concrete personal stories about what a good experience at Camillagaarden was about, and how it could be made better. The staff built on these inputs to fundamentally redefine their professional role from experts to coaches and facilitators. According to Pawsø, this reflected a realization that “we are no more experts at something than they are”.

The citizens are now actively involved as innovators, coming up with new ideas every day, and driving the formation of various interest groups that pursue the activities and services they find the most fun and rewarding. User satisfaction and everyday engagement has skyrocketed and the number of users has gone up by nearly 30 percent (without additional staffing), to the point that the institution now has a waiting list for the first time in its 40-year history.

The shift has thus been towards a much more reciprocal, mutual relationship where staff sees its role as a collaborative one. The everyday work is about shaping outcomes, such as quality of life, in real-time. An example of how this changed relationship works in practice at Camillagaarden concerns a group of citizen-users who once were thought of as a disruption, or

trouble makers. They were labelled by staff as the 'corridor runners,' because they preferred to spend time roving around the corridors and hallways of the institution, rather than engage in activities with the other users. As part of the design process, this group was also involved, and the engagement challenged the staff to re-think how to make group sessions more interesting for everyone. Pawsø says of the 'corridor runners': "They did not bother to be in the groups, because it was boring, so they ran out in the corridors. This was always the case for maybe 20% of the users. But where we previously had said, how do we get them to stay in the group, now we think, 'well what is it that is so exciting out in the corridor? We managed to turn the perspective in that way." As a consequence, Camillagaarden now has no corridor runners, but rather a broader range of activities, including physical activities which appeal to those who are too restless to work on hand crafts all day.

## 4.2 Shifting the relationship

In their 1994 book *Designing Interactive Strategy*, Normann & Ramirez argue that there are three types of relationships in systems of value-creating actors – such as the system of an institution for adult mentally handicapped, or one for dealing with families at risk, or a school: 'Pooled relationships', in which each part of a system comes together to form a whole; 'Sequential relationships' where sections of an organizational system produce outputs to a sequential process; and finally 'reciprocal' relationships, which are the most complex and which in reality characterize most service-producing organizations.

It seems reasonable to argue that the changes in the perception of the relationship between end users (adult mentally disabled persons) and public service organizations can be characterized as a shift toward recognizing that essentially, the relationship is (or should be) a reciprocal one. Normann & Ramirez (1994:30) state that "Co-production is the term we use to describe the 'reciprocal' relationships between actors...", and they elaborate that this view implies that the customer (or citizen) is not only a passive orderer/buyer/user of the offering, but also participates in many other ways in consuming it, for instance in its delivery. In section below I take a closer look at another way in which design seems to redefine what it means to "produce" a public service.

## 5. MOVING TO OUTCOMES

Anne Lind was until the end of 2012 the Director of the Board of Industrial Injuries (BII) in Denmark. She explains how she had the sense that something in her organization needed to change, although she could not be precise about what it was:

*It is an eye opener ... it is more concrete. [The design process] has made me aware that there are some things we have to look at. ... So far we have been describing a service to citizens, not giving them one. To Ms. Lind, leveraging design approaches to better see how her organization's services impact citizens, has been "a shift in perspective".*

The Board of Industrial Injuries is a government agency in Denmark and part of the Ministry of Employment. The responsibility of BII is to handle worker's injury claims and ensure that the case management is legally correct, so that insurance settlements (which are generally paid by private insurers) accurately reflect the degree to which citizens have lost their ability to work. It has also historically been a key emphasis in the organization to ensure highly efficient case management. Tools such as lean management, team-based work and performance-based remuneration, and the introduction of digital systems in case and workflow management, have been used extensively in BII's pursuit of increased productivity.

Meanwhile, in the period 2007-2012, BII collaborated with various designers, including MindLab, a government-run innovation unit that is part of amongst others the Ministry of Employment, and *Creuna*, a private service design firm, to explore how its services are experienced by citizens. The methods included ethnographic field research (contextual citizen interviews recorded on video and audio) as well as numerous workshops with staff and management, development of *personas* to represent a range of ideal-typical users, and seminars and conferences where various insights and results from the design projects were shared internally amongst staff and externally amongst stakeholders such as local government, trade unions, insurance firms, health care organizations, etc.

The quote above concerning a shift in perspective reflects a questioning by Ms Anne Lind, the Director:

What is the ultimate contribution of an organization such as the BII? Is it to efficiently handle the case process to settle insurance claims and payment in accordance with legal standards, or is it to produce some kind of longer-term outcome for citizens and society?

### 5.1 Managing a strategic shift

Through the design process, Anne Lind initiated a strategic shift in her organization, from focusing mainly on handling insurance settlements, to helping people return to the labour market. Amongst the

**“One could argue that the previous mode of problem-solving did not simplify the service production process, but made it even more complex for both the system and for users, without addressing the real question of how better outcomes are created.”**

initiatives to underpin this change has been the strengthening of a “travel team” which works with local governments to quickly settle cases and rehabilitate injured workers back into work; improved online digital services that enable citizens to track their case progress; and a newly established Citizen Service Centre which will provide a more individually tailored and comprehensive service, starting with citizen’s needs. The underlying movement shifts the attention of the BII from focusing on producing processes (correct case management) to producing outcomes (return to labour market). Flowing from the experience of the highly user-oriented design work, Ms. Lind’s organization now focuses on leveraging a wide range of external resources to help injured workers get re-trained and find a job again.

Seeing how outcomes concretely are manifested from the point of view of citizens has been a key starting

point, and an emotional driver of this change. Some of the first interviews with citizens, which were video-filmed in their own homes, were, according to Lind, of great significance. To staff, it was almost shocking to learn that although their case management was perhaps legally correct, citizens experienced it as confusing, bureaucratic, and sometimes nearly meaningless. A universal finding seemed to be that the overwhelming amount of paperwork tended to get people caught up in the work injury process to the extent they felt they were the work injury. As a result, the case management process in some instances made people more ill than they were already. “It has been good, but it has been tough”, is how Anne Lind characterizes the process. At first, the staff needed a lot of attention from her, simply because of the emotional challenge of realising that their work was in some cases doing more harm than good. This substantially challenged their world view.

In terms of methodology, using such qualitative research was a major departure from past practices, and one which allowed the organization to design different responses. According to Lind, the main research method had previously been quantitative satisfaction surveys. “When we made a user survey we made a nice action plan to follow up ... we then piled additional information onto the users.” One could argue that the previous mode of problem-solving did not simplify the service production process, but made it even more complex for both the system and for users, without addressing the real question of how better outcomes are created. As a consequence there was a real risk that citizens were cast in a role as passive recipients, while the system was attempting to become ever-more efficient at a process that created dysfunctional outcomes.

As discussed above, professionals have difficulty understanding why users do not go through their process correctly; but users have stalls, missteps, quits and complaints because the process does not consider the contexts, complexities and subjective experience of their lives. This in turn further slows down the process and creates more work for the professional. Users feel annoyed, dissatisfied, demoralized, bored, let down by the process. In the case of BII’s work, the design approaches helped Anne Lind and her organization flip assumptions on their head. Seeing how the process was dysfunctional from an outcome

perspective, the underlying assumptions in the business model were challenged. The agency began to ask questions such as: What is best for the users? What do they need? What is the purpose of this service? How might we be more preventative? At BII, this has also led to a comprehensive review of which resources are really available in the system, including in the health care institutions, in local government, and in insurance companies. By focusing on the desired outcomes, the Board has launched a dialogue with these stakeholders about how to help users make a better life based on what best suits their situation.

## 5.2 Creating outcomes through value constellations

As public managers leverage design to see for themselves how outcomes are created in practice, they begin to ask questions about the underlying purpose of their organizations. They start rethinking how value is created. The outside-in view of user experience that is provided by design exposes the entire network of actors, including citizens, who can potentially take part in value-creation. Normann & Ramirez characterize this as a process of reconfiguring, so that actors come together to co-produce value via what they call not a value chain, but a 'value constellation'.

In the case of BII, the design projects helped Anne Lind see how her organization can work systematically to re-align a range of actors such as other authorities, health care providers, and insurers, to produce more value with citizens. For instance, this could lead to insurance agencies to invest actively in their customers/the citizen's rehabilitation (physical training, therapy, etc.). Ultimately, this allows for a much more coordinated way of helping citizens back to the labor market: the ultimate outcome of the agency's work. In the terminology of Normann & Ramirez, this is "an effective offering", and it is "designed in such a way so that partners end up performing the 'right' activities for them, engendering value creation on both sides, or rather *all*, sides".<sup>23</sup>

## 6. RADICAL EFFICIENCY?

Sune Knudsen is Head of Division at the Danish Business Authority (DBA). In 2010-11 he led an ambitious design project that aimed at making it easier to register a new business in Denmark. In describing the business case for a new solution that

was co-designed with small business owners in a range of industries, Knudsen says:

*If we succeed with this [...] businesses will save a lot of money, they will be more satisfied, you will get higher efficiency of regulation, and the public sector will also save money.*

### 6.1. Statistics as identity

Mr. Knudsen's project addressed a specific government requirement: The selection of a branch code which is the statistical industry category to which a newly registered business will belong. However, the DBA knew that many business owners become frustrated and spend undue amounts of time figuring out which code to choose. To many of them, selecting a code is not merely a question of statistical categorization, it is making a choice about their businesses' public identity. Around a fourth of all new businesses in Denmark end up registering a code that does not accurately match what their business does; this leads to error in the government systems: Because the Food Safety Administration, the Ministry of Taxation, the Work Safety Agency, and others, use the codes to plan and execute controls (including on-site visits) to businesses, the knock-on effects on administrative waste and error are huge.

Sune Knudsen engaged designers to use a range of ethnographic techniques to study how business owners experienced the online registration, and how various public agencies internally dealt and collaborated around the branch codes. Building on insights about user experience outside and inside the system, designers then carried out iterative prototyping of web mock ups, testing them with end users. The team, consisting of public servants on Mr. Knudsen's own staff; a digital design agency; and the innovation unit MindLab, then created a working model for a new website to handle branch code registration, as well as a knowledge management system for administrative staff, to ensure



<sup>23</sup> 1994, p. 54

quick knowledge-sharing across the different public agencies.

## 6.2. Public value by design

Sune Knudsen's comments above highlight a pattern in a number of the instances that are part of the empirical research: That the solutions flowing from design-led approaches, when implemented, hold a potential for significant improvements in public value. According to Cole & Parston, "public value"<sup>24</sup> is increased when public service organizations are able to improve efficiency (productivity) while at the same time improving outcomes. In my own work I argue that in addition to productivity and outcomes, the value of innovation in the public sector should also include user (citizen) satisfaction and democratic elements such as participation, empowerment, transparency, and accountability.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the engagement of citizens might in itself lead to increased value. As Pestoff points out, governments can seek better ways of involving their citizens in the provision (co-production) of goods and services, either for reasons of improving efficiency of public services, effectiveness of public policies, or to promote other important social goals, such as citizen empowerment, participation and democracy.<sup>26</sup>

What kinds of public value are potentially improved by design approaches? Taking a closer look at the quote by Sune Knudsen above, he expects that his design project will make the branch code registration easier and more satisfactory for business owners, ensure better outcomes in the form of more accurate registration (compliance) with the codes, and he expects that the public administrators will save time answering questions about the codes and will have fewer errors in planning and executing controls. An externally produced business case study of the project confirmed that these types of value could be expected, to the extent that the cost of the new web-based solution would deliver a saving in time and money for both businesses and the public administration to the tune of approximately a one to twenty return on investment (ROI) over three years.<sup>27</sup> Going back to the case of Camillagaarden, the institution for adult mentally handicapped, manager Christina Pawsø similarly noted an actualized gain in productivity which flowed from the changes in the

relationship with citizens. Not only has the institution added thirty percent more users while maintaining the same number of staff, and increased satisfaction. She also gives the example that on average there is one social worker to eight users at Camillagaarden. However, with the right type of engagement of the users, a staff of two can easily facilitate thirty users over several hours at a time. That is approximately a doubling of productivity. Pawsø explains how this is made possible by leveraging the resources and motivation of the individual user: "If you are put into a frame where all your resources are being used instead of everything you are having trouble with, then you can also help others. And this also gives value to the individual."

The British organisation The Innovation Unit has characterized such results, where services are produced at lower cost while being better for people and driving more positive outcomes, as "radical efficiencies".<sup>28</sup> It seems that co-design helps managers realise exactly such opportunities.

## 7. CONCLUSION: DISCOVERING CO-PRODUCTION BY DESIGN

In each of the cases discussed in this article, collaborative design processes seem to have triggered new and different approaches by public managers to their organization's service provision. Below I consider the implications for design practice, education and for public policy.

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<sup>24</sup> Cole & Parston, 2006

<sup>25</sup> Bason, 2010

<sup>26</sup> Pestoff, 2012

<sup>27</sup> MindLab, 2012

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<sup>28</sup> Gillinson, Sarah et. al: *Radical efficiency*, NESTA, 2010

# IMPLICATIONS FOR

## DESIGN PRACTICE

Design approaches – as applied in the examples I give in this article – help public managers explore in detail how the system/user relationship is shaped very concretely via interactions in space and time. This holds a disruptive potential because public managers are given the opportunity to view the results of their organization's efforts in a new light. There is a rather systematic finding across the empirical data – all sixteen interviews – that the voice of the citizen, however it is captured through audio or video (but preferably by such 'live' media), is a crucial trigger for change. It can be termed 'professional empathy', because qualitative research seems to power an empathetic, engaging, but still professional, (re) connection between public service staff and users. As Anne Lind, Director of the Danish Board of Industrial Injuries (BII) said, "it is an eye-opener".

What is especially eye-opening is how user experiences are tightly connected to the very creation of outcomes. In an institution for adult mentally handicapped such as Camillagaarden, where engagement and thriving *is* the desired outcome, positive user experience and a co-productive relationship with staff is the key to positive change. Getting businesses to comply with abstract statistical requirements requires that the Danish Business Authority establishes an interaction design that makes doing the right thing easy. And to help injured workers back to the labor market requires that the Board of Industrial Injuries designs a meaningful, individualized service process that builds and nourishes people's physical and mental healing and identity to the point where they can re-boot, re-train and re-enter the world of work. The implication for design practice is that designers must continue to develop and strengthen their ability to conduct in-depth user research and to facilitate processes with clients and stakeholders to activate their "professional empathy" and help turn the eye-openers into real change.

## DESIGN EDUCATION

Design approaches provide a different set of tools and ways of working systematically and collaboratively with innovation in government. Qualitative, ethnographically-inspired research; highly open, interactive and tangible workshop formats; visualization and rapid prototyping; user testing redesigned services; these are in many ways novel approaches to policy and service innovation.

Design education needs to support students in learning the theory and practice of collaborative design within a public sector setting. Further, education must equip them with the ability to navigate the internal machinery of government. Even as designers help public managers achieve an outside-in perspective on the consequences of their efforts, designers must also appreciate the inside-out experience of working within a political, hierarchical and bureaucratic setting. Extended secondments or internships to public service organizations is probably the best way of helping design students really appreciate what the daily life of a public servant is like; but additionally it could make sense to equip design students with a minimum of public management theory, perhaps as electives. One of the biggest

barriers for designers to become trusted advisers of governments is simply that their world, or world-view, is too far removed than the one of policy makers. For future generations of designers to be effective, that needs to change.

## POLICYMAKING

This article pointed to three implications for policy. Firstly, *A new relationship with citizens* implies a new mode of production which shifts the relationship between the public service system and citizens. The concept points towards a much more reciprocal, mutual relationship where the professional public staff sees its role as a collaborative one, and where citizens are recognized as co-producers of value.

Secondly, a *shift to outcomes* via citizen-centred (ethnographic) research shows the consequences for people of an organisation's interactions with them. The concept relates to the new system/citizen relationship, but takes it a step further via methods which show, often in highly empathetic ways, what kind of impact a service or process is having on end-users.

More *public value* could, thirdly, be generated both for system and for users, as a result of working systematically with redesigning interactions to shape the new relationship.

These three findings point to a conclusion: That design-led innovation can lead to the discovery and implementation of co-production as a new model for public service organizations. This model however poses new challenges to existing practices, routines and cultures:

New professional identities for public service staff: How to make the transition from 'helper' to 'facilitator'?

If co-production leads to a need for fewer human resources in public organizations, would design projects with this focus mean asking staff to make themselves redundant? How can they then be expected to engage in making co-production successful?

Will users want to co-produce? Although the findings point to a positive shift in the system/citizen relationship, is there such a thing as too much reciprocity? Will citizens revolt and demand that they just 'receive' service for their tax dollars?

It may be that design has not only helped place co-production back on the public sector reform agenda; it may trigger a renewed research agenda around these topics as well.

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Prior to joining MindLab in 2007, Christian held various positions at Ramboll, a consultancy, including head of labour market research and head of the public organisation and management practice. Christian is author of numerous papers, articles and five books on leadership and innovation in the public sector, most recently *Leading Public Sector Innovation: Co-creating for a Better Society*, Policy Press, University of Bristol, 2010 and *Design for policy* (ed.), London, Gower Ashgate, forthcoming 2013.

Christian Bason is an experienced presenter and university lecturer and regularly serves as adviser to public sector organisations in Denmark and abroad. He sits on a number of boards, including as Chair of the European Commission's Expert Group on Public Sector Innovation, the Advisory Board of the Lisbon Council, and the EU Commission's European Design Leadership Board.

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# CHAPTER 1

## DESIGNING NEW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THE STATE

1. PEER-PRODUCTION IN PUBLIC SERVICES:  
EMERGING THEMES FOR DESIGN RESEARCH AND ACTION  
ANDREA BOTERO, JOANNA SAAD-SULONEN
2. SERVICE DESIGN FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE  
MAKING A STEP FORWARD TOWARDS A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY  
MARGHERITA PILLAN, IRINA SUTEU
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# PEER-PRODUCTION IN PUBLIC SERVICES? EMERGING THEMES FOR DESIGN RESEARCH AND ACTION

Andrea Botero, Joanna Saad-Sulonen

## ABSTRACT

*This article collects a set of emerging themes for design research and action. The themes are lessons learned from case studies and research projects in Helsinki, Finland that deal with peer production of public services. We argue that these themes are relevant for the design and building of resilient and sustainable public and collaborative services in the next decades.*

**SERVICE DESIGN**  
**COMMUNITIES**  
**CO-PRODUCTION**  
**PEER PRODUCTION**  
**DESIGN-IN-USE**  
**TIME**  
**CO-GOVERNANCE**

**PROJECT TITLE:**  
(CO-P2P)  
Co-creation,  
co-governance and  
peer-to-peer production in  
public services

**UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:**  
Aalto University

**CITY/COUNTRY:**  
Helsinki, Finland

**SERVICE AREA:**  
Cross-sector

**PROJECT WEBSITE/BLOG:**  
<http://co-p2p.mlog.taik.fi>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The thoughts we present in here as our contribution to the Public & Collaborative cluster activities have their most concrete origins on a meta-level initiative we have been running since 2010 here at Aalto University in the form of a “special interest group” or SIG. Our CO-P2P SIG was a cross-Aalto activity that aimed at understanding processes, logics and incentives that make possible novel partnerships between the public sector, private sector, third sector, and citizens, in order to create, produce and deliver public services. Instead of focusing on a particular design intervention; the participants in the SIG decided to focus their efforts on creating shared vocabulary and analysis of past and ongoing initiatives of the members of the SIG, since we noticed we needed to build common ground and a set of shared premises if we were to continue work further. Thus through a seminar and case studies we design a shared outcome in the form of a book (see Figure 1), much in the same spirit as we are now doing this exercise at the DESIS level.

In this chapter we want to highlight some of the thoughts and experiences that writing the book brought to us in relationship to the aims and questions we have been tackling in the DESIS cluster of Public & Collaborative. We do this here with the aim of bringing the relationship to design activities more to the fore-front.

## 2 PUBLIC & COLLABORATIVE, A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN FINLAND

In Finland, like it has been the case in other western countries, the last few years have witnessed a flurry of citizen-driven and organized activities that range from guerrilla gardening and urban farming with aims to beautify unattended urban spots<sup>1</sup>, pop up one day restaurant initiatives<sup>2</sup> that comment on impractical bureaucracy, Cleaning day carnivals<sup>3</sup> that call attention to the need for new recycling practices, grassroots urban planning initiatives and new movements to

revive the local community<sup>4</sup>, citizen-run platforms to crowd-source new legislation ideas<sup>5</sup> and projects to reinvent more collective ways of growing old together<sup>6</sup>.

These developments have been especially visible in urban areas, such as Helsinki<sup>7</sup>. Some of those developments are connected to the renewed interest in the spirit of traditional Finnish talkoot<sup>8</sup>, as well as to the combination of creative and information-sharing associational activity as a sort of activist instrument (Paterson 2011). In many cases, self-assigned innovators and active people have decided to take a more active role in confronting contemporary concerns, strengthening their belonging and cooperation with others and at the same time redefining what is considered as “public”, “collaborative” and even “shared” in their cities. There is no doubt that the Internet has been a supporting factor in the visibility of these efforts when, at least in the Finnish context, broadband and mobile connection are reasonably available<sup>9</sup> and where social media platforms, both mainstream as well as other more niche ones have been enthusiastically appropriated. New media and new technologies have indeed provided some groups with easy ways to communicate, forming online groups and self-defined information channels and collaborative spaces. Many of the experiences in projects and case studies of the SIG members are definitively examples of this trend.

Hand-in-hand with these above local trends, the evolving impacts of the economic crisis, shifting demands for the Nordic model of the welfare state<sup>10</sup>,

1 A successful case is a nationwide network of urban gardening coordinated by Dodo ry an environmental association (<http://www.kaupunkiviljely.fi>)

2 The Ravintolapäivä (<http://www.restaurantday.org/>) has turned into an international movement called “restaurant day” where everyone can create a restaurant for a day.

3 Cleaning day transform cities into flea markets, where anyone can sell or give away their needless stuff. See: <http://siivouspaiva.com/>

4 A reinvigoration of the neighborhood association model in the form of “movements” has been visible in Helsinki over the last years. Networks are sprouting in the suburbs (e.g.: ) as well as in the city center (e.g: <http://kallioliike.org/>)

5 Called the Avoin Ministeriö (Open Ministry). The experiment is run by an association that provides an online platform (<http://openministry.info/>).

6 An association of self-defined “active citizens” is working now in its second project to design and build a co-housing arrangement. See <http://aktiivisetseiniorit-fi.directo.fi/> and Botero & Hysalo (2013)

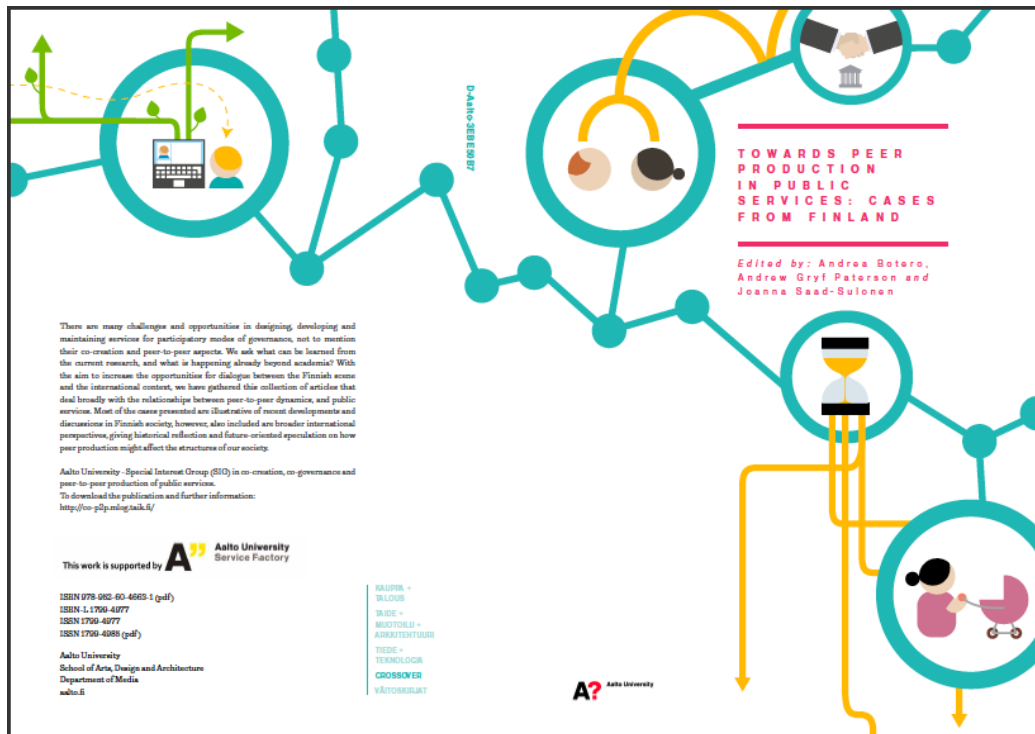
7 Hernberg (2012) provides a compact overview of some initiatives in Helsinki

8 Talkoot is a Finnish expression for a gathering of people (friends, family, neighbors) to work together building or repairing something that is of common concern or to help someone with a task that exceeds his or her own capacity. The work is unpaid and involves elements of festive and party attitude (see also: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talkoot>)

9 Statistics Finland tells that more than 70% of Finnish population uses internet daily as of 2011 (see [http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2011/sutivi\\_2011-11-02\\_kat\\_001\\_fi.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2011/sutivi_2011-11-02_kat_001_fi.html))

10 See e.g. Hellman et al. 2012

**FIGURE 1.** Book Cover - Towards Peer Production in Public Services: Cases from Finland (Botero et al. 2012)



and the challenges of an aging population have been raised as key points to deal with in many political discussions in the country. To support that conversation with more collaborative dynamics some initiatives have been made. The Finnish Innovation Fund (Sitra) has commissioned several reports that deal with alternative approaches to deal with these challenges. One features ideas on the future of the welfare state in the time of communities (Mokka & Neuvonen 2006), and a more recent one provides an overview of contemporary Finnish co-production projects that build on the "talkoot" tradition (Aitamurto, Siivonen & Lovio 2012). In parallel few discrete initiatives to bring new perspective to innovation approaches in the public sector have been tried. Again a design-oriented unit in Sitra known as the Helsinki Design Lab, has placed designers in public departments<sup>11</sup> and created also provocative prototypes like that of a "public" crowd-funding platform for civic spaces<sup>12</sup>. Other initiatives include experiments on

participatory budgeting by the City Library network<sup>13</sup>, new projects to consolidate open data offerings of public organizations so that new services can be created<sup>14</sup> and also few initiatives where innovation environments in which citizens are supposed to have a role in the process have been tested<sup>15</sup>.

From a different perspective our own Aalto University has also been involved in experimenting with new service design approaches involving both citizens and municipalities that are starting to yield some interesting results [See Box 1].

All these developments set the ground for a more general debate on how our relationship with the state should evolve, and how to imagine and organize

11 The program is called Design Exchange (<http://insidejob.fi/>) Unfortunately its future is uncertain as it has been announced that HDL will be closed during 2013

12 The prototypes is called Brickstarter (<http://brickstarter.org/>)

13 See <http://osallistuvabudjetointi.fi/>

14 These include the Helsinki Region Infoshare initiative (<http://www.hri.fi/en/>) and the annual competition Apps for Finland (<http://apps4finland.fi/>)

15 The city of Espoo is trying a new platform called Joukkoenkeli in the planning and development of a new residential area (see <http://joukkoenkeli.fi/group/188>) and The Helsinki Living lab hub (<http://www.helsinkilivinglab.fi/>) was active a few years ago as a product and service development platform.

common affairs in new ways<sup>16</sup>. There is no doubt that there is a renewed interest to understand processes, logics and incentives that can make possible new partnerships between the public-sector, private-sector, third-sector, and citizens, in order to create, produce and deliver public services<sup>17</sup>. In accordance to DESIS idea of the Lab, we believe such experimental spaces might create conditions to probe, prototype and engage actively with citizens in understanding these new dynamics, however the path towards is long and not straightforward. For us it seems that the collaborative and communal dimensions of public

services have not surface enough as the focus of discussion and action in Finland, despite that there are several experimentations currently underway as we have highlighted.

The possibilities for both grassroots level (supported by design labs) and official level experiments (carried out with design labs) to make an impact will largely depend on how new initiatives are able to work within several emerging key themes.

### 3. THEMES

In the following we propose some of these themes and the underlying issues they present for public and collaborative services. These insights are based largely

<sup>16</sup> See Benkler (2006) and (Pestoff 2008) for wider contextualization of these issues

<sup>17</sup> Related discussion around Europe and beyond: Borchorst, Bødker & Zander (2009), Jégou & Manzini (2008), Ostrom (2000), Parks et. al. (1999), Parker & Heapy (2006), Paterson (2010), Bason (2013 this compilation)

#### BOX 1. Other P&C related projects in Aalto School of Arts, Design and Architecture

During the past years there has been a variety of initiatives in teaching and research that build on the expertise in critical thinking, social engagement, human centeredness and co-design that exists across the school. Besides the project we report in this chapter, we want to provide the readers with an overview of some of the other ongoing and finished activities that relate to the P&C cluster within Aalto:

**365° Wellbeing:** 12 study projects organized in the context of the Helsinki Design Capital 2012. All had as cases actual services or processes in the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Kauniainen and Lahti and dealt with different dimensions of wellbeing. Design Department / Jari Pekka Kola / <http://365wellbeing.aalto.fi/>

**Service Design with and for Citizens:** A cross-Aalto thematic group with a pool of different projects and courses focusing on user-centered service design and innovation in the public sector. Design Department (+ others) / Tuuli Mätelmäki / <http://designresearch.fi/blogs/withandfor>

**Tango - Towards a New interGenerational Openness:** An EU funded platform for study projects in 3 design schools. In Helsinki the project creates meeting places for encounters among inhabitants of Känelmäki suburb (esp. intergenerational interactions) by means of local culture and artistic activities. Art Education Department and Creative Sustainability MA/ Mira Kallio

**Designing for Healthcare:** Collaboration with Tampere University Hospital (regional hospital) in the context of large development program of the hospital of which one part focuses on improving patient-centered treatment. The project includes 2 pilots on new service journeys and space prototyping. Department of Media / Juha Kronqvist / <http://designforhealthcare.blogspot.be/>



on the discussions that arose while working on the co-p2 SIG initiative, and on our own design experience. That is by looking back at our ongoing research across old and new projects. We present these themes, as a challenge to design's involvement in the renewal of public services and also as opportunities to embrace a more rigorous practice.

### **3.1 The increased importance of the dynamics of co-production and peer-production**

The inclusion of design oriented approaches in the development of public services have had some impact in acknowledging the importance of involving citizens in early stages of service ideation (Bason 2013 this compilation). There is by now a more consolidated set of tools and techniques aimed at enhancing

## **There is by now a more consolidated set of tools and techniques aimed at enhancing citizens influence in early stages all the way from crowd-sourcing their ideas, to seeking consultation and engaging citizens in iterative ideation workshops.**

citizens influence in early stages all the way from crowd-sourcing their ideas, to seeking consultation and engaging citizens in iterative ideation workshops. However, citizen-driven grassroots efforts like the ones we have pointed out in the previous section also point to the fact that beyond early involvement in ideation, other not so straightforward long-term involvement goals are gaining relevance. In that framework more attention needs to be geared towards supporting and making possible -also by design- the dynamics of co-production and peer-production. Co-production broadly speaking can be seen as the possibility to continue one's creative and practical involvement in the production and delivery of the service throughout time. Peer-production on the other hand involves also the capability of self organizing to make services happen between peers at points and contexts where it makes sense to do so.

During the work of the SIG we had the opportunity to learn more about a couple of services developed by a NGO aimed at a particular set of "problematic" users: drug and gambling addicts. In their case, the design and use of web and mobile -based tools have enabled new types of peer-based support services for dealing with addiction (Tammi et al 2012). The services have proven to be successful in both cases, thus highlighting the many benefits and the reach of jointly co-producing a service where the (publicly funded) NGO maintains the platform and host the interactions, but where "users" are producing the content (advice and support). The experience makes clear also the dangers of taking the approach too naively, without considerations to the particularities of situations of use, and structural conditions that surrounds these people. There will be always a need for –and also the right to– professional support, beyond that of the one provided by peers. The future evolution of the services and the platform it relies on might need a more thorough rethinking of different balances, and meanings in co-production.

Another interesting case relied on the experiences of the local chapter of time banking in Helsinki (van der Wekken 2012), which the activists see as a viable platform for the development of local and community services. In their case it is not only a matter of supplying services that are currently unavailable (not offered by the municipalities), rather it is more an attempt to rethink and reframe economical exchange activities and provide opportunities for influencing and engaging in new forms of organization. The building blocks needed for a successful design in these conditions are not always in the control of the community itself nor is it necessarily possible to articulate what would be needed "before" the ideas are tried out in practice. In here several "designs" need to be experimented, tried out and piloted practice as they all go along.

Public and collaborative service design approaches need to account for this more seriously by addressing collaborative design dynamics beyond the traditional design phases, also in the phases of use, future use and design "while doing".



### 3.2 An issue of co-governance (democracy)

Having citizens involved in the co-production of services has been often presented as valid insofar it offers economical solutions. Often, having groups of volunteer citizens take care of some of the activities cuts the expenses traditionally paid to third parties or to the staff of municipalities and public service providers. Additionally, from the side of citizens, the incentive for volunteer work can be high, because the issues at stake touch their everyday lives, their possibilities of enjoyment of their surroundings and pressing needs. For example, Pirjo Tulikukka shared the case of the Kääntöpaikka community space in the neighborhood of Arabianranta. There was a pressing need for such a space in this new neighborhood, which had not been catered for by the urban development. A group of residents began to pro-actively look for

**As co-production and peer-production of public services become a reality to confront, design activities need to also address involvement in the maintenance, relocation, redirection and evolution of services. As we have seen, the involvement of a wide variety of people in these activities has implications beyond productivity, efficiency, or experience.**

suitable spaces, found a suitable empty office space, and proposed the idea to the development agency, which accepted it. The residents group then created two teams to voluntarily manage this communal space (Tulikukka 2012). For many of them, this became a much more meaningful way to be involved and participate, than for example voting in the local elections. As the community activities began to grow, the group of residents applied for funds from the Social Department of the City of Helsinki to cover the salary of a person to handle the work. A small victory they won and provided further incentives to continue.

This is one example of how citizens and officials - together - found solutions, "on the go", for local pressing issues.

Cutting expenses and addressing the pressing needs of citizens are concrete aspects of co-production and p2p production. However, these practices could provide stepping stones for addressing new forms of democratic practices and models. Traditional citizen participation, which has mainly been limited to inviting citizens to give feedback on issues highlighted by officials, has so far failed because it happens from the "inside-out", so from the side of formal governance, which reaches out to citizens. Many of the everyday issues have thus remained untackled (Boeher & Boelens, 2011).

Victor Pestoff (2012) argues that co-production has important implications for the development of participatory forms of governance, and the important role public policy plays in crowding in or out these developments. Additionally, Michel Bauwens (2012) envisions a change in the role of the state. According to him, the peer-to-peer economy opens the way for a "partner state", with whom citizens collaborates in the production of services. According to these writers, co-production and peer production of services can thus be understood as being key ingredients of new forms of governance, such as co-governance, where government and citizens cooperate and co-produce and maybe where there is an interest to build a commons (Bollier & Helfrich 2012). What does that then means for the design of public services and for service designers? There is a need for design to step out of its own disciplinary silo and jargon, and to clearly position itself in the context of governance and fully address "the political" (see also Hillgren 2013 and Staszowski 2013 this compilation). So far, as designers, we have little language that would help us collaborate, and debate with e.g. policy experts. Such language needs to be developed.

### 3.3 Recognizing design-in-use as a central design activity

So far we have highlighted the importance of identifying co-production and peer production dynamics that tell us it is not enough to focus only on citizen involvement in the initial design stages, nor even with coming up with new services ideas. As co-production and peer-production of public services become a reality to confront, design activities need

to also address involvement in the maintenance, relocation, redirection and evolution of services. As we have seen, the involvement of a wide variety of people in these activities has implications beyond productivity, efficiency, or experience. We would also need to think in terms of new co-governance possibilities that are open or closed by design. These types of processes drift away from the project type of engagement that is typical of design consultancy model of working (Kimbél 2012) and instead bring forward some aspects that resemble activism practices (Julier 2011) and even participation in social movement creation (Seppälä 2012).

One of the examples analyzed in the SIG is the case of Cleaning day (Siivouspäivä), a carnival-like event designed to be performed twice a year. It is a day where anyone is encouraged to sell, swap and donate stuff that people have at home and don't use anymore. The idea started out as informal conversation with friends on the possibilities to do something about reducing the amount of stuff in their homes and at the same time thinking in terms of recycling and up-cycling, new urban culture and community building. After some initial enthusiasm around a Facebook status update, a working group of active people got together to create a platform (tools, information, resources, communication channels) that citizens could use to turn Helsinki into a giant flea market during one day (Seppälä 2012). The initiative is now in its third version and has spread to other cities as well. This is an example of a self-organizing group, who has applied social media and savvy use of distributed design skills to build momentum for the event and the mobilization of people. Among other things it has induced change in the way city authorities deal with the provision of permits for selling second-hand stuff in public space. After the first Cleaning day took place, the office in charge at the public works department of the City of Helsinki approached the core-organizing group to discuss possibilities for cooperation. One of the outcomes was the use of the Cleaning day online platform as a way for officializing one's flea-market activities during the day, without having to ask for a permit per se. This arrangement between the Cleaning day group and the city officials is an example of how design-in-use takes place without prior planning, but through collaboration "through doing" and hints at

the possibilities of looking at the possibilities of new service constellations to emerge with multiple shapes of partnerships.

In these circumstances design engagement seems to be shifting towards achieving resilience of the co-designed services by actively dealing with design-in-use. By this we mean a process to deal not only with designers and their design process, but rather embracing how the things undergoing design, and the design process itself, are simultaneously embedded in existing everyday life arrangements; some which can be part of an activist agenda but not necessarily.

The concept of design-in-use thus expands to include practices related to handling the multitude of tools at hand: configurations, customizations, adaptations, maintenance, reuse, even sometimes redesign through

**The arrangement between the Cleaning Day group and the city officials is an example of how design-in-use takes place without prior planning, but through collaboration 'through doing' and hints at the possibilities of new service constellations to emerge with multiple shapes of partnerships.**

"artful integrations" (Suchman, 1994) and bricolage-type of activities (Büscher et al., 2001, Karasti & Syrjänen, 2004, Botero et al., 2010, Botero, 2013). Some of these aspects have been dealt recently under the rubric of infrastructuring and prototyping (see Hillgren et al. 2011, Hillgren 2013 this compilation) and while some progress has been made in that direction there is a lot more of work that needs to be done. Especially when the time and the "rhythms" of public and collaborative ventures are different than traditional design projects, it is clear that design practice needs new models to address long-term commitments.

#### 4. TIME, NEW ENGAGEMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS?

Design interventions are traditionally often limited to the production of a particular outcome, or the application of “designerly” techniques to service innovation problems. Interventions are set to take place during a certain period of time. However, as we have seen, the emergence of co-production and peer production of services will require a framework of co-governance and design-in-use. This, we argue, requires novel understandings of the timeframe of design and collaboration in design activities. Service design that aims to be public and collaborative needs to seriously address in more nuanced ways issues related to time.

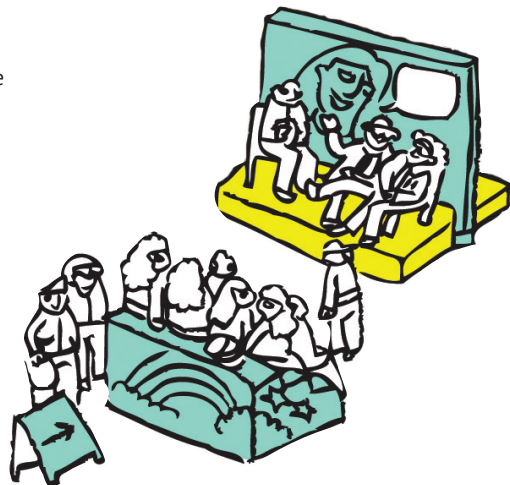
Many of the cases presented in the book and analysed in the SIG are not cases of participation activities staged by designers, planners, or other facilitators. They are cases of active citizens having already recognized a need for action (e.g. Time banking, cleaning day, community spaces) and having scanned possible partners and tools that would help them in their endeavors. If we are to position our own work, as designers, in the context of co-governance, through a design-in-use approach, there are a variety of challenges to tackle.

One of the challenges is ensuring the sustainability of the co-produced services, after the design research projects ends. The dynamics of working with communities are looser, especially in terms of timeframes. The involvement of designers in such endeavors can be sustained in time if the design-in-use and adaptation strategies are decided early on. Moreover, it is important that the designed outcomes e.g. a service, needs not to be the end-point of the design activities, but it can become a trigger for other kind of changes that may happen in time, in the context of use (Saad-Sulonen et al., 2012).

What are then the responsibilities of the designers, this time through an expanded timeframe that goes beyond the traditional staged collaborative design activities? Until what point should the designers be tied to the process of evolution of a service? In our own work we notice that sometimes it is unavoidable to eventually get bored and tired of this link that ties us to an engagement. We sometime have felt like cutting the umbilical

cord, and at the same time we want to keep our accountability towards the settings and the people we learn to appreciate and know. When should the separation happen, or if further commitment is created is e.g. social entrepreneurship a more viable route? Moreover, is the co-design setting the only cause that keeps the link alive between people and the designers? Can there be other types of engagements and partnerships?

We welcome feedback, ideas and fruitful conversation with the DESIS community to develop this issues further.



## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

- Design practice needs to device new ways of engagement beyond traditional R&D project forms and consultancy models.
- Design practice needs to understand that public and collaborative endeavors have different time frames.
- Design practice should recognize possibilities for participation and collaboration beyond activities staged by designers and/or other experts in design-in-use.
- Designs (per se) should accommodate possibilities for peer production and co-production. Contributions towards building *commons* are needed now more than ever.

### DESIGN EDUCATION

- Design study projects for public sector cannot be silos of one discipline, more cross-fertilization is needed.
- We need to educate designers that are more versed in communication with policy experts. They need vocabulary and basic understanding of governance related issues.
- We need to equip social workers, political scientist and sociologist – amongst others- with basic design vocabulary.

### POLICYMAKING

- There is a need for policies that provide spaces for experimentation and possibilities for risk taking in the public sector.
- Models are needed to facilitate collaboration with community led initiatives (to scale them up? To make them sustainable?) and for the creation of commons. This can be anything from providing supporting infrastructure, give recognition, or even creating shared language.

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# SERVICE DESIGN FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOG. MAKING A STEP TOWARDS A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

Margherita Pillan, Irina Suteu

## ABSTRACT

*The Italian society has traditionally been identified as a mono-cultural one, being characterized by homogeneous values (concerning, for instance: family, religion,...) and strong attachment to local customs; the country we live in is usually praised for its cultural heritage, and famous for its rigid, complex and cumbersome bureaucratic system. Recently Italy is passing through demographic and social changes bringing a mixture of cultures that converge into the Italian environments. In particular in Lombardy the presence of foreign population increased in the last decade by 11 % by year with peaks between 19-23% in the period from 2003 to 2005,<sup>[1]</sup> changing the picture of the Italian demographics and creating a constant pressure at the administrative level. The phenomenon of immigration in Italy has grown significantly over the last three decades. However, many public services have a complex, outdated organization system and the presence of many citizens of foreign origin exerts pressure on institutions, urging them to change. Up to now, political parties have not been able to propose innovative solutions in the law system and in the public service*

**DIGITAL SERVICES**  
**CULTURAL DIVERSITY**  
**INTERCULTURAL DIALOG**

### PROJECT TITLE:

Service Design

### UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:

Politecnico Di Milano

### CITY/COUNTRY:

Italy

### SERVICE AREA:

Interculturality, Digital  
Services, Multicultural Society

### MAIN PARTNERS:

Associations: Naga, Asnada,  
Fondazione Interculture,  
Metid Center

### PROJECT LEAD:

Margherita Pillan

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*institutions so to correspond to the social changes. A number of nongovernmental organizations offer services in different fields, such as education, health care, basic help for the poorest.*

*The research and education activities reported in this paper were guided by some questions: how to promote social cohesion in multicultural urban environments? What role can service design play with respect to a full acceptance of social change due to multicultural complexity? How can we contribute to public service innovation so to correspond to multicultural issues?*

*Acknowledging this, the next paper presents a pedagogical experiment aiming to address the social issues coming from the above-mentioned situation and that starts an inquiry on the possible role of the design in proposing intercultural dialog scenarios. The course is part of the wider research on social sustainability expressed in the public and collaborative cluster of the DESIS Network.*

## **1. SOCIAL CHANGE FOR A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

### **1.2 Italy from a homogeneous to a diverse social context**

Over the past decades, Italy has seen the arrival of a growing number of foreigners who moved to our country in search of job opportunities, to study, for personal or political reasons, and more.

In this paper, we will indicate these people with the terms: new Italians or new citizens [2], to emphasize their belonging to the social structure of Italy, and their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Despite the complexity of the different phenomena that can be related to the progressive transformation of Italian society toward a multicultural asset, it is possible to single out some issues that should be afforded in order to improve life quality and social wellbeing.

During our research, we have addressed many different aspects of living conditions of the new

citizens and tried to understand what the priority 'to be addressed and the issues on which the design of the services may bring contributions more' important.

The Italian law system is mainly based on the *jus sanguinis* principle, that is, the citizenship rights are normally granted only to those who were born from Italian citizens; for this reason, the children of immigrants do not automatically get citizenship even if they were born on Italian soil. Most Italians tend to take the *jus sanguinis* principles underlying as natural since the long lasting tradition; a change of this deeply rooted principle will require time and work. Due to the relative novelty of the immigration phenomena, most people tend to consider as 'new comers' and 'last arrived' all the citizens with a foreign origins, even when they were born in Italy; public institution managers slowly start to consider the different needs emerging from the multicultural social

composition and in most cases the search for practical solutions to problems is empirically carried on, without a real political debate about the ongoing change and suitable strategies.

Despite the relevancy of the new citizens in the Italian work system, many immigrants get jobs that under-use their skills. Historical professional association tend to protect their privilege opposing bureaucratic obstacles to the free professional practice of new citizen who studied abroad: local protectionist policies are opposed to innovation that newcomers may bring in different professional sectors. While these phenomena represent an under exploitation of the cultural resources and thereafter a lost for national economy, they also contribute to increase personal frustration and social friction.

In Italy the overall quality of public services (such as health care assistance and education) is high and free for all the citizens, but bureaucratic procedures are quite complex and appear as obscure for new comers since very low attention is paid to communication. Some specific features of the local service organization make quite complicate and frustrating the access to some public services for new citizens.

## **“From our research it appeared as evident the importance of cognitive and psychological phenomena related to sense of belonging and identity.”**

To better understand the complex issues related to the wide topic of multiculturalism in Italy, we made researches based on different activities. Firstly previously the beginning of the course, we had interviews with experts of different disciplines and carried on an investigation into the literature in fields as sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology. Secondly we contacted and started to individuate the main areas of intervention along with selected organizations aimed to the solution of specific objectives such as health care, cultural exchange, language learning. These ONG are based on the

active participation of the new Italians together or are completely founded by citizens of foreign origin; As our research community is characterized by a high number of researchers and PhD students coming from foreign countries finally, the personal involvement of the members of our research group is very high and personal. Thirdly one of the essential issues was to draft a project brief that will allow students to get close to the intercultural communication concept, by designing digital services. It is important to stress out that one of the main objectives of the course was to teach students how to learn by doing, this referring to the transfer of social interaction dynamics in digital service solutions.

### **1.3 Raising the awareness on the national identity change**

We chose to not focus our attention on extreme events such as the attitudes of racism and foreclosure, and instead we concentrated our attention on everyday life small and great difficulties normally encountered by new citizens and often taken as given and non modifiable. We would like to make a contribution in terms of service design to the solution of big and small problems, reducing friction that every day new citizens experience living and acting in Italy. In other words, we choose to adopt both top down and bottom up approaches to embrace the different aspects of social complexity.

From our research it appeared as evident the importance of cognitive and psychological phenomena related to sense of belonging and identity.

As new citizens face with practical problems (residence permit, job search, medical care), the ability of each individual to make the best use of his/her own resources and actively seek solutions to the problems and needs of everyday life are 'strongly influenced by the quality' of human relations. The daily confrontation with stereotypes and prejudices produce friction and fatigue in every daily action and these difficulties do not vanish with time, and are still experienced by children of immigrants, born on Italian land, especially when the physical appearance puts in evidence the foreign origin.

The condition of a citizen with a foreign background does not end in a short time and sometimes cannot ever run out. Everyone has the right to maintain a strong link with the traditions of the country of origin,

with its cultural roots, with specific tastes, values, and habits. Diversity is human, and must be accepted and valued in all its forms. Especially in cases of the visible minorities, the ethnic minority status might never end. To minimize the psychological problems related to the cultural shock and to reduce fatigue related to the condition of “newly arrived”, it is very important that Italian citizens mature a new awareness of the potential of multiculturalism. In order to understand the perception of the migration flow in the present Italian society, it is necessary to briefly review the evolution of the foreigners’ image in the public opinion.

## 2. TOWARDS THE EXPLOITATION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

### 2.2 Italy from an emigration to immigration country

The imaginary attached to the Italian culture is strongly rooted in the cultural heritage and the rich architectural and art scene, and emphasizes the strong national identity recognized and preserved even in communities outside Italy. In the same time the Italian society is historically an emigration one the phenomenon reaching important peaks at the beginning 1900's when the emigration flow accounted more than 600,000 persons each year. Although the main target stayed the United States a considerable part of the population also choose France, Germany and Switzerland as destination countries. This situation continued throughout the 50's and 60's, the migration being however legalized and encouraged by legislation acts that released temporary working visas to Italian citizens especially in Germany <sup>[3]</sup>.

If until the first half of the last century the migration flow exited the country, the phenomenon of internal migration emerged as a strong trend in the 50's and 70's. This changed radically the demographics of Italy reporting more than 2 million regional migrants <sup>[4]</sup>. This phenomenon of inter-regional internal migration underlined the distinction between “strong and weak” economic areas and between south and north.

The brief review of the migration trends shows a society in continuous transformation that experienced internal changes, in this sense revealing strong economic and cultural regional identities. This sets up the scene for one of the most significant social

changes that occurred in the last 10 to 12 years, in which Italy has seen an increasing inflow of foreigners coming from North Africa, the Middle East, and the Eastern Europe. Some of the most attractive areas are in the northern Italy and in particular Lombardy <sup>[5]</sup> in this respect the foreign population following an inter-regional migration trend. Having seen the transformation of the shift from an emigration to an immigration society in Italy several important issues have to be considered. First the already consolidated immigrant population started to integrate in the social tissue, the mixed families constituting 8,3% in 2009 <sup>[6]</sup>. This brings the emergence of the second generation Italians, who inherited a double cultural identity and are perfectly integrated in the Italian society. Second an important incoming factor is the diversification of religious beliefs and practices, that include Islamic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish <sup>[7]</sup>. The above-mentioned data show at a closer look a phenomenon of cultural diversification that wasn't present before, and that raises questions regarding the integration of the foreigners in the Italian culture and how this will affect the traditional cultural heritage.

### 2.3 Foreigners in the public opinion

This change is received from the public opinion with certain reluctance; most of the times the metaphor attached to the incoming flows of foreigners is that of intruders into a terrain to which they don't belong. In a study on the public opinion since the emergence of the immigration phenomenon in Italy, Sciortino e Colombo emphasize the changes on the public discourse referring to foreigners. Analyzing the printed press from the 1969 to 2001 the authors drafted a distinct change in the attitude towards foreigners and the image constructed around the figure of the immigrant. In this study the perception of the phenomenon changes slowly from its recognition as significant [<sup>69-81</sup>] to the acknowledgement of the immigration impact and its politic implications, [<sup>82-91</sup>] and then to the construction of the Pandora box myth, advertising the image of the immigrants in a negative light <sup>[8]</sup>.

It is important to stress out how the factors influencing this changes have different sources, in part being influenced by the major socio - political changes that took place, such as the falling of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the communist regime the event of the

European Community, or more recently the war in Somalia.

## **2.4 “Noi e loro” in Italy**

The above-mentioned changes mark a deeper change in the socio-cultural identity of the Italian society, that has seen a shift from focusing on the regional differences, during the inter-regional migration period into acquiring a more coherent cultural identity in contrast with the incoming foreign culture brought by immigration. This counter posing of values, beliefs and languages evolves from the necessity of negotiating a simultaneous presence into a shared territory. As Triandafilydou, explains, the host countries and societies are faced with the indispensable re-affirming of each communities' identity creating in this way a “others-within” situation in which the political and social order is constantly re-negotiated [9]. This process can be seen from Social Identity Theory perspective in which the in-group, out-group paradigm emerges<sup>10</sup>. In social identity theory, the individuals consider themselves part of a certain group according to cognitive and perceptive aspects. The group members are not initially linked by affective ties, but rather share the same behavioral patterns and perspective on the surrounding context. This paradigm can be extended to large groups and communities in order to understand the host national group and its natural reaction to the diversity of the incoming foreign groups<sup>11</sup>. In the next chapter we will argue that understanding the dynamic between different groups could lead to negotiate a more cohesive and therefore sustainable society.

## **3. CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY AS A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION ACTIONS**

### **3.2 Culture as an emerging sustainability factor**

Environmental, economic and social sustainability and sustainable development have been a growing major concern in the public discourse since the formulation of the first action plan in the 1987 in the Brundtland Report and Agenda [12]. If culture was initially seen as part of the social sustainable development, a more recent perspective stresses the importance of culture, bringing it forward as the fourth pillar of the sustainable development [13] arguing that sustainable communities depend upon the capability of individuals to understand and respect each other's values, and

this qualities are built through cultural interaction [14]. Moreover, Nurse argues that culture should be considered the central pillar of sustainability because peoples' identities, signifying systems, cosmologies and epistemic frameworks shape how the environment is viewed and lived in [15]. This perspective is reinforced at international level by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, that states that “parties shall endeavor to integrate culture in their development policies at all levels for the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development and, within this framework, foster aspects relating to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions” [16]. In this context the focus on culture, brings a new, more detailed dimension to the social sustainability, emphasizing the role of the cultural aspects in the creation of a cohesive and therefore more sustainable social environment. The social innovation as suggested by Mulgan concerns “social activities that are motivated by the goal of meeting social needs and that are predominantly developed and diffused through social organizations who's primary goals are social” [17] within this definition the intercultural dialog can be placed as a main goal to attain in the context of an increasing multicultural society. As shown before the specificity of the Italian social context is that of a continuously changing one, a change that operates at the cultural level activating contrasting forces.

We suggest that it is in the realm of this tension that the social innovation actions geared towards cultural sustainability are relevant and necessary. Rather than perceiving the barriers that cultural diversity imposes, the social innovation activities enable the stakeholders in this changing process to sense the opportunities and acknowledge the benefits of a heterogeneous society.

### **3.3 Intercultural dialog and communication design**

Having individuated the overall area in which the social innovation actions can be implemented the next step is to draw the attention on the precise issues that can be addressed through these actions and how this could inform the work of the communication designers. Taking a closer look at the intercultural contact several literatures shown the impact that the immersion in a new and unknown cultural environment has on the foreigners. The notion of “cultural shock” pinpoints

the psychological phenomenon that occurs in the absence of cultural cues that can help the foreigner decipher the new environment [18] [19] [20]. In the same time the social context reacts to a critical mass of foreigners that have the potential to influence an established system of values, beliefs and traditions. Rather than a uniform background to which foreigners have to gradually get accustomed, the hosting context has to be seen as a dynamic system that modifies through cultural influences and exchanges. At individual level the intercultural contact has to be seen from both sides, weighting the phenomenon of cultural shock also from the perspective of the locals that come in contact with foreigners. A strategy to build an intercultural dialog has to be constructed from both sides and can constitute the objective of a communication design activity.

The task of the designer in this case is to observe the dynamic of the social interactions, acknowledge the cultural differences, anticipate the emerging frictions and draft strategies that can be applied in order to decrease the impact of the intercultural contact. In the specific case of the exercise in the design of digital services, the digital tools are intended to offer support in the mediation of the intercultural social interactions. The final purpose of the digital services is to sustain the creation of a multicultural cohesive society, in which the cultural baggage of all its participants is considered to have a value. This sets up an important challenge for the designers, who have to be conscious of their own identity as individuals and groups in order to deconstruct the “us and them” concept and identify connection points on which the intercultural dialog can be built.

## 4. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

### 4.2 Areas for service design interventions

The design of public and collaborative services can play a relevant role to promote new forms of dialog between institutions and citizens; meaningful services can provide relevant experiences, offering innovative solutions of practical problems but also offering opportunities for a better exploitation of the potentialities related to multicultural social composition. This opens a wide area in which the communication design can play an important role. The objectives that can be tackled through a design

approach range from promoting an increased awareness on the issues related to a multicultural society to suggesting solutions to practical problems, and seeking new organization forms that take into account the cultural diversity.

Italy is now a multicultural society and in several aspects, most Italians have accepted the change while most new comers find Italy a place where it is possible and convenient to stay.

On the other hand, new and old citizens strongly feel the need of a system renewal; in order to reduce the friction experimented in every day life, and especially with respect to the law system and during the fruition of public services. But the answers to the problems are not simple. We can better explain some of the tangles of the present situation through an example referred to the education field.

Traditionally, public Italian primary school provides excellent education programs, at least in most parts of the country. Teachers feel socially responsible to transfer basic language and math skills so to ensure the minimum knowledge set to all citizens.

### 4.3 Education system for a multicultural society

As the number of immigrants grew, we assisted also to a relevant increase of the number of non-Italian speaking (or better, non Italian mother tongue) children. While young people usually can learn new languages in very short time, it is also evident that, when the number of non-Italian mother tongue students increases, the education goals and methodologies should be re-defined. As Italy is a mono-language country, teachers are normally not trained to manage multi-language classes, as instead happens in multi lingual countries as Belgium and Switzerland.

Several teachers face therefore a contradictory situation: on one hand they are quite willing to welcome the non Italian mother language children, encountering their specific education needs; on the other hand they experience a sense of betrayal with respect to Italian mother language students if they cannot guarantee a full achievement of the education goals as indicated by the education ministry. In 2010, the previous education minister Mariastella Gelmini issued a law decree establishing the maximum

acceptable number of foreign students per class, starting it at 30%. This measure is obviously incapable to provide a solution to the problem of how the public education service should be innovated in terms of objectives and teaching methods; nonetheless, this decision is a significant sign of the inability of our country to address the necessary changes in the organization of public services and in relation to social change. This contradictory situation is made more critical as the economical crisis reflects into a progressive reduction of the economical resources dedicated to public education. At first sight, we face with a difficult dilemma: on one hand teachers should ensure a high level of education inside the public system; on the other hand they have to adjust times, goals and methods to respond to the needs of students who do not possess those basic knowledge skills, that until a few years ago could be taken for granted. Teachers are left alone in front of a challenging task. The renewal of the education methodologies is a very slow process, needing time and resources also in terms of experimentation opportunities. But students and families cannot wait since, for each child, education is a not replicable and non-reversible experience: what to do? In absence of convincing solutions, several families that can afford it, tend to switch toward the private education system, in search of schools that can guarantee didactical high standards; this is quite a negative process, increasing social divide and relighting the processing of social cohesion between new and native citizens. The search of a solution cannot be delegated to education scientist and education experts: it requires a cultural change of attitude as a preliminary condition to prepare the ground. Such a change requires a positive attitude toward innovation and the cooperation of all the actors involved in the process: teachers, families, politicians, and education experts.

In other words, the real innovation can be stated in terms of a change of value and only consequently, can become effective in terms of practical goals and tasks. In the case of the education, the change of perspective consists in the understanding that citizens with multilingual capabilities can play a very important role in our country.

Italy is a relatively young country, being unified in the present form only since 1861. Since the unification, teachers activity was driven by the difficult goal of

unify the nation from the cultural and linguistic points of view. After second world war, the goal of spreading official Italian language, opposed to deeply rooted dialects, was taken as priority and mandatory in the definition of education guidelines. Now, dialects have almost disappeared and our nation can be considered as quite homogeneous from the linguistic point of view. Now, children with good knowledge of foreign languages and traditions should conveniently be considered as a resource: people capable to bridge our country with other nations around the world, so offering opportunities for exchange and cooperation in a more connected world [21].

#### ***4.4 Professional skills and social integration***

Beside education, we investigated other domains also presenting similar dissonances. As an instance, some significant phenomena concern the employment field. In Italy, new citizens are widely present in several fields of activity, but their presence is more relevant in blue-collar labors and medium to low skilled work, the field of work being small manufactures, household and agriculture (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali, 2012) [22]. The presence of new citizens is notably less diffused in some high skill fields as it is still rare to encounter a foreign origin doctor, teacher or accountant. In several cases, as previously mentioned, professional associations oppose bureaucracy barrier to people that obtained degrees in foreign countries to protect the privileges of the professional community members the employment rate being higher than in the case of the Italian citizens. In 2012, the percentage of employment was 65.3 %, for EU citizens residing in Italy and 59.5 for non-European legal residents, compared to 43.0 % Italian citizens [23]. In some way, this closure attitude is supported by the Italian tendency to drive their choice in the search of professional contribution; mainly following tradition criteria instead of adopting merit based comparative analysis. As an example, a trained and experienced architect who obtained his/her degree out of Italy needs examinations or even to join again university education programs before he or she can practice in Italy. This defensive closure is coherent with the dominant defensive attitude aimed at the conservation of privileges, very negative with respect to innovation and real merit dynamics.

To translate these statements into practical actions, we conducted a one-semester project at the School of

the Design at Politecnico di Milano. The participants were students of the first year of a master degree in communication design during the second semester of the 2011/2012 academic year.

The assignment required the development of collaborative services capable to give a contribution to the solution of a practical problem experienced by new citizens and, at the same time, to promote a better awareness of the unexploited potentialities of cultural diversity in our social environment. In order to provide a better insight of the proposed issue, we invited as speakers, some representative members of the associations we cooperated with. Students were left free to choose the association to cooperate with and the specific domain of activity on which to focus the attention.

### 5. PARTNERS AND STUDENT PROJECTS

In order to accommodate the multifaceted phenomenon of immigration and the problems that foreign citizens encounter upon their arrival in a new country the partners involved were associations and private agencies, which responded to different needs of the foreigners in Milan.

**Asnada** school, is one of the few associations with a consolidated tradition of offering free Italian language classes to foreigners present in Milan and Rome. The school embraces an alternative approach to education,

featuring an interdisciplinary range of activities, such as model making, acting and performing, singing and story telling. The school is open to both foreign and Italian citizens in mixed educational and creative activities [24].

**Naga** association is a non profit organization providing medical care and legal help to illegal immigrants in Milan. The association is not an alternative to institutional services, but comes to complete a services offered by the government and the municipality. The association is active in the Milan area and brings together more than 300 volunteers. In one year the association offers more than 1500 medical visits and legal advising sessions, and 800 persons are contacted by the Street Medical Unit service. [25]

**Fondazione Intercultura** is another non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the intercultural dialog and cultural exchanges for high school students in Italy. The association has as main aim to bring an increased awareness on the intercultural dialog, being active in the secondary school system. By organizing international exchange internships for high school students, the Intercultura association and foundation, enables an opening towards the positive perception of other cultures, both on the Italian territory and overseas[26]. Along with the above-mentioned associations, the students were introduced to the **Intese project**, an online platform developed by Metid center and dedicated to foreign students at Politecnico di Milano[27].

FIGURE1. Class and activities schedule

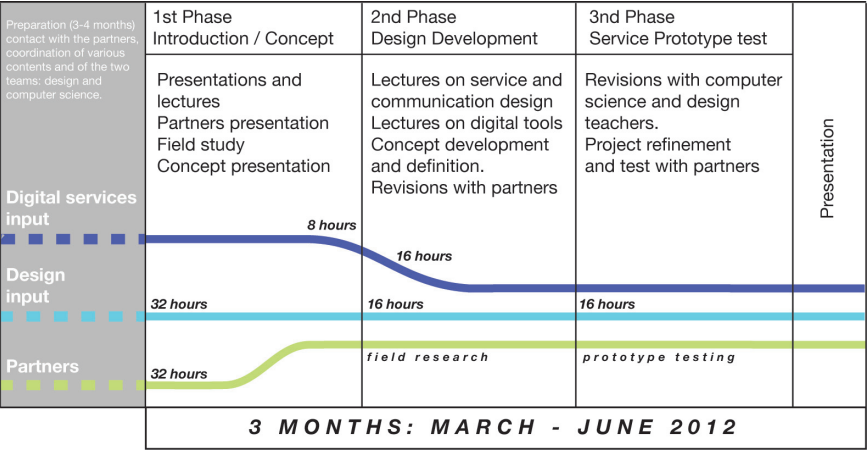
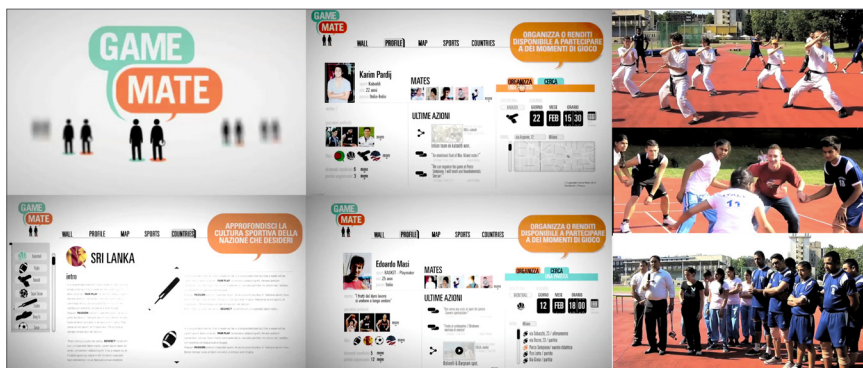
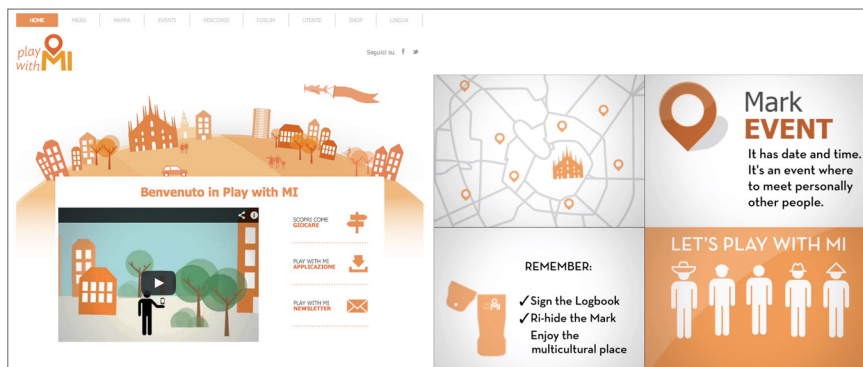


FIGURE 2. Game Mate Project



Some of the most interesting projects related to the free time of the immigrants away from home and acknowledged the lack of services that encouraged the outdoors and sports. *GameMate* (Bozzato, Castro, Leoni and Xia) is a project that proposes the organization of multicultural sport events, in this way enabling the creation of social ties between people from different cultures but sharing the same passion for sport.

FIGURE 3. Play with MI Project



*Play with Mi* (Peretti, Recalcati, Teruzzi) is an online and offline game aiming to invite the local residents of Milan to discover the multicultural events and interesting locations. Working touristic guide, the project is intended both for Italians and foreigners and proposes the collaborative creation of an alternative map that signals the presence of positive multicultural places.

As mentioned before, the introductory phase where the lectures and exercises concerned mainly the theoretic knowledge and were intended to sensibelize the students bringing them closer to the concept of diversity, and helping them working with the partners. In result the projects tackled the issues discovered on the field research and were relevant to the specific problems of foreigners in Italy. The lectures were taught by a multidisciplinary group of teachers and lecturers whom balanced the content of the course and emphasized the hands on experience. An important factor was the field research and the

encounter with the stories of the social workers and foreign residents, this motivating the students to develop their concepts.

## 6. DISCUSSION – SPECIFICITY AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE ITALIAN CASE

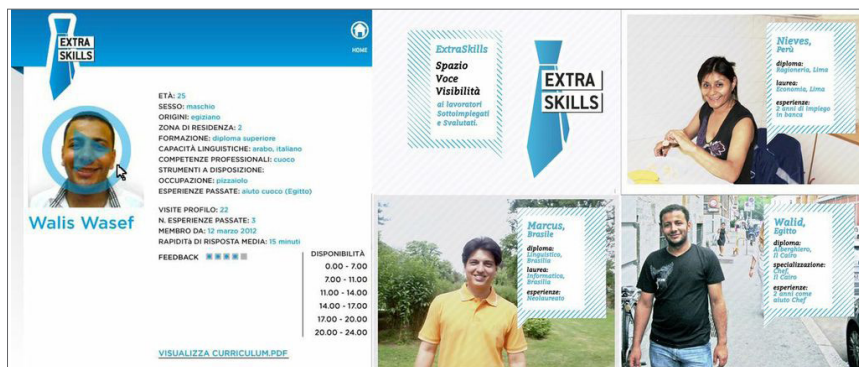
As far as we know, the topic of social innovation with respect to multicultural societies is a new one for the service design community and for the P&C DESIS cluster. For this reason, this first experience should be

FIGURE 4. ABC Diario Project



ABCDiario (Students: Sassi, Verrengia, Zangrandi) is an online vocabulary that links the words in the Italian vocabulary with the stories of the participants. The website allows users to upload pictures and drawings to describe the significance of the letters and words in their language. The target users are the students at Asnada language school.

FIGURE 5. Extraskills Project



Extraskills (Banchelli, Biraghi, Gasparini, Tonelli) is an online platform that has the aim to emphasize the underused professional skills of the foreign citizens and putting them in direct contact with individuals and small businesses looking for part time collaborators. He service identified the gap between the real potential of the foreign professionals and the actual employment opportunities they have access to through traditional channels.

considered as a first investigation of a promising terrain. In our belief, the need of social innovation with respect to multicultural social dynamics is a P&C issue since in Italy the need of change is evident, and furthermore, it is also evident that the direction of the change are not yet clearly defined; the priority seems to be the activation of a dialog actively involving citizens – new and traditional – politicians, managers of public service institutions, experts (education, health care, job market experts) and, of course, designers. The primary role of designers is the construction of meaningful experiences aimed to create an awareness of the state of being of our society, to enlighten

the potentialities of a mixed and diversified social composition, and to provide positive experiences of intercultural dialog.

It could be observed that we only provided quite vague and too ample project brief with respect to the usual education laboratory assignments. Probably that's true, but we preferred to present the results of our research without attempting simplifications or complexity reduction. It is a strong belief of the authors of this paper, that design should always try to embrace the real complexity of contexts while, from the education point of view, it is very important to

guide the students toward some form of modeling of tangled contexts without suppressing contradictions and inconsistencies, exploring dynamic and changing phenomena. The projects developed as well as the class feedback showed several aspects that have to be taken in consideration when embarking in a class that emphasizes a highly debated social subject: 1. the course content involved students both professionally and emotionally, asking them to tackle a highly sensitive social issue with which they might not empathize. 2. being a multidisciplinary course that asked students to acquire technical skills the difficulty stays in balancing the importance of the service design and digital tools maintain the focus on the actual objective of the course. 3. The contact with the partners and the field studies have to be coordinated suggesting tools that could enable the active observation and conduct meaningful interviews. Altogether the class performed well in all activities, understanding the intention of the exercise and presenting projects that received a positive feedback from the partners.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion the entire process of preparing, conducting and reviewing the results of the course acquired it unfolded a double value: that of a research into a much discussed and controversial social issue,

and the impact that such an issue can have on the design students. The course revealed, or rather verified the existence of several layers of perception of the reality. In this case the academic world that shapes the young generation was confronted with the entangled reality of the migration. One of the issues that came forward in the class was the acknowledgement of the regional migration, from south to north in Italy. This analogy helped students to come closer to the immigration phenomenon and find familiar meanings to it. One of the challenges of the teaching team was to avoid common places and stereotypes in explaining the pedagogical content and reviewing the student works. Having completed the course it is important to underline the complexity of the issues we approached and relevance of a more extended implementation of the intercultural dialog in the communication design. This field is still far from being thoroughly investigated and carries an important potential for creative expression in the field of service and interaction design.

In Facebook you can find some communities created by new citizens. One of them is named Yalla Italia.

In some way we could summarize with these words, the results of the research activities we carried on to prepare the project phase with our students: Yalla Italia, Italy, wake up!

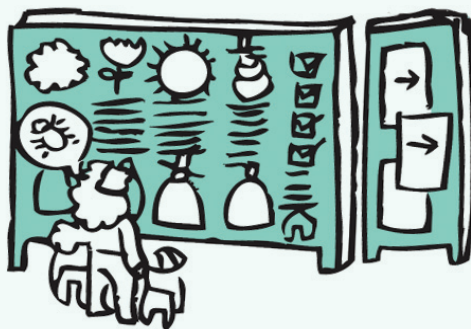
## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

The course unveiled a still little explored niche of intervention for service design and in particular contributed to adding a design perspective to the intercultural dialog. It is very important to stress out the relevance of bringing the cultural issues in the realm of communication design practice in particular in the contemporary Italian context. If most of the times the design brief follows the market needs, in this case the exercise anticipated the change and the needs of a multicultural society.

### DESIGN EDUCATION

Social issues have already a recognized place in the design curriculum, however the novelty of the approach stays in the direct involvement that a theme related to intercultural contact and dialog imposes. In this case rather than placing themselves outside the inquiry field, the students and teaching staff experienced the emotional involvement triggered by the close analysis of highly sensitive social issues experienced on everyday life.



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# REFLECTIONS ON DESIGNING FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: A CASE STUDY IN NEW YORK CITY

Eduardo Staszowski, Scott Brown, Benjamin Winter

## ABSTRACT

*Today, a number of wide ranging systemic, social, economic, and environmental challenges are provoking governments at various levels to rethink their approach to public service delivery. Recognizing these societal and policy trends, and the need for radical social innovation in the public realm, the DESIS Lab at Parsons the New School for Design began in 2011 the multi-year research program “Public & Collaborative NYC” to investigate the assertion that design can serve as a catalyst for social innovation in public services in New York City. In 2012, the DESIS Lab entered a partnership with the Public Policy Lab, a non-profit dedicated to improving public services through design, and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to develop a project entitled “Designing Services for Housing” which focused on the issue of affordable housing in the city.*

*This article examines the “Designing Services for Housing” project as a case study for identifying various challenges designers face in working in collaboration with public partners to effect social change in the public realm. Key areas of focus include the acknowledgement of the political position of the designer, the recognition and overcoming of epistemological barriers, and the management of risk aversion in the public sector. Building on reflections from this case study, the article concludes by highlighting various implications of designing for social innovation in the public sector and offers recommendations*

## PUBLIC SERVICES

## SERVICE DESIGN

## SOCIAL INNOVATION

## CO-DESIGN

## CO-PRODUCTION

### PROJECT TITLE:

Public & Collaborative NYC:  
Designing Services for  
Housing

### UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:

Parsons The New School for  
Design

### CITY/COUNTRY:

New York City, United States

### MAIN PARTNERS:

Public Policy Lab, NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development

### SERVICE AREA:

Housing

### PROJECT WEBSITE/BLOG:

[nyc.pubcollab.org](http://nyc.pubcollab.org)

### PROJECT LEADS:

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## 1. INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Today, a number of wide ranging systemic, social, economic, and environmental challenges are provoking governments at various levels to rethink their approach to public service delivery. Following cuts in public spending and austerity measures to reduce budget deficits, alternatives to big-state welfare initiatives, such as public-private partnerships, the use of new technologies, as well as various strategies for increased public participation are now being considered. In the United States and across the world there is a growing perception of the need for new approaches to providing essential services for individuals and communities to thrive. What these new approaches will look like, how they will take shape, and what role design can play in effecting such change is still open for exploration and experimentation. In the United Kingdom – where, in the last few years, there has been a vigorous debate on the relation of design to public service and between social innovation and public policy – a crucial claim has been made by the Design Commission concerning the role of design in the provision of public services<sup>1</sup>. The claim is that “Design is integral to the DNA of each and every public service”, that one cannot improve public services without thinking about design. In their most recent report, the commission emphasizes the value of a design-based approach in promoting the kinds of innovation needed to address the challenges of an increasingly difficult public sector landscape, as well as the genuine need to provide better services to the public who are enduring the effects of continued economic instability<sup>2</sup>. However, while the report strongly advocates the beneficial potential good design can bring to any government operation or service delivery system (or design’s role in “creating cost-effective public services in the 21st century”), there is still much work to be done in thinking about what a participatory design-driven approach to public service will look like, particularly in the American social and political context.

The common denominator to any new approach in this field, however, is the requirement of new forms

of collaboration across a variety of practical domains. The traditional silos that separate government apparatus from community action can be broken down so new kinds of collaboration can be explored. Such partnerships can be effected and amplified by means of more participatory, horizontal practices such as co-governance, co-design, and co-production – in other words, through new forms of collaboration where people, experts, and governments work together to provide better public services. Design can play a transformative role in promoting this kind of change. One of the challenges of a design-driven approach is to accommodate multiple ways of knowing, so that the designer and other experts can employ their distinct forms of knowledge and expertise towards the solving of a particular problem.

### 1.1 Public & Collaborative NYC

Recognizing the need for radical social innovation in the public realm, the DESIS Lab at Parsons the New School for Design began in 2011 the multi-year research program “Public & Collaborative NYC” to investigate the assertion that design can serve as a catalyst for social innovation in public services in New York City. In the context of such pressing issues, this initiative sought to ask the following questions: What are the roles design can play in building bridges between city government and people that can effect new kinds of social innovation in the provision of services for the public good? What are the forms of collaboration or strategies for building strong partnerships between public and private actors as well as local communities and individuals that will promote such innovation?

### 1.2 Designing Services for Housing

In 2012, with the generous support of the Rockefeller Foundation, Parsons DESIS Lab entered a partnership with the Public Policy Lab – a non-profit dedicated to improving public services through design – and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to develop “Designing Services for Housing” (DSH). DSH is a two-year design effort exploring “ways to engage community residents in the development of services related to city-supported affordable housing development and preservation in neighborhoods with significant public

<sup>1</sup> The Design Commission is the industry-led research arm to the Associate Parliamentary Design and Innovation Group in the United Kingdom Parliament created to advise government on how design can drive economic and social improvement and to provide a forum for the design community to better engage with policy makers.

<sup>2</sup> Design Commission. *Restarting Britain 2: Design and Public Services*. 2013

and private sector investment leveraged by HPD<sup>3</sup>. HPD is the largest municipal housing preservation and development agency in the United States, and its mission is “to improve the availability, affordability and quality of housing in New York City” (HPD, 2013). The city’s affordable housing service landscape consists of a diverse network of government actors, regulatory bodies, private developers of affordable housing, property managers, community-based organizations, tenant associations and individuals. It is an inherently collaborative field, requiring interaction between a number of different parties, and making it an ideal space to explore the generative possibilities of enhanced forms of collaborative practice between public and private actors. Furthermore, the topic of housing is particularly urgent, as New York City has some of the lowest vacancy rates in the United States coupled with steadily increasing rent costs (figure 1). Combined with the challenges of an enduring

economic crisis, housing has become a crisis of its own in the city.

DSH was structured around two interconnected project tracks. The first focused on improving HPD’s services and interfaces with current and potential residents of subsidized housing for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. The second focused on enabling resident social-networks and collaborative services<sup>4</sup> in neighborhoods where HPD programs and initiatives are most active, such as the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area in the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx. The project began with a series of public lectures and two courses at Parsons that included co-design sessions with HPD staff, students, and Public Policy Lab fellows to create a “kit of ideas” for the

3 “Parsons DESIS Lab, Public Policy Lab and NYC Housing Preservation and Development Receive Rockefeller Foundation Cultural Innovative Fund Grant to Design and Prototype City Service Improvements”, NYC government. Press release, August 29, 2012, on the NYC government web site, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/pr2012/pr-08-29-12.shtml>

4 Collaborative services are a type of services based on collaborations between people. The main interactions of services generally occur between service users and service providers. In collaborative services this line is often blurred: service providers are service users and vice versa.

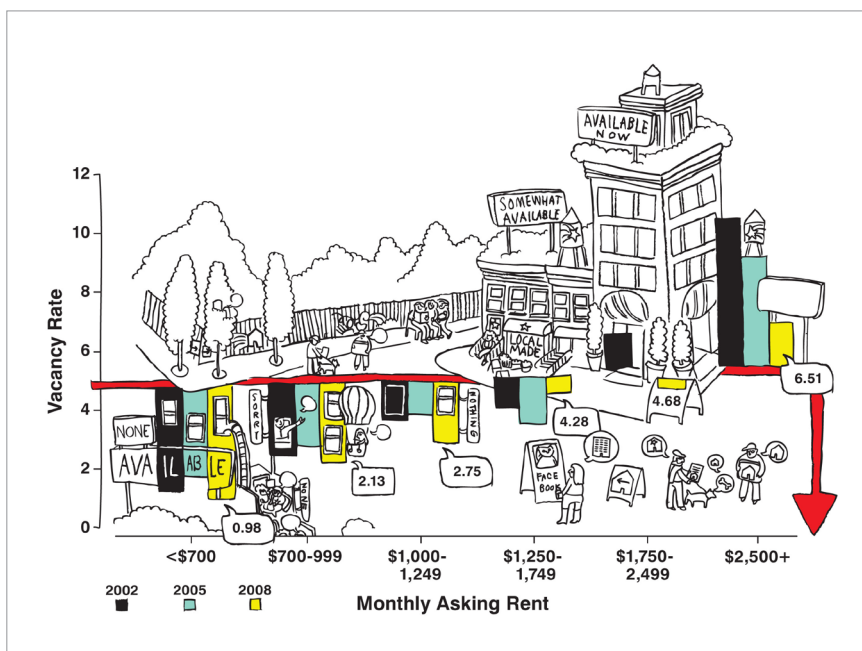


**FIGURE 1:** New York City has had an overall net vacancy rental rate of less than 5% since 1974—the common definition of a housing emergency. Rent levels represent monthly contract rent in real 2008 dollars. Source: 2002, 2005, 2008 Housing and Vacancy Survey, U. S. Census Bureau. Graph by Amy Findeiss/Parsons DESIS Lab.



**FIGURE 2:** The “kit of ideas” was initially illustrated as an entire scene, intended to depict a possible future in which mutually reinforcing innovations were adopted across the arc of HPD’s services. Drawing by Amy Findeiss/Parsons DESIS Lab.

agency (figure 2)<sup>5</sup>. The “kit” includes new service ideas for increasing tenants and landlords’ understanding of the city’s housing maintenance code and protection of tenants’ rights; simplifying application processes for affordable units; improving HPD’s information channels and physical spaces; and creating networks among neighbors for mutual support.

During summer and fall of 2012, the design fellows convened by the Public Policy Lab<sup>6</sup> continued to work with HPD managers, front-line staff, community-based organizations, affordable-housing developers, and potential and current users of HPD’s services to identify and refine concepts for further development. Four proposals for enhancing the marketing, lottery, and lease-up processes for affordable housing were selected by HPD to be transformed into pilot projects

in 2013. Ideas about how to activate resident social-networks and collaborative services around housing-related issues, however, were considered outside the agency’s scope and therefore not developed as pilot proposals but left as recommendations for future exploration. This work will be published in a document (“The How-To-Guide”), which will provide technical and strategic guidance for the agency to implement the pilot proposals. For the purpose of this article, the “Designing Services for Housing” project serves as a case study to open up the discussion about the role of designers in working with government to effect social innovation in the public sector.

## 2. EVIDENCE & REFLECTION

During the DSH project, it was observed that the designers operating in this space encountered a number of epistemological, practical, and political challenges. This section describes the nature of the proposals that were put forward by the design team, and examines how such ideas predicated specific challenges identified during the project. It concludes by reiterating the implications of these challenges in

5 The lecture series brought together leading European design experts Ezio Manzini, professor at the Politecnico di Milano, Italy; Christian Bason, director of Denmark’s Mindlab; David Boyle, a fellow at London think-tank the New Economics Foundation; and François Jégou, scientific director of the French public innovation lab 27e Région with New York City policy makers and academics to explore the intersection of social innovation and public services.

6 For this initiative, the Public Policy Lab’s fellows included five designers and one staff member at HPD’s Division of Strategic Planning who acted as a liaison between the agency and the other partners.

order to suggest new possibilities for enhancing this type of interdisciplinary collaboration amongst design practitioners, design educators, civil servants and policy makers<sup>7</sup>.

## 2.1 Acknowledging the political

*"Given the importance of power in defining the problem and identifying stakeholders, it is all too easy to accept the stated goals of the collaboration, which means success is measured from the position of the powerful while equally legitimate outcomes, which favour low-power stakeholders, are excluded. Moreover, while collaboration can be highly productive in solving interorganizational problems, conflict also has a clear role in challenging existing frameworks and forcing domain change in directions considered by at least some members to be positive." (Hardy and Phillips, 1998)*

Current societal challenges are generating the need for radical innovation and the redesign of public services. Governments are challenged with finding new ways to provide better services in the context of broader economic crisis. While often resisting austerity measures and tax increases, the public is at the same time demanding better services. In this context, a new 'breed' of (service) designers with expertise in user participation, appear as 'natural' candidates to help governments evolve and enhance services for the public good.

However, designing in the public sector need not be merely exercises in making the State look user-friendly or making interactions with government a better 'experience'. 'User-centered' approaches<sup>8</sup> (i.e. "user as subject") for enhancing service delivery commonly applied in the private sector cannot be automatically transferred to this context without engaging in a discussion about the socio-political implications of this work. A



movement towards a 'participatory' approach (i.e. "user as partner") in this case is not only appropriate but also required. Here, citizens are key stakeholders in public problems and should be considered as participants in the construction of their own futures and not only participants in the design process simply as users or consumers<sup>9</sup>.

The challenge for designers operating in this space is how to negotiate their inherent political position as agents of change accountable, not to a client or clients who have engaged them for a specific purpose, but to the diverse needs of the broader public(s). Therefore, the traditional client-consultant relationship in which the designer is an expert beholden to very specific interests is challenged. In this sense, the work of designers in the public realm is not simply a matter of enhancing existing service structures or even maintaining current social practices. It can be thought of in terms of playing a more transformative and political role.

The DSH project is partly an experiment in testing and understanding the limits and opportunities of this new role. For example, DSH explored how designers could be proponents of service co-production in the public sector, or more specifically how the city could look at collaborative social innovations as inspiration for different forms of public partnership and reshaping public services<sup>10</sup>. Thinking of service provision in this manner can constitute a challenge to the existing order in which public agencies operate. Most of the DSH proposals involving co-production and bottom-up social innovation were not immediately or entirely embraced by the agency. Certain aspects of co-production were eventually incorporated into the pilot proposals, but within the limits of existing parameters. For example, proposals in which co-production was directed at reorienting relationships between stakeholders in the affordable housing services landscape (i.e. supporting new forms of collaboration between tenants and landlords), did not fall directly

<sup>7</sup> In this article the authors reflect on the barriers faced by designers when designing for social innovation in the public sector. These reflections does not include the opinion of public staff participants, who might have felt equally challenged by the design process proposed by the Public & Collaborative team.

<sup>8</sup> The term 'user-centered design' was coined by Donald Norman at the University of California San Diego to describe design processes in which the needs of end-users influence the design of a product or service. The term and design approach enjoyed a surge of popularity after the publication of the books User-Centered System Design: New Perspectives on Human-Computer Interaction (Norman & Draper, 1986) and The Design of Everyday Things (Norman, 1988)

<sup>9</sup> This article refers to the participatory design approach as described in the Scandinavian tradition, in terms of early experiments with employing computers to emancipate workers in their work environment (Ehn, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> According to David Boyle, a fellow at the New Economics Foundation in London, co-production means delivering public services through an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families, and their neighbors. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and communities become far more effective agents of change.

within the agency's current mandate or practices. In retrospect, it is clear that the presentation, negotiation and reception of these ideas constituted moments of contestation, wherein design is an explicitly political act. Design becomes a political act precisely because it is a set of practices and procedures which directly challenge the established order. It represents a moment of contestation, not only through the promotion of new ideas and policies, but by the very processes in which such ideas are produced.

## 2.2 Overcoming Epistemological Barriers

*"Overcoming the distinction between quantitative and qualitative forms of knowledge is politically radical, as well as epistemologically radical. Breaking out of methodological scientific procedures may also mean breaking out of organisational routines that constrain power." (Davies, 2011)*

The DSH project was conceived as an inherently interdisciplinary endeavor meant to bring together designers (represented by Parsons students and Public Policy Lab fellows), agency leadership (with different backgrounds including strategic planning, marketing, and urban development policy) and front-line staff into a collaborative space. Within this space, the different project participants brought to the table different disciplinary viewpoints and approaches to improving New York City's affordable housing-related services<sup>11</sup>. Designers typically operate as experts in experimentation, coming up with a wide array of proposals in a short period of time. Design's mode of operation is heuristic and iterative (where failure during the process is expected and embraced), and it lays a heavy emphasis on 'innovation'. While agency partners certainly maintained a positive view of the value of design – particularly with respect to its potential to identify and fix service inefficiencies, as well to improve the style and usability of 'touch-points' (i.e. posters and websites) – the role of designer as a catalyst for social innovation and institutional change was not always embraced. Design proposals

that sought to discuss and expand policy into areas outside existing mandates were often constrained by legal infrastructure which places strict limitations on the speed and scale in which new policy ideas may be experimented with or implemented.

One such proposal recommended that affordable housing developers and property managers actively facilitate social networks and collaborative services within their buildings in order to help residents recognize each other for mutual support and foster a

**Design's mode of operation is heuristic and iterative (where failure during the process is expected and embraced), and it lays a heavy emphasis on "innovation."**

greater sense of connection and belonging throughout their community. While this concept appeared compatible with HPD's interests in "strengthening neighborhoods" and "stabilizing families" (HPD, 2010), the designer's proposed methods for achieving such goals differed significantly from the agency's existing policy mechanisms. Although this proposal was designed to further HPD's goals and social mission, the rationale for such an approach fell outside of existing frameworks for validating strategic decisions and policy proposals. Previous studies on policy innovation reinforce this perception by suggesting that modern bureaucracies "often struggle to make space for engagement with uncertainty" and operate within a highly rationalistic, economized epistemological framework (Davies, 2011). The DSH project verified that agencies', governments', and policy makers' 'economistic' approach to problem solving tends to value new ideas by weighing them against quantitative metrics for an initiative's likelihood of success. The rapid experiments, ad hoc iterations, and speculative narratives that designers commonly use to justify their ideas simply do not carry the same weight as rigorous surveying and economic data in the eyes of most public administrators. Both previous research on policy innovation experts and the

<sup>11</sup> Public Policy Lab's fellows included designers from different academic and professional backgrounds such as an experience designer with a focus on participatory design and systems thinking; a service designer specialized in social-sector clients; an expert in public-engagement strategy, and an urban planner with a focus on community-based design. Design students in the Integrated Design Program (BFA) and the Transdisciplinary Design Program (MFA) at Parsons were involved in the first phase of the project. Both academic programs emphasize the use of service design and participatory tools and methods to engage multiple stakeholders in addressing pressing social issues.

observations made during the DSH project confirm that the requirements necessary for bureaucratic institutions to incorporate new forms of change often fall outside the capabilities of designers. In meetings where proposals were presented to agency staff that emphasized social innovations outside existing service structures, the designers often lacked the 'epistemological authority' to convey the validity of their ideas to agency partners.

Both designers and policy makers are expected to demonstrate particular forms of expertise; but paradoxically such demonstrations of expertise can actually prevent the very real work required to translate policy intentions into political realities. For instance, a designer could be asked by agency staff to 'do the design' for a set of policy goals; this is not the same as designers working with citizens to envision better societies. If design practices are to be a catalyst for social innovation in the public sector, then it is imperative to further explore the possibility of creating platforms or spaces in which different epistemic communities may work together without reproducing hierarchical power relations where one form of knowledge and practice is valued more highly than another.

## 2.3 Managing Risk Aversion

*"The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation."* (Schön, 1983)

The risks associated with communicating new ideas and proposals must be taken into account when designing for social innovation with public-sector partners. Especially when discussing and promoting more disruptive, or transformative proposals, designers need to be aware of the unique constraints that government agencies face in exploring, entertaining, and implementing new ideas. By acting in the public sphere, agency managers and staff are held publicly accountable for their actions and for their use of taxpayers' money. For this reason, strict communications protocols (both internal and external) may inhibit the exchange of ideas and discourage

participants of a design project from taking the risks necessary to be truly innovative.

The various ideas, activities, and outcomes of the DSH project were subject to different constraints depending on their audience – be it the design team, agency partners, or the general public. The more people that proposals and interventions were potentially exposed to, the greater the limitations that were imposed upon them. As concepts moved from the design studio to the agency conference room and into the public domain, they were naturally subjected to increasingly rigorous editorial scrutiny and legal restriction.

In the studio, designers often encourage divergent thinking and expansive ideation in order to maximize the exploration and exchange of new ideas. In the conference room, an atmosphere of free and frank discussion may also be cultivated, but ideas must be articulated in ways that do not unduly criticize an agency's existing policies or unfairly overlook its inherent limitations. In public documents and



FIGURE 3: Layout of the "How-To Guide" cover.

The presence of agency's logo in the cover was contingent on the approval of all ideas and language consolidated by HPD's legal and communications staff.

interactions associated with the agency, new ideas must be thoroughly vetted and edited to ensure that they do not create false expectations, unequal opportunities, or conflicts of interest among individual constituents or institutional partners.

Since innovation in the public realm is intended for everyone, it cannot be seen to alienate anyone. Unlike the private corporation, which is obligated to act solely in the interest of its shareholders, a public-sector institution is obligated to act equally in the interest of all its constituents. As a result, the work of designers partnering with government agencies is held to a higher standard of public accountability. In this environment designers should expect agencies' legal and communications departments to work closely with design team in developing concepts for the public and authorizing them for public consumption.

The DSH team grappled with the complexities of involving the public in their work well before any of their proposals were ready to be discussed publicly. Design research methods involving public participants or private partners had to be routinely vetted by the agency. The design team's decision to produce and publish a "How-To Guide" (figure 3), illustrating the project's development and detailing proposals intended for piloting by the agency, presented additional challenges. Publishing concepts before conducting prototyping emphasized editing over experimentation and placed legal and communications procedures before the design process.

This experience demonstrates how untested ideas risk being evaluated on the basis of how they might be perceived rather than how they actually perform. 'Visioning' and scenario building – design approaches intended to explore new possibilities in order to prompt strategic conversations among stakeholders – risk being interpreted as "speculative" or "condescending" for presuming too much about current procedures and future possibilities, and they may be just as likely to offend public managers as inspire them.

Successful innovation in public services must ultimately recognize the challenges of public accountability. Designers and agency staff are wise to think strategically about how and when to involve the public in their work. This requires a delicate

balance that can be hard to achieve and manage. The Bloomberg administration, for instance, has been criticized for its so-called pilot programs – essentially a "do it first; ask questions later" approach. For some, these pilots are innovative ways to skip public-sector red tape, and for others they are a "tool that undermines democracy by minimizing the public's role in scrutinizing the ideas of government"<sup>12</sup>.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Building on reflections from this case study, this article concludes by highlighting various implications on designing for social innovation in the public sector and offering recommendations for designers, educators, civil servants and policy makers.



12 David W. Chen and Michael M. Grynbaum, "'Pilot' Label Lets Mayor's Projects Skip City Review," The New York Times, June 26, 2011, New York Times on the Web ([www.nytimes.com/2011/06/27/nyregion/bloomberg-pilot-programs-avoid-red-tape-and-public-review.html?](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/27/nyregion/bloomberg-pilot-programs-avoid-red-tape-and-public-review.html?)), accessed Feb. 23, 2013.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR

## DESIGN PRACTICE

Although the overall design agenda is growing within governments (with a prevalent focus on the design of 'apps' or digital platforms to increase government transparency), participatory design, service design, and designing for social innovation in the public sector are still emerging practices in the United States. As discussed in this article, designing for social innovation cannot be merely an exercise of consultation or placing the user at the center of the design process. Designing in this context is mostly about creating meaningful mechanisms of public participation. As a result, designers must acknowledge the complex political environment in which their work is situated. They would also do well to examine the landscape and existing processes which facilitate public participation in governance. The application of participatory methods and involving final users in the delivery of public services must be carefully examined. The aims of consultation, participation, co-design, and co-production can be easily distorted, and the use of these strategies – what Barbara Cruikshank (1999) calls “technologies of citizenship” – can expose problematic political and power relations. The design community needs to shift the discussion focused on user-centered methods towards a political commitment to participatory and democratic processes.

Designers pursuing social innovation in the public sector must also carefully consider how to position their projects in relation to government agencies, community partners, and private individuals, so as to maintain their own autonomy and legitimacy without losing the participation, trust, and enthusiasm of all stakeholders. As stressed above, in asserting their epistemological authority within hierarchical, bureaucratic policy making environments, designers will be subjected to increasingly rigorous scrutiny. Therefore, they must adapt their language and tools in ways that are more legible to their public partners and community collaborators. Further comparison and analysis is necessary to determine when and why designers are best served by working within, along side, or outside of government agencies.

## DESIGN EDUCATION

The DESIS Network's Public & Collaborative Thematic Cluster initiative is one example of how universities and design schools around the world are trying to create different opportunities for students and faculty to engage with a multiplicity of public and community partners. Exposure to these kinds of project situations is fundamental to the development of future designers' capacity to work collaboratively and engage in cooperative processes.

The DSH project in particular, revealed that designers must learn how to better communicate with public-sector managers and at the same time retain their authority to intervene and add value to a field that often resists the kinds of uncertainty and speculative thinking that characterize design practice. In this sense, it is essential to nurture pedagogical spaces that enhance the ability of design students to interact with other fields and disciplines, such as the social sciences, management, and public policy.

Although the market for design services in the public sector is expanding (with companies like IDEO, Reboot, and others steadily expanding the field) there is a

lack of a strong professional and academic tradition around service design in the United States. Consequently, there is not much of a culture or familiarity with design-led innovation processes within public agencies. As a result, there are few internships or other opportunities for design students to gain experience working in this space. One way to address this issue is for universities' career service offices to consider establishing relationships with public agencies and to guide design students in pursuing careers in the public sector.

To strengthen the professional authority and credibility of designers working to effect change in the public realm, universities should continue to promote public events, stimulate research initiatives and foster strategic alliances with public agencies in order to build a more robust academic knowledge base in this emerging field.

## **PUBLIC-SECTOR MANAGERS AND POLICY MAKERS**

Public-sector managers and policy makers are beholden to practical and political constraints, which can make experimentation with new ideas – even desirable ones – difficult and/or impossible. If public-sector managers and policy makers are interested in experimenting with new ideas, one approach could be to create semi-autonomous spaces for collaboration, or what Christian Bason has referred to as “authorizing environments” (Bason, 2013). Supported by a specific agency, organization, or community, these spaces could serve as both exploratory and experimental sites for working towards innovative solutions to public problems (i.e. affordable housing, education, healthcare, etc). They could be dedicated to the creation of networks and partnerships; launching projects, events, and platforms. Such spaces would bring together a variety of actors, both public and private, with a diverse array of skill sets and expertise around a set of issues. They would provide a degree of freedom from many of the innovative constraints of partner-specific mandates, policy issues, and procedural restrictions.

While remaining semi-autonomous and allowing innovators to freely explore new forms and create new knowledge, these spaces could still be supported by the larger institutional bodies whose services, practices, interests stand to benefit from such collaborative work. How the output of these spaces is evaluated and adopted would ultimately be up to the specific agencies, organizations, or communities that house them. However, the idea is to proliferate such spaces so that they may (1) work experimentally and freely using design as a instrument for advancing innovation in the public sector/realms, and (2) be collaboratively integrated with all interested parties at every step of the process in order to maximize the potential for innovation and new ideas to emerge.

Governments should consider promoting the creation of ‘public innovation places’ where professionals from different backgrounds (design, economics, policy and social knowledge) can operate in a more horizontal, non-hierarchical ways, and where they can complement each other, as opposed to one form of knowledge dictating how the others will operate.

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# CHAPTER 2

## DESIGN SCHOOLS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

### 1. SEVEN REFLECTIONS ON DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION, STUDENTS & A NEIGHBOURHOOD

VIRGINIA TASSINARI, NIK BAERTEN

### 2. LEARNING TOGETHER: STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS CO-DESIGNING FOR CARBON REDUCTION IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

ADAM THORPE, LORRAINE GAMMAN



# SEVEN REFLECTIONS ON DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION: STUDENTS AND A NEIGHBORHOOD

Nik Baerten

## ABSTRACT

*The process to involve students from several schools and neighborhood inhabitants as well as the public sector in design activities aimed at social innovation, presents a series of challenges worth reflecting upon. One might ask oneself: what are some of the main ingredients that play a part in the success of such a project? How do these influence the various stakeholders involved? This article aims to draw attention to seven such key learnings, using the “Welcome to Saint-Gilles” project as its main inspiration and case study.*

### DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

### PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

### DESIGN PROCESS MANAGEMENT

#### PROJECT TITLE:

Welcome to Saint-Gilles

#### UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:

Social Spaces,  
CUO - MAD Faculty

#### CITY/COUNTRY:

Genk, Belgium

#### SERVICE AREAS:

Neighborhood Revitalization

#### MAIN PARTNERS:

Reciprocity, Recentre,  
Wallonie Design, ID-Campus  
(HEC, Liège),  
MAD Fac (Genk) and  
7 other design schools

#### PROJECT LEAD:

Virginia Tassinari

#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

<http://co-p2p.mlog.taik.fi>

## 1. CONTEXT

Throughout the academic year 2012-2013, design students from MAD Faculty in Genk (B) together with students from 7 other design schools in the EU-region Meuse-Rhine, participated in the project “Welcome to Saint-Gilles”<sup>1</sup>. An initiative of Reciprocity (Liège’s International Design Biennial) with the support of Wallonie Design and Recentre, the project aimed to create small design interventions to meet social needs of the people living in the Saint-Gilles neighborhood in Liège (Belgium). For many students it was their first encounter with the principles and methods of design for social innovation.

In this chapter, the authors - who have been involved in the project as design educators, project leaders as well as experts invited to reflect upon the work of students of the other participating schools - would like to share a selection of lessons learnt regarding the design of the process as such, stakeholder and designer roles as well as more general points of attention. These lessons build further upon insights gained within the context of the “Welcome to Saint-Gilles” and similar projects on design for social innovation in which both authors have been involved over the past few years.

The following paragraphs will explain seven such key insights taking into account the roles and perspectives of stakeholders generally involved, e.g. that of the educator, the student, neighborhood inhabitants, local policymakers, etc.

## 2. SEVEN REFLECTIONS

In the case study at hand, design for social innovation has been addressed as a challenge best tackled by means of a participatory/collaborative approach. As such, the project brought together a wide range of stakeholders which were involved in the analysis of the situation at hand as well as the co-creation of (seeds for) solutions. These included design students and educators from 8 design schools from

3 different countries, neighborhood inhabitants and local entrepreneurs, local policymakers and staff, public sector staff (design organization) as well as experts on design for social innovation. The degree of participation of these stakeholders varied from providing access to people and facilities for design activities to take place, to providing information and feedback on student ideas through interviews and workshops.

The following paragraphs will attempt to reflect upon the design process followed, the stakeholders roles and interactions that took place and do so in retrospect. A selection of seven practical insights will be given, some of which may sound trivial, as they share points of attention with participatory design or multi-stakeholder processes in general. Yet experience shows that they continue to be overlooked in practice and are generally insufficiently addressed in most student courses on the matter. Hence the authors wish to shed some extra light upon them so that other schools engaging their students in real-life, collaborative projects on design for social innovation might benefit.

### 2.1 Managing expectations

*To expect the unexpected shows a thoroughly modern intellect.”*

—Oscar Wilde

In most projects in which various stakeholders - such as students, educators, inhabitants or users, local policymakers and/or civil servants - are involved, the eventual perception of success depends on how well expectations are managed in advance. Each stakeholder will participate with expectations shaped by their specific context and agenda. Educators for example wish to guide the learning process of the students. Students wish to learn, obtain a sufficient grade or create a solution perceived as valuable by the inhabitants. Policy-makers and civil servants wish to have a qualitative result on which they can build. Inhabitants expect working solutions, etc. All these perspectives imply different requirements in terms of process and envisioned result. Meeting all expectations to their fullest extent is often not feasible for practical reasons of available time, resources and/or expertise. Especially then it is crucial

<sup>1</sup> When addressing student activities during the “Welcome to Saint-Gilles” project within the context of this text, the authors mainly address those carried out by the students of the MAD Faculty. While most activities were similar across the various participating design schools, there have been differences in approach. These were a valuable part of the learning experience across schools, yet go beyond the scope of this text. For more information on the project, see [http://www.designliege.be/en-293-welcome\\_to\\_saint\\_gilles.html](http://www.designliege.be/en-293-welcome_to_saint_gilles.html)

that expectations are made explicit, discussed and put in the right perspective as early on in the process as possible. Only then they can be managed and the process and its results can be tuned to the extent possible. Project coordinators need to facilitate this discussion as to find the right equilibrium and provide clarity to the various stakeholders. Key questions for the moderator to address in this matter could be: “What do you hope to get out of this project?”, “When would you consider it a success?”, “What would you think would be needed to achieve this?”, “Do we have (access to) it?”. Addressing these questions collectively helps to build mutual understanding of what is needed, what can be achieved and thus what can be expected and what cannot.

As people voice their expectations, one also gains a deeper insight into the link between expectations, levels of ambition and dynamics of engagement between stakeholders. For example,

**“As people voice their expectations, one also gains a deeper insight into the link between expectations, levels of ambition and dynamics of engagement between stakeholders.”**

when expectations, vested interests and means of local policymakers are very high, this might give wings to ambitious students and citizens to be more engaged. When teachers emphasize the necessity for their students above all to learn from their experience, local citizens might feel their problems are not taken as seriously as they would like them to be and consequently feel less engaged. A deeper understanding of the dynamics between stakeholders, can inform the further fine tuning of the design process. In their role as facilitators of communication, designers need to develop the sensitivity needed in order to pick up on these signals. In the case of “Welcome to Saint-Gilles”<sup>2</sup>, early on in the process it was made clear to local policymakers

that the results would be “seeds” of social innovation which would need further care and investment by the local community and its supporters. They would show potential, yet not deliver complete solutions as such. As the various student projects inspired the collective imagination of the local community, expectations of the final results grew but so did the understanding of local inhabitants that their own role was crucial to make things work.

## 2.2 Managing momentum

*“It might be true that it is “quality time” that counts, but after a certain point quantity has a bearing on quality.”*

—Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

From a ‘project’ point of view, activities have a clear beginning and an end. A problem is delineated and one works towards a solution, of which the delivery forms the culmination point of the project. In a participatory setting however, there is a ‘process’ component to activities which requires additional attention. From a ‘process’ point of view, for example, ‘momentum’<sup>3</sup> is of key importance regarding stakeholder involvement. It is closely linked to engagement as stakeholders feel more engaged - and thus willing to invest attention and effort into the cause - as they see things happen, feel appreciated as they are invited to participate, feel part of making change happen etc.

Momentum and hence also engagement are influenced by many factors such as frequency and quality of communication and interaction, depth and nature of stakeholder involvement, progress and results, sense of (co-)ownership, etc. As such, building and managing momentum over the timespan of a project is an important task for the project coordinator. Depending on the phase of the project, he/she will aim to modulate momentum as the driving power of stakeholder involvement in view of the goals throughout the process.

During “Welcome to Saint-Gilles”, fluctuations of momentum could be experienced on various levels. During the research phase of the project, the streets were often abuzz with students talking to shop-owners, local inhabitants and passers-by releasing their

<sup>3</sup> Both quantitative momentum, i.e. measurable in terms of number and frequency of events, and perceived or qualitative momentum, i.e. as experienced by resp. stakeholders, play a key role.

<sup>2</sup> See “From Welfare State to Partner State” by Virginia Tassinari

urban probes, bringing furniture to the park to test a concept or attract attention, etc. while later periods during which students were hard at work prototyping solutions, were calm and showed less activity in the streets. Also, for most participating schools, the amount of time for and frequency of contact with the local inhabitants were limited and - for reasons of manageability - focussed on specific moments. A select group of inhabitants, for example, were interviewed by students from the various schools on these occasions, often zooming in on similar questions as students tried to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the neighborhood. Repetition of questions led to fatigue with this group, eventually causing a narrowing of focus, often with a bias toward the negative characteristics of their neighborhoods or nostalgia for times bygone. For them, this led to a change in perception of momentum, as being a little stuck in the moment.

Another swing of momentum could be noticed towards the end of the project. A beautifully crafted exhibition<sup>4</sup> of the project results featured about 80 ideas to revitalize the neighborhood and concluded the project. They were seeds to be taken home, planted and cared for by local inhabitants. A chocolate map of the neighborhood - proposed by one of the students<sup>5</sup> - for example, was already in production by a local artisan by the end of the project. Another student's proposal to organize an evening walk using community-built paper lanterns<sup>6</sup> had awoken interest in local community members to breathe life into a new tradition.<sup>7</sup> Although these were clear signs that local initiative had received a boost and people were adopting some of the seeds of ideas sown, people voiced their concern that as students would leave and no-one would be left behind or appointed to keep discussions and initiative

going, momentum would die out.<sup>8</sup> With this, they would soon return to their previous state or worse: with yet another confirmation of the ingrained false belief of powerlessness, of incapability of bringing about change on their own.

With the exhibition and the implicit conclusion of the involvement of the schools, "Welcome to Saint-Gilles" has entered a handover-phase. Not only the results, but the enthusiasm and hopes awakened in the hearts of many stakeholders need to be carried over. The responsibility of the designer (see also "designing out the designer") hence extends beyond the delivery of the results, however small.

One could argue that in the context of a school-driven project certain degrees of quality and responsibility cannot be guaranteed as it concerns a learning experience. Yet even when the expectations are carefully managed, working within a real-life context, implies working with the hopes and fears of real people. This inevitably implies the need for responsible behavior from those involved. Architects and builders are responsible for their constructions many decades after they have been finished. Medical students train on real patients, yet those patients are adequately cared for, no matter how well or badly the students perform. Even though these analogies are only partially relevant to this context, and even though the ethical and moral dimensions to this point lie beyond the scope of this article, the issue of roles and responsibilities of the designer can benefit from further debate.

## 2.3 DESIGNING OUT THE DESIGNER

*"New solutions win by virtue of adoption, and they don't get adopted if they're bad solutions."*

—John Perry Barlow

One way to ensure or facilitate local stakeholders to carry out solutions or carry on the process of collaborative solution-building, is to consciously "design out the designer" from the solution. Many successful initiatives of design for social innovation

4 By Thomas Lommée. See [http://www.intrastructures.net/Intrastructures/Actions\\_-\\_Welcome\\_to\\_St\\_gilles.html](http://www.intrastructures.net/Intrastructures/Actions_-_Welcome_to_St_gilles.html) and [http://www.designliege.be/FCK\\_STOCK/File/thomas\\_lomme-postcards.pdf](http://www.designliege.be/FCK_STOCK/File/thomas_lomme-postcards.pdf) for the project take-away-cards.

5 "L'Œr Noir" by Pablo Calderon, Design Academy Eindhoven.

6 "Grow slow light" by Teun Habraken, MAD Faculty.

7 Intrigued by the idea of creating a new tradition, some local inhabitants decided to revisit their neighborhood history. Hence recently they decided to blend the old with the new and organize a street festival - 'Le pèlerinage des musiciens' - to be organized in collaboration with/by the neighborhood team ('le mouvement Saint-Gilles'), guided by local project partner ID Campus. The wrapping paper around the chocolate neighborhood map now sold in the local artisanal chocolate shop will feature an information leaflet on the event.

8 During the year following Reciprocity, students of both the MAD Faculty (Genk) and ID-campus (HEC, Liège) continued to work on the concepts developed in order to guide a group of inhabitants - who gathered as a newborn neighborhood movement, as caretakers of the initiative's legacy - in implementing their own solutions, co-creating toolkits and setting up platforms (on- and offline).

have done this by developing so called “toolkits”, designed with the solution’s end-users in mind. Yet all too often, these toolkits pay too little attention to the broader context in which the solution will need to be applied. Generally, people in various roles and positions are required in order to make solutions work. When phasing out the role of the designer, these need to be taken into account. This goes beyond the mere tools and extends to people and organizational contexts.

In the case of Saint-Gilles, for example, people clearly feel the need for the installment of a skilled person and place equipped to catalyze the flow of resourceful interaction within the local community.<sup>9</sup>

For project results to be sustainable solutions, usable by the community they were intended to support, it is a valuable exercise and learning experience for students to learn to ‘undesign’ their role as designers/facilitators from the eventual solution they create. As such they need to learn to ‘read’ their users, to empathize with their audiences and assess their ability to carry out or carry on solutions so they can scale. To do this they need to be resourceful. In the case of “Welcome to Saint-Gilles”, this has been part of the assignment for the MAD Faculty students from the beginning. As such, the handing-over phase and growth path of the solution was treated as a design challenge in its own right.

At the same time, this exercise emphasized the areas and moments in which specific design skills were needed and the designer could not take a step back, but was explicitly needed, such as when translating requirements into a specific design.

## 2.4 Rendering envisionings tangible

*“Nothing ever becomes real until it is experienced.”*

—John Keats

Involving a broad range of stakeholders implies having to deal with a diversity of perspectives and hence also of languages through which they address the challenges at hand. In order for them to understand each other and for designers to be able to integrate the information they gather, a common ground needs to be established. While words are valuable carriers

of meaning, their meanings and interpretation by people from different backgrounds may vary widely. In this context, visuals and tangible objects may help to ground meaning.

Besides because of their knowledge of the design process itself, designers are well-equipped as facilitators of communication<sup>10</sup>, translators of viewpoints and skillful creators of common ground. Through drawings, manipulated images, object prototypes, storyboards, videosketches and various other ways of prototyping ideas, they can render observations, ideas and envisioned experiences tangible<sup>11</sup>. As such, these creations can help to establish a common ground of understanding and a valuable resource of reference material and ‘project memory’.

These materials also allow the designers themselves to focus people’s attention more easily and gather feedback from the various stakeholders involved as to fine-tune their ideas and solutions on a continuous basis. Having tangible documentation of designs and the design process from the earliest field research, over analysis to concept design and implementation, all the way to testing and communication of results, helps to steer the process and foster engagement.

As such, the collective materials of stepwise inspiration and concretization are powerful ingredients in building and maintaining momentum throughout the design process. That is also why keeping these - often highly visual - materials in view and within arm’s reach inside the working space (also while engaging with stakeholders) is a stimulating way to remain in touch with gathered insights as well as to enable people to point at them while discussing them. This saves valuable time and helps to keep interpretations aligned throughout the process. In the case of “Welcome to Saint-Gilles”, no fixed ‘project rooms’ or places to meet and engage with stakeholders within the neighborhood were available on a continuous basis. No working space could therefore evolve and this evolution could not grow along with the understanding of and discussions between the various stakeholders and the designers. A local ‘base-station’ would also have been an opportunity to further ground the activities within the local area and community and allow design students to experience

<sup>9</sup> The students and the newly founded neighborhood team/ movement (‘le mouvement Saint-Gilles’) of local inhabitants are currently working on both aspects.

<sup>10</sup> (Tan, 2010)

<sup>11</sup> (Buchenau & Suri, 2000)

and experiment with the various rhythms of life in the neighborhood in a more profound manner.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of “Welcome to Saint-Gilles”, for practical reasons of distance and availability of people, few iterations of community-feedback were possible. The know-how of teachers and experts involved was employed in order to compensate for this lack somehow. Nevertheless, students were stimulated to render their ideas tangible early on in and throughout the project. They did so through maps, diagrams, drawings and sketches, but also image manipulations as to place envisioned solutions in their intended context. Externalizing ideas helped students’ to clarify their own ideas by allowing them to enter into a dialogue with them as well as to engage in a more fruitful discussion with the various stakeholders. From street furniture and signage as service touchpoints, to tools for community “placemaking” were rendered tangible and refined based upon feedback by peers, experts, local inhabitants and other stakeholders.

The value of rendering concepts tangible extends beyond the prototyping of the ideas as such. The prototyping activity<sup>13</sup> collaborative thought-experiment with stakeholders of trying to envision the possible impacts - both positive and negative - of their solution on its context, whether physical or in terms of community dynamics. This “what if” game of imagineering is often employed within (design driven) strategic foresight as to feed discussion and foster engagement regarding future challenges, solutions and situations.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.5 Seeing with new eyes

*“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”*

—Marcel Proust

By engaging with stakeholders and trying to elicit information about the context at hand, not only does the designer gain valuable insights, but also the stakeholders involved are teased to reflect upon

their day to day context and look at it from a different angle.

Challenged by questions of the designer asking “*why is that so?*”, “*why could it not ... ?*”, “*but I also see ...*”, “*what if ...*”, they are led to question certain assumptions. The act of questioning one’s assumptions is a powerful source of insight and creative inspiration, but in a way it is also a contradiction in terms. It is exactly because they are assumptions, that we are mostly not aware of them in the first place. It often takes an outsider - in this case the designer - to raise the questions that allow this to happen.

More than once in the “Welcome to Saint-Gilles” project, the expectations of local inhabitants were challenged as they witnessed or participated in street

**“More than once in the ‘Welcome to Saint-Gilles’ project, the expectations of local inhabitants were challenged as they witnessed or participated in street interventions by the students within the framework of their design research activities or discussed with them.”**

interventions by the students within the framework of their design research activities or discussed with them. The outsiders’ perspectives made the insiders see with new eyes.

It is not just the eye enabling one to look at a context, but also the context enabling the eye to see things in a different way. There are various ways to bring about such effects. Rather than focus on how to achieve a certain goal, the authors explicitly challenged students to imagine their goal would have been achieved at some point in the future, their solution would have been realized: “*How would the situation look different?*”,

<sup>12</sup> During the evaluation of the project and exploration of ways to elaborate upon its results, the need for a “base-station” as a lever for social innovation was emphasized.

<sup>13</sup> Due to practical restrictions no participatory prototyping took place within the “Welcome to Saint-Gilles” project. Students’ prototypes were however shown to and discussed with local inhabitants (and other stakeholders) as to enable fine tuning through feedback.

<sup>14</sup> (Baerten, 2012)

*"Which steps could have led to this effect?"*; ... By luring stakeholders away from the present into a preferable future, they were stimulated not only to envision today's problems solved, but also today's points of strength developed further.

As such, an important enabler in seeing with new eyes, has been to shift students and inhabitants away from *"what is"* and *"what has been"*, towards *"what could be"*. Of course, among the elderly inhabitants sometimes this would mean nostalgia for bygone times would set in, but then they were stimulated to combine insights from the past with today's and tomorrow's challenges to come to new envisionings.

Furthermore, by nudging people away from focussing solely on problems to building further on qualities already present within the situation at hand, the discourse was allowed to take a more opportunistic turn. Rather than to emphasize barriers already blocking the field of vision, room was created for inhabitants and students alike to see new possibilities, which could be reached by building on what was already present, albeit sometimes in a dormant state.

As these envisionings of *"what could be"* were rendered tangible, by asking questions such as: *"Suppose this idea would be in place, how would Saint-Gilles look/feel/work differently?"*, stakeholders started to see even present-day Saint-Gilles through different eyes. Moreover, by providing a temporary escape from feasibility checks and impossibilities which normally characterize the formality by which local initiatives come about, new eyes opened up new pathways of enthusiasm and mutual respect in relationships between local inhabitants, civil servants and policymakers.

In retrospect, one could say that *"Welcome to Saint-Gilles"* had the luxury of being supported by local policymakers, while they also let it take its own course. They framed the project from beginning to end, followed its progress and checked in every now and then, but mostly kept their distance. As such they showed to value and respect the experimental nature of the initiative. They allowed themselves to be surprised, inspired and in the end to be provided with seeds of bottom-up innovation which are now available to be co-developed in the future. Last but not least, schools and students - in the

particular case of Saint-Gilles previously often considered a nuisance<sup>15</sup> - were now the ones who prepared the terrain and catalyzed new ways of interacting with each other, reframing the situation as one of adding value to the neighborhood collaboratively.

## 2.6 Building belief

*"Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones."*

—Herbert Simon

For most stakeholders involved in *"Welcome to Saint-Gilles"* - except for the educators and experts - it was their first encounter with design for social innovation. As such, it has been above everything else a valuable learning experience for them in many ways. Both sides have learnt the power and limitations of design aimed at changing a neighborhood's existing situation into a preferred one, the kind of added value<sup>16</sup> it can deliver through co-design and co-production of solutions. They have also learnt how in this process, design can lead to a change of roles and dynamics between stakeholders. But most of all, the major leap that has been taken is that of building belief, of realizing that a situation perceived as inert, unchangeable can actually be moved into a preferable direction. This shift and the catalytic activities leading up towards it, as such express the essence of design.

As such, *"Welcome to Saint-Gilles"* has proved a learning journey for many. Inhabitants, for example, learned that change in their local community is possible, and moreover that they can themselves can be the ones effectuating change with relatively little effort. They have learnt that by collaborating on initially relatively simple ideas - even naive perhaps in some cases - these ideas could be grown into valuable and robust concepts. Inhabitants learned that it is possible to align viewpoints and efforts of those who have a common stake in the future of their community: their neighbors, young and old, local civil servants and policymakers, local entrepreneurs, local authorities etc. As such, by breaking the barrier of silence and inertia, between *"wish we could"* and *"can do"*, doors have been

<sup>15</sup> cf. noisy nightlife, local food monoculture, clogged up traffic, etc.

<sup>16</sup> (Sanders & Simons, 2009) distinguish between at least six types of added value delivered through co-creation within a societal scope, i.e. transformation, ownership, learning, behavior change, happiness, survival.

opened, breaking new ground for future change.

The way in which several of the student concepts have been adopted, adapted and are now being implemented by the local inhabitants bears testimony to this.

Celebrating small successes throughout the process is an important factor in building engagement and belief. Such moments can be simple yet powerful and be celebrated in myriad ways, e.g. a local policymaker or civil servant paying a visit to a meeting with local inhabitants, a video documenting local inhabitants actively involved in prototyping 'their' solution, etc. By rendering small successes and intermediate results tangible, by creating references through documented memories, belief is built and momentum is gained. In Saint-Gilles, posters on window panes spurred neighborhood dialogue, an exhibition celebrating the student projects brought people together to link up and discuss further, project flashcards visualized what a concept could lead to if implemented, allowed people to take ideas home physically and contained a link to its authors so people could get in touch.

Thus, as touchpoints in general service design help to shape the user experience of those involved in using and/or providing the service, also in this case, simple touchpoints enabled a community of people to build belief in their ability to effectuate change.

## 2.7 CELEBRATING SERENDIPITY

*"The song was there before me, before I came along.  
I just sorta came down and just sorta took it down  
with a pencil, but it was there before I came around."*

—Bob Dylan

While highlighting the importance of managing expectations, we should also highlight the importance of leaving room for discovery of ideas that lie beyond the line of expectation. When facing a challenge, any solution-oriented person will seek to form himself/herself an idea of how to tackle it, which soon becomes the seemingly single adequate solution. A key characteristic of design-driven modes of thought however is the ability to keep alternative options open, to not cling to any idea a priori.

In "Welcome to Saint-Gilles" students engaged in

all kinds of design research activities ranging from ethnographic observation methods to urban variants of cultural probes<sup>17</sup>.

Many of these methods were aimed at teaching them to postpone judgement and interpretation, to let the situation speak to them as such, to engage in field research with an open mind. It is thus that which at first appears coincidental, acquires the traits of a skill which can be learnt.

Various coincidental encounters with people and situations, inspired and nudged students' designs into sometimes surprising, new, but valuable directions which could hardly have been foreseen on beforehand. They had been inspired by the situation at hand, the richness of first-hand, unfiltered experience.

Yet they could only happen because the process left room for it. The danger of micromanaging processes in view of quick fixes or solutions by rushing forward is always lurking around the corner, especially there where stakes are high and preferred outcomes or results can be blinding.

When learning is the primary purpose - for both schools and for example local policymakers - school-driven projects of design for social innovation generally benefit from a context which is shielded from pressures which would overemphasize the need for a particular solution in the shortest amount possible.

The "Welcome to Saint-Gilles" project could thankfully take place without such pressures and could therefore also demonstrate to stakeholders the variety of solutions and changes in stakeholder dynamics to which design for social innovation could lead.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

The above are but a handful of lessons drawn from experiences in design initiatives aimed at social innovation in which design educators and students, citizens and policymakers collaborate. Although simple and straightforward, they point towards valuable insights regarding future points of attention/challenges for design practice, design education and policy making.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<sup>17</sup> (Gaver, Boucher, Pennington, & Walker, 2004)

## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

In a context in which the public is involved to collaboratively look for improvements to society in its smallest to its largest manifestations, more than anything else, the designer's or design team's role can be considered as that of a catalyst of change. Through interaction they will set the stage for solutions to be designed collaboratively, later on continued and scaled. Sparking and maintaining momentum of (inter)action to enable change is the work of a catalyst. To do this well, knowledge of societal systems (e.g. public institutions) and its interactions as well as group facilitation skills are welcome assets. The design team has specific knowledge and expertise in terms of design processes moving from research and ideas through concepts to implementations. They are also skilled at integrating knowledge and insights from other disciplines in the design process, yet should not (wish to) become pseudo-experts in those disciplines as such.

It is to be expected that designers will increasingly occupy also positions embedded within public sector structures. This will not only infuse design logic and processes within the context of policymaking and -implementation, yet also inform and inspire design practice to develop new approaches to tackling societal challenges. This body of knowledge and know-how will once more (need to) enrich the design discourse and the skills and expertise of agencies focussing on design for social innovation.

### DESIGN EDUCATION

The "Welcome to Saint-Gilles" project has once again shown the need for design education to expand the knowledge and skill-set of educators and students to enable them to carry out multi-stakeholder design processes in a public context successfully. In this respect one can think of everything from facilitation and group dynamics to basic urban anthropology or sociology and business model development, all of which are valuable enrichments of the designer's know-how. The consolidation and build-up of knowledge derived from experiences such as these - and to which the Public & Collaborative initiative is a welcome contribution - requires and deserves more attention.

As skills shift and design teams will incorporate and adapt knowledge and know-how from other disciplines, new people will also bring about new dynamics. Many design programs are still very much (over)focussed on educating the 'individual designer', while in view of future challenges and modes of knowledge creation, exchange and work, they could benefit from a more balanced approach which includes also the necessary team- and network-skills.

It is worth noting as well that education is not a tapas bar and no one exercise make an expert. Students would therefore benefit from more integrated curricula in which the knowledge and skills they acquire through their participation in real-life projects of design for social innovation can be deepened through multiple experiences and iterations.

Furthermore, considering the nature of the projects and the frequency and depth of interaction required, both the project and the students' learning experience would benefit from extra-curricular involvement of students in local communities. In the case of "Welcome to Saint-Gilles" several students became passionately involved, putting in lots of extra(curricular) time to better understand their context and better serve the people their designs were intended to serve or influence. In the current educational climate, such passionate involvement should receive more attention, recognition and encouragement. Only then will we be able to 'grow' the design-driven social innovators we as a society need.

## POLICYMAKING

Getting involved early and deeply in design-driven initiatives of social innovation offers a unique opportunity for local policymakers to engage with their audience, increase their empathy for and understanding of the situation on the terrain. As they are likely to be in the position of managing the projects or setting their constraints, it is crucial that policymakers understand the needs of the project and especially the process involved (e.g. room to experiment, flexibility, learning, etc.). As mentioned earlier (see for example "Managing expectations") also lies an important role for the designer or coordinator to safeguard these principles and mediate between the interests and viewpoints of stakeholders involved. Involving policymakers in ongoing projects elsewhere before embarking on an adventure in their home context, can be a valuable way for them to get acquainted with the methods and approaches and allow them to assess the appropriate management style.

In terms of the latter, it is crucial that they understand that 'process' is at least as important as 'project'. This proves generally to be a steep challenge, since new initiatives taken by policymakers are often tightly linked to policy-cycles and other, fixed agendas, with a clear beginning, end and culmination point. However there are no guarantees that the evolution and momentum of a project of social innovation follows or should follow that same flow. As such processes often involve a change of ways and culture, they require flexibility in time and space.

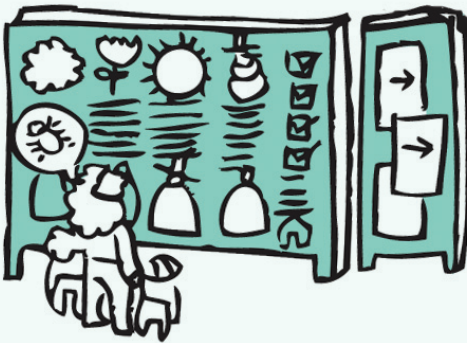
When it comes to involving schools in designing for social innovation in local communities, there are a few points of attention worth to be addressed. Schools are first and foremost educational institutions. As policymaking, also education has its rhythm and calendar. Also these can be in or out of synch with the flow of activity required in terms of community interaction.

Second, in times of budget cuts and diminished financial means, local policymakers may see in schools a 'cheap alternative' to address a problem/challenge rather than invest in a more costly professional design practice. This would be unfair to the schools, the design professionals and most of all the local community, yet unfortunately it happens. This is an important pitfall to avoid for all involved, including design schools.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKING (CONT.)

That being said, policymakers creating space for schools to engage in real life's societal challenges and solutions is a valuable investment in the next generation of problem solvers and preventers, and a boost to community building efforts across generations. In many contexts, the valuable role design schools can play as catalysts of change and a low-threshold entry point to experiment with design for social innovation is still underestimated and undervalued. Last but not least, there are various ways in which schools and professional design practices could collaborate and be of complementary value to one another. So far these modi operandi have been insufficiently explored.

Last but not least, investing in whichever project of social innovation ought to be seen a long term investment and commitment. Policymakers and civil servants ought to be prepared to invest in continuation, experimentation and scaling, out of respect for local communities and stakeholders involved. Designers would do well to emphasize this more when and especially before engaging in participatory projects of design for social innovation.



I am indebted to my wife and colleague Virginia Tassinari and to my DESIS & Public & Collaborative colleagues, especially Ezio Manzini and Eduardo Staszowski for both patience and ever-inspiring discussion. Thanks also to Thomas Lommée, François Jegou, Adam Thorpe & Lorraine Gamman for valuable reflections on some of the topics addressed and of course to our fellow colleagues from the design schools and all involved in Reciprocity who made “Welcome to Saint-Gilles” possible, especially Giovanna Massoni, Clio Brzakala, Cyrielle Doutrewe, Emilie Vandermeiren and Leonor Lupi.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Nik Baerten** was trained as a knowledge engineer. For several years he was active as a multidisciplinary researcher at the Digital Culture department of the Maastricht McLuhan Institute. In 2004, he co-founded Pantopicon, a studio for futures exploration and envisioning based in Antwerp (Belgium), blending foresight & design. In 2013, the studio and its partner Concrete were awarded a Henry Van de Velde Design Label for their social design project “Museum in our street”. Nik lectures at the MAD Faculty in Genk (Belgium). Besides a foresight-oriented course entitled “futurestudio”, he also teaches - together with Virginia Tassinari - an applied course on design for social innovation, through which for several years they engaged students in community-oriented projects of “design for togetherness”.

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# LEARNING TOGETHER: STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS CO-DESIGNING FOR CARBON REDUCTION IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

Adam Thorpe and Lorraine Gamman

## ABSTRACT

*In 2012, the London Borough of Camden (Camden Council) identified 30 'Green Zones' – local neighborhoods, including King's Cross where Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design (CSM) is located, that are characterized by the presence of community champions and/or community groups that are committed to delivering behavioral change that supports more sustainable ways of living within their neighborhoods. This article reflects on how the University of the Arts London (UAL) DESIS Lab, working in partnership with the London Borough of Camden's Sustainability Team, supported students from CSM's BA Product Design and MA Applied Imagination courses to collaborate with local residents to design new ways to change behaviors to reduce carbon emissions. Reflection on the practice of delivering the project confirms some of our previous understandings about the best way to deliver student design projects that address societal challenges working with community groups. It also highlights further challenges that need to be addressed when seeking to deliver similar DESIS projects in the future. Finally, we consider the implications of these findings for design practice, design education and policy makers.*

**SOCIALLY RESPONSIVE  
DESIGN**

**SERVICE DESIGN  
SOCIAL INNOVATION**

**COMMUNITIES  
FOOD GROWING**

**WATER SAVING  
BEHAVIOR CHANGE**

**PROJECT TITLE:**  
Green Camden

**UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:**  
UAL

**CITY/COUNTRY:**  
London, UK

**SERVICE AREA:**  
Carbon reduction for  
sustainable futures

**MAIN PARTNERS:**  
Camden Council, CSM (UAL)

**PROJECT LEAD:**  
Adam Thorpe

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The theme 'Public and Collaborative' was proposed and defined by Ezio Manzini and colleagues at Parsons, The New School for Design in September 2011, with the intention of catalyzing a collaborative exploration of the design questions: *'How are the emerging social networks meeting public services and innovation policies? And vice versa, how can public services and innovation policies trigger, empower, direct the emerging social networks? What can design do to make this 'promise' more effective and fruitful?'* (See also the P&C Background Notes at <http://www.desis-clusters.org/background-notes>).

This paper shares insights into how the UAL DESIS Lab team at CSM taught BA Product Design students and MA Applied Imagination students to support social innovation<sup>1</sup> initiatives and to work *with* and *for* the local community to design for social change, whilst adhering to the undergraduate students' apparently contradictory course requirements and examination objectives. We feel it is the insights that can be derived from the full account of how the project progressed, the challenges and barriers to success, as well as the final outcomes achieved that may be of interest to other design educators and provide a contribution to knowledge in this area of research and practice. In doing so we contribute to an address to Margolin's concern that 'attention [has not] been given to changes in the education of product designers that might prepare them to design for populations in need rather than for the market alone'.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1. UAL DESIS Lab structure

The UAL DESIS Lab is coordinated from within the Socially Responsive Design<sup>3</sup> and Innovation Hub at the Design Against Crime Research Centre (DACRC). We deliver practice-based and practice-led research in the field of socially responsive design for innovation and sustainability. As a research centre we do not have

direct access to a cohort of design students, so to work with our student cohort we have to negotiate with course leaders. Typically, this requires planning twelve months ahead to run a student project with courses in the School of Communication, Product and Spatial Design, the school from which our Research Centre originated. Working with students we deliver 'thematic projects' that explore our research interests or develop and test research questions and design resources. We also work with students to deliver 'client projects' that apply the research and methods developed by the centre to the specific challenges of clients who set the project brief - such as banks seeking to reduce ATM fraud, police and other public service providers seeking to reduce cycle theft or local government and public service providers seeking to promote sustainable transport (see <http://www.desis-network.org/content/u-al-university-arts-london-desis-lab> ).

### 1.2. A Socially Responsive Design approach

Typically DACRC projects are both 'user centered' and 'collaborative' i.e. working with diverse stakeholders and duty holders<sup>4</sup> to co-define design challenges and co-create designed responses. Despite these collaborative activities, the term co-design does not clearly describe our project approach as a whole due to the varying intensities of collaboration that occur at various stages in the project/process. Similarly whilst our projects typically apply a multitude of design tools and techniques often associated with service design e.g. stakeholder/duty holder mapping, agenda mapping, asset mapping, journey mapping, service blueprinting (or system mapping), the use of ethnographic design research techniques and appreciation and creation of personas (to understand the needs of diverse social actors), the term 'service design' does not accurately describe the projects we deliver which combine the structuring of social networks with the design of products and services that address societal needs and challenges and constitute an account of design for social innovation and sustainability.

1 New ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. In other words, they are innovations that are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act. See: Murray, R., Mulgan, G., Caulier-Grice, J. (2008). How to innovate: The tools for social innovation. The Young Foundation.

2 Margolin, V., & Margolin, S. (2002). A 'Social Model' of Design: Issues of Practice and Research. *Design Issues*. 18, pp. 24-30.

3 'Socially responsive design takes as its primary driver social issues, its main consideration social impact, and its main objective 'social change' as discussed in Gamman, L. & Thorpe, A. (2011) Design with society: why socially responsive design is good enough. *CoDesign International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*, 7 (3-4), pp. 217 -231. Special Issue on Socially Responsive Design.

4 'Stakeholders' are the individuals and groups that have a stake in the issues/questions being addressed. 'Duty-holders' are the individuals and groups that have a 'duty of care', a legal or moral obligation, in relation to the issues/questions being addressed. The Online Dictionary defines 'duty' as 'something that one is expected or required to do by moral or legal obligation' and 'holder' as three types of noun e.g. 1. something that holds (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hold>) or secures: 2. a person who has the ownership, possession (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/possession>), or use of something; owner; tenant. 3. Law. a person who has the legal right to enforce a negotiable instrument.

We use the term 'socially responsive design'<sup>5</sup> to embrace the range of design activities which, as design researchers and designers, we engage in with diverse actors that prioritize social goals and needs over those of the market. This approach has been celebrated as an exemplar of social impact, and led to the licensing of designs and the creation of commercial and social enterprises<sup>6</sup>. It is an approach that we have explained at length elsewhere<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. GREEN CAMDEN PUBLIC AND COLLABORATIVE (P&C) PROJECT SET-UP

In January 2012, Camden Council approached our research team to explore the possibility of a practice based research project focusing on assisting the council in changing the behaviors of social actors within the London Borough of Camden so as to reduce carbon emissions by exploring new ways of living and working in Camden. The council's Sustainability Team had identified three distinct stakeholder groups that they wished to target with initiatives to change behavior so as to reduce carbon emissions (linked to a desire to meet targets for carbon reduction of 40% by 2020). The three groups were; (i) Camden Council staff (ii) Camden businesses, and (iii) Camden residents. Each of these groups were to be addressed separately and each of the three initiatives were managed by a different budget and project lead. We felt that Camden residents represented the best fit to the 'Public and Collaborative' call.

During these discussions with the council we became aware of their 'Green Zone' initiative<sup>8</sup> which targeted

thirty neighborhoods within the London Borough of Camden with the aim of catalyzing the uptake of up to seventy five different actions related to reduced carbon emissions. We realized that these aims were aligned to those of our DESIS project and that if these behaviors were changed via collaborative actions rather than those taken as individuals then the strategies to deliver such behavior changes could be viewed as 'Public and Collaborative' services. The council was very positive about this proposal, even though government cuts and UK austerity conditions meant they could not provide any funding to the project. The council agreed to some 'in kind' support in the form of staff time, which we felt was important for the success of the project. Consequently, Camden Council advisors provided specialist insights and expertise, as well as introductions to the community groups that make up the Camden Green Zones and also provided a commitment to help deliver, scale and transfer viable project outcomes.

Whilst it is common for us, as research staff, to work with students we do not have a regular scheduled plan of engagement within course curricula and typically must work with course directors a long way in advance to schedule student involvement in projects. However, BA (Hons) Product Design approached us seeking a 'social innovation' themed 'client project' for their graduating students and so student engagement in the Public and Collaborative project was possible at short notice. To engage the BA (Hons) Product Design course team and students we created a student brief (Appendix 1) that was circulated and eventually approved. This positive response from the course team came despite not providing the usual client investment needed to secure such a client project.

## 3. GREEN CAMDEN PUBLIC AND COLLABORATIVE PROJECT DELIVERY: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

As the project set up progressed we found that the course requirements were not an ideal fit for a co-design project linked to public and collaborative service design as they stipulated individual 3D products design outputs. However, we recognized that product touchpoints<sup>9</sup> could be a likely part of product/service system solutions that constitute public

5 'Socially responsive design takes as its primary driver social issues, its main consideration social impact, and its main objective social change' as discussed in Gamman, L. & Thorpe, A. (2011) Design with society: why socially responsive design is good enough. *CoDesign International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*, 7 (3-4), pp. 217 -231. Special Issue on Socially Responsive Design.

6 Arts and Humanities Research Council (Great Britain). (2009). Fighting crime through more effective design: can crime be reduced by making it harder, more risky and less rewarding? Bristol: Arts & Humanities Research Council. Available from: <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News-and-Events/Publications/Publications-archive/Documents/General/Fighting-crime-through-effective-design.pdf>.

7 Thorpe, A., Gamman, L. (with Ekblom, P., Willcocks, M., Sidebottom, A. and Johnson, S.D. (2010). Bike Off 2 - Catalyzing Anti Theft Bike, Bike Parking And Information Design For The 21st Century: An Open Research Approach. In: Inns, T. (Ed.) Designing for the 21st Century. Volume 2: Interdisciplinary Methods and Findings. Farnham: Gower. pp. 238-258.

And:

Gamman, L. and Thorpe, A. (Dec 2011) *CoDesign International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*, 7 (3-4). Special Issue on Socially Responsive Design.

8 <http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/green/communities/start-a-green-camden-zone.en>

9 Shostack described touchpoints as 'everything the consumer uses to verify their service's effectiveness. She introduced thinking around touchpoints as part of services, using the term 'service blueprinting'. See: Shostack, L. G. (1982). How to Design a Service. *European Journal of Marketing*, 16(1), 49-63 and Shostack, L. G. (1984). Design Services that Deliver. *Harvard Business Review* (84115), 133-139.

and collaborative services, and also that co-design activity in the prototyping and realization of these product/service systems would allow for the course requirements to be met by the proposed project context and approach. We proceeded on this basis. The challenges we faced in these initial stages were predominantly linked to two factors; (i) identification and engagement of communities with whom to collaborate and (ii) students' limited knowledge and experience of service design, and its tools and methods and those of participatory/ collaborative design.

### **3.1. Identification and engagement of communities to collaborate with**

We worked quickly and iteratively to create and deploy new methods and tools to crowd-source community collaborators and contexts. To do this we worked with Camden Council. Usually we would start such a project by engaging 'duty-holders' related to the context and issues being addressed by the project to be involved in the briefing of the students. In this instance we had

## **We worked quickly and iteratively to create and deploy new methods and tools to crowd-source community collaborators and contexts.**

to identify groups of 'stakeholders' (community groups) - not just 'duty-holders' (council staff, police etc) to co-define the briefs for the projects and also to collaborate in findings appropriate for design responses. We found that duty-holders are easier to engage in addressing issues for which they have a shared (and paid) responsibility. They are also more easily contactable and able to dedicate time to the project during working hours. Stakeholders have no such paid duty to engage and are typically more difficult to engage with. Consequently, we needed to devise a strategy for identifying and communicating with stakeholders (community groups) in ways that would be accessible and useful to them. We did this by setting up a weblog <http://desisgreencamden.jimdo.com/> for the project and asking the council to contact all their Green Zone representatives to introduce our project opportunity

and share the weblog address with the residents. The weblog explained the brief for the project and asked residents who were interested in collaborating with our students to get in touch with us directly, or via Camden Council. A template was provided for residents to use to describe the project that they required design assistance with and our aim was to match student groups with community projects. Locating appropriate community projects to engage with was our biggest challenge as the timing of the project meant that identifying communities for collaboration with students would have to happen in parallel to the upskilling of the students, because even though we had got positive feedback from Camden, we still had to identify and meet the community groups that we hoped our students would be working with. On reflection this fact may be the crux of why what turned out to be an excellent student learning experience and community project, didn't develop in the way we anticipated.

### **3.2. Students' limited knowledge and experience of service design tools and methods and co-design practices**

From the outset it was apparent that the undergraduate product design students were unfamiliar with the design challenge they faced. Although comfortable and highly skilled in 3D product design, they were unsure (and in a few cases even unhappy) about the requirement for them to understand and articulate a collaborative system or enterprise as a service before identifying product design opportunities that would facilitate its delivery. Furthermore they were concerned that both the articulation of the service and the diagnosis of the product design opportunities, and even the design and development of the product proposals, should be a participatory process - working with residents - that would provide and use the product service system.

We found that the BA Product Design students we were working with had little experience or knowledge of service design<sup>10</sup> methods and tools and little or no experience or knowledge of co-design or participatory design methods useful for working collaboratively with non-designers. This was a significant problem given the focus of the project, as detailed in the brief (see: <http://desisgreencamden.jimdo.com/brief/>), which explicitly required students to use participatory design

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<sup>10</sup> A full account of what is meant by 'service design' is defined by Lucy Kimbell in *The Turn to Service Design*. Available from: [www.lucykimbell.com/stuff/ServiceDesignKimbell\\_final.pdf](http://www.lucykimbell.com/stuff/ServiceDesignKimbell_final.pdf).

techniques to work with neighborhood residents to map the systems (service blueprints) and journeys (physical and metaphorical) required to enable people (Camden residents) to take sustainable actions (a list of such actions is provided in the brief) as part of their daily routines, in a public and collaborative context (i.e. working together to instigate and implement behavior change rather than as individuals). Consequently it was necessary for us to teach these skills to the students before engaging them in the delivery of the DESIS projects in collaboration with Camden residents. To do this we asked students to find examples of existing projects that they felt could be described as public and collaborative services for sustainability and to map them as product service systems (or service blueprints). Also to consider the experiences and journeys of those people that engage with the provision and use of the service.

In short, we helped the students to deconstruct existing product service systems that constitute social innovations so as to gain an understanding of how they 'worked' in practice. Finally, we asked the students to select one of the 'desirable actions/behaviors' for carbon reduction from the list provided by Camden Council and to explore how these behaviors might be reframed as services that were (i) public (delivered by and for members of the public) and (ii) collaborative (delivered by groups of people acting together). Students developed public and collaborative service proposals to present to community groups as a way of starting focused conversations around the brief. We explained that at this stage the proposals were hypothetical and were not necessarily those that the residents that responded to the call for collaboration (made via the weblog) would wish to collaboratively realize within their communities.

The students visualized their ideas and the proposals were uploaded to the weblog to give potential collaborating residents more information on the sort of projects that the students had been thinking of and were interested in developing and delivering with them within their communities.

### ***3.2.1 Problems we encountered linked to students' limited knowledge and experience of service design tools, methods and co-design practices***

- Lack of service design knowledge base. Despite what the course handbook stated, the undergraduate students had very little

experience/knowledge of service design tools and techniques and we found that introducing these competencies prior to commencing the collaborative and practice elements of the project took more time than we had anticipated.

- Undergraduate students' understanding of the project's primary aims and ambitions linked to the co-design approach was poor despite our efforts explaining and teaching it. Some students clearly wanted to develop design concepts *before* engaging with the community, and some students rushed mapping activities that would be useful in identifying appropriate design interventions. For example, we had described the need for design intervention to be considered only linked to the design of product 'touchpoints' that would enable service delivery and that appropriate touchpoints would emerge from interaction with the community and development of mapping techniques, not from students working alone. However, because of course requirements for students to come up with three separate product design proposals, many of our students wanted to raise product ideas earlier than we wanted them to, or was advisable in the context of the Green Camden project. This perceived conflict between the project requirements and their course requirements preoccupied some students and prevented them from concentrating fully on the methods that we were teaching that would enable identification of appropriate product proposals in due course.
- Some students seemed to reject the idea of community engagement i.e. they did not want to engage with the community before trying to develop ideas and were uncomfortable relinquishing control over the authorship of designs within a collaborative design process. This may have been linked to their understandings of course requirements, despite the assurances of their course tutors from outside the project.
- Other students had a user-centered model of how to work with community groups regarding how to design touchpoints (products) rather than a co-design model i.e. they wanted to do it *for* them rather than *with* them, and saw community input as coming later in the form of consultation rather than collaboration.

In retrospect, we realize that we miscalculated at the outset the time needed to teach service design and collaborative design skills and techniques. It took up much of the time we had anticipated would be used for community engagement. Nor did we realize the course handbook requirements of the BA (Hons) Product Design course that appeared to contradict some of the Public and Collaborative projects aims and objectives. In future we can easily redress both these issues with more preparation in the set-up/planning stages, however on this occasion the time lines we had to meet to enable our collaboration within the Public and Collaborative Thematic Cluster meant we had to proceed as best we could and learn what the barriers and enablers to delivery of the project might be through doing it.

In an attempt to support the collaborative attempts of the undergraduate students we embraced a request for involvement from postgraduate students within the MA Applied imagination (MAAI) course at CSM who were interested in participating in a design-led social innovation project. MAAI students are from diverse disciplines and many have experience of professional practice prior to enrolling on the course. MAAI student learning objectives include critical appraisal of design processes. Consequently several students from MAAI were interested to learn more of the collaborative and participatory design processes that the DESIS project was engaged in, also the hegemonies that surround such processes. Their advanced experience, in comparison to the undergraduate cohort, meant that they were able to provide significant peer-to-peer support for the younger students.

Having established that the student cohort had a workable knowledge as regards to the competencies and skills required to tackle the collaborative design brief we proceeded to match students with community groups with whom they could share and develop their proposals or co-define new ones based on community feedback/collaboration. The student proposals focused on the following themes:

- Re-use and recycle (plastic bags, Tetrapacks)
- Local and seasonal food (food growing, access to local and seasonal food, packaging)
- Water saving services
- Compost delivery services
- Electric car management services

## 4. WORKING WITH RESIDENTS – MATCHMAKING STUDENTS AND RESIDENT NEEDS

One of the aims of our project was for students to co-create services that could be implemented by the residents. Also for student designers to work with residents to improve services already implemented by them. We arranged for the Camden Sustainability Team and Green Zone residents interested/active in these thematic areas to attend student presentations of their proposals. Each student introduced their proposal to the stakeholder group and received feedback. The students needed to understand that their proposals were only to be used as a starting point for discussion, as a boundary object<sup>11</sup>, to illustrate the sort of approaches that students would ideally like or seek to develop in collaboration with residents to facilitate achievement of the residents' sustainable actions i.e. to attract residents with real problems or needs on similar themes to collaborate with students to address them. These projects were loaded on a website, so we could match student interest with resident interest and needs. See: <http://desisgreencamden.jimdo.com/>.

### 4.1. Matchmaking

How to find the right community for the right student was not obvious to us. Project staff circulated the web address for the matchmaking blog to the Camden Council Sustainability Team for circulation to Green Zone residents. The aim was to find resident groups within Green Zones that would collaborate with students to either:

- i. Develop the student proposals to work in the context of their Green Zone area, or
- ii. Develop Green Zone resident proposals on the same theme as student proposals e.g. water saving, re-use/recycle, local working, local/seasonal food.

The matchmaking was facilitated by Camden Council's Sustainability Team and DESIS project staff. Our ambition was that by April 2012 students would be ready and able to meet with Green Zone local community groups to discuss how their proposals (i or ii above) might be realized and facilitated by co-design. These dates were not possible to meet not least because of the Easter

<sup>11</sup> Boundary objects are those artefacts that make visible and comprehensible the complexities of the service, ranging from prototypes (Case A) to sketches (Cases A and B) to the customer journey diagrams (all three). See: Kimbell, L. (2011). Designing for service as one way of designing services. *International Journal of Design*, 5(2), pp. 41-52.

break. By the 17th April 2012 not all the undergraduate students had submitted their work for the website. This made it difficult for us to match students with residents and vice versa. We realized there might be community groups who were not being served too i.e. had turned up and had good projects but that our students were not interested in these themes. Fortunately the postgraduate MA Applied Imagination students were able to work with the communities that the undergraduate students were not able to so that we could approach the project in the way we felt was appropriate. Concurrently, we worked with the undergraduate BA (Hons) Product Design students who did not feel able to engage in the full collaborative process on their own terms to ensure that despite their failure to engage in co-design in the way the brief required, were able to meet their course requirements and achieve their desired learning outcomes and course deliverables.

## 5. STUDENTS CRISIS – PRODUCTS AS TOUCHPOINTS AND/OR TRIGGERS

On return to CSM after the Easter break on 17th April 2012, the scale of the BA (Hons) Product Design student crisis we were experiencing with the project started to become clearer to us. We got the BA (Hons) Product Design course director involved to refocus those students who had not delivered presentations for the website. We gave a number of additional tutorials and managed to help students crystallize their ideas, thoughts and proposals in ways they could experience as meaningful, to help them commence community dialogue. Some of that dialogue did not take the form of a co-design workshop as we had anticipated but certainly saw rich levels of community engagement begin to take place. As the students engaged in what they more easily recognized as design practice, harmony returned to the group.

The problems some students experienced was first that the local context in which students were seeking to apply their proposals did not provide the range of opportunities some of the students felt they needed, a consequence of them wishing to realize their preconceived design proposals over those available to them from within the communities that responded to the call for collaboration. For these students we had to look slightly further afield for communities that were more of a match and this made a lot of extra work for

the team. It also meant extra meetings were required with these new collaborating groups to quickly establish opportunities for collaboration and manage expectations before handing over the dialogue to be managed by the students and collaborators themselves. Secondly, some of the student proposals were not up to standard and there was no group we could match them with so we had to get them to start from scratch. Thirdly, given the additional challenges and associated workload, we were not sure we were going to be ready to meet the schedule we had created i.e. the next deadline of 24th April 2012 – for a co-design workshop (1) to be run with residents (hosted either at CSM or in the participating Green Zone locations, dependent on available space/ resources) where students were supposed to:

- i. Work with residents to review the systems and user journeys/experiences of residents and other stakeholders in relation to the proposed services.
- ii. Work together with residents to identify potential touchpoints that serve as possible opportunities for product design intervention.

We relaxed these requirements and our terms for the BA group and established a more flexible agenda for students and their collaborators to work within. We became grateful that we had managed to match all the students up with a community group at all, even if the process had not been as anticipated! Ultimately this meant that the project team had to put in many extra hours and set up many meets to make the project work, but ultimately that all the students could get through the project in a way that was meaningful and useful to them.

Those community groups that contacted us and that BA (Hons) Product Design students were not matched with were not ignored. To meet some of the expectations we had created by liaising with the Camden Council and residents about this project, we matched students from MA Applied Imagination with these groups instead. However, to ensure that the student experience was meaningful we had to work hard to enable those postgraduate students that vigorously engaged with the project by; (i) teaching service design skills and collaborative design methods and approaches and, (ii) delivering more lectures, tutorials and community meets than we previously anticipated we would have to deliver when commencing the project!

Some excellent scoping work has been delivered by student groups from MA Applied Imagination, who included BA (Hons) Product students in group discussions and learning, and were keen to set up co-design workshops. With our support further student co-design workshops took place in mid May 2012.

## 6. CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP REPORTS

Some students managed to co-design aspects of the project with the community but not all aspects given the time frames and late start were co-designed, despite what some students asserted. A number of the projects utilized instead a user-centered design methodology and in our view, despite our best efforts, this approach dominated amongst the undergraduate product design cohort. A clearer picture of the situation perhaps can be best understood from the feedback that we have endeavored to obtain since completing the project.

### 6.1. Students

It has proved difficult to get any significant post project student feedback from the undergraduate students. Many have left CSM and are not residents in the UK and made their comments so clear during the project life span, that they appear to us to have seen the project's final result as a success, given their was good feedback to the final exhibition of their work. However, three of the twelve undergraduate students have feedback positively. One of them, Lubna Jamaldin, says she now wants to be a social designer and has subsequently been taken on as a paid intern with DACRC. Another, Tahiya Mueen, explored social enterprise as a way of developing her proposals for promoting public and collaborative food growing via food packaging. Feedback from the postgraduate students has been very positive too. The Green Camden project was a highlight of student feedback for the course as a whole and one of the student team members has gone on to develop a social enterprise working with communities to regenerate neighborhoods with local residents utilizing many of the approaches that were taught during the Green Camden project.

### 6.2. Residents

Not all residents fed back formally either and ultimately we deduced from interviews that some of the problems our students may have experienced were linked to a general understanding of the 'designer as

stylist'. For example, one resident suggested that the most significant contribution was that 'designers can make it all look pretty'. Others appeared to understand the role of the design students as 'volunteers' that would help to refurbish premises or implement existing community proposals – which was not possible in the context of this project as students had to deliver design, not simply labor.

When an exhibition of the work opened to the public at CSM in June 2012 a number of the community groups attended. It was obvious that the diverse roles and contributions of design(ers) was misunderstood by some stakeholders. Some of the stakeholders did not understand why the products, services and systems that had been co-created (and presented in the films that students produced for the show) had not gone on to be implemented by the students. The compost distribution service designed with and for local whole food company Alara Foods was one example of this, with the project leader expressing concern that the final design had not yet been implemented. (See Compost Container For Public Space by Fernando Laposse - Image 3 in Appendix 2). Even amongst those residents who were more design savvy, we felt there was an assumption that once designers were involved, because Camden Council had brokered the connection, that the proposals developed would be funded for implementation by Camden Council immediately. This is one of the biggest problems we encountered – that there was an expectation that had been created that could not be met by the project because of financial implications in a context of austerity. It took us time to bring Camden's sustainability group back into the loop and for them to be ready to meet with residents and to review decisions about how to go forward with the residents' design proposals that had originated from their work with our students.

Certainly some of the groups who were working with residents such as GetMore, a local social enterprise who assisted in locating collaborators for student projects, found the design process positive; 'because of this intervention we have really great relations with Adam Thorpe and his team and he is championing our entry into the NESTA Hands Off My Bike challenge'. Their comment, however, suggests that the project worked for them as a networking and capacity building activity, rather than achieving the objectives residents/students were after (i.e. GetMore felt the project was significant

as it might lead to future benefits for them with the players involved, rather than commenting on the work delivered with the students). Additionally, Camden Council were very positive about the progress made as regards to community engagement, development and application of a new process for collaboration and engagement which they felt would be useful to other areas of the council. Indeed, there have been several opportunities for the DESIS project team to work with the council in support of social enterprise activity in the borough that stemmed directly from this project.

## 7. PROTOTYPING OUTPUTS

Many of the project outputs were product service systems, product elements of which the students developed as design models and production drawings. The context for the product proposals were explained within short films made to illustrate the service systems that the products facilitated. Communities' can use the films to 'pitch' for funding to implement the proposals in the future. It is product not service design focused because of course requirements, but some of the products could be understood as design 'triggers'<sup>12</sup> rather than actual products as they conceptualize alternative visions for product innovation linked to achieving more sustainable ways of living. The postgraduate students focused on the creation of co-design tools that could be used by communities to build innovative capacity via collaboration. The student's collaborative designs are illustrated in Appendix 2 and the short films are available to view at <http://vimeo.com/designagainstcrime/videos>.

## 8. EXHIBITING GREEN CAMDEN

The DESIS Green Camden exhibition featured students and residents talking about their projects and design concepts on video. The films were created by bringing in an outside coach from the local social enterprise hub to coach students in the creation and delivery of three-minute elevator pitches that communicated the public and collaborative service proposals. An exhibition of these films was presented for public view and a range of duty-holders and stakeholders attended to celebrate the project and to consider how the

proposals might be taken forward for implementation. The exhibition was in June 2012 and was part of the student degree shows at CSM - a big opportunity as it was the first time our shows had been housed in our new building and consequently attendance was significant. CSM estimate almost 4,000 external guests attended the opening night with 1,000 per day across all the CSM shows i.e. 10,000 people in total although we are unable to truthfully estimate how many people viewed the films.

Certainly the DESIS Green Camden exhibition was low key in comparison to some of the course shows that occupied the building. Despite this, the DESIS exhibition nevertheless produced positive peer review from the art and design community. It was complimented for promoting new ideas for more sustainable living and consequently received support from staff and students. A number of courses have since offered to work with the DESIS Lab which ensures a positive future for DESIS projects at CSM.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The DESIS Public and Collaborative project was the first project where the coordinating team based at a Research Centre allowed students to lead the co-designing process with community collaborators rather than research staff members. Much positive strength of such an opportunity and engagement emerged. There were also weaknesses associated with this approach that require address in future projects. These concerns can be summarized as:

**(i) Expectation management.** Working out ways that the expectations of the project team and partners are managed from the outset without turning them off the project needs more time and thought than we allowed. Working with partners who already have an identified need/desire (aim) is much easier. In these circumstances it is possible to give the project a way of defining and measuring success and to ensure expectations of different groups are proportionate. Many of the student designers interpreted the need to accommodate and respond to community needs and desires rather than assert their own perspectives as a passive role and felt the role of 'designer as facilitator', that they understood was required of a co-design approach, was hard for some community groups to understand. As for the expectations of the community actors, some of them had previous experience of actors from outside their

12 Loi, D. (2007). Reflective probes, primitive probes and playful triggers. *Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference Proceedings*. 2007, pp. 232-245.

communities coming to 'help' them with their projects. These interventions had been limited to the provision of labor and materials for the refurbishment of community premises as required by the community groups involved. This limited experience and mis-understanding of what co-design meant led to expectations of students and communities being misaligned. Most students wanted to optimize the application of their design skills and competencies, especially given that the project was being assessed and contributed to the grading of their final degree. These contradictory expectations were not easily aligned and it took some time to establish what contribution design could make beyond painting the community's walls for them and implementing the community's preconceived ideas. On reflection more time should have been invested in building a relationship between the project partners around the opportunity for co-design engagement, than took place. We should have taken time to include some events that could show the communities concerned the contribution that design can make in furthering the sustainability of social innovations before we started so they were clearer about what could be achieved.

**(ii) Engagement/Set Up.** In several instances projects were proposed by community groups that were presented as 'community projects' when in fact there were only a few people within the communities that the projects purported to serve that were committed/prepared to work on the projects. In future we feel it is important to find ways to get more engagement from community groups – perhaps via delivering project activities and learning opportunities, in open, accessible places so that people can see what is happening and get involved. This would require a longer lead in time for the projects as we would need to have an engagement stage that enabled 'public(s)'<sup>13</sup> to form naturally from those who were interested or concerned about the issues the activities addressed. Also we recognize that we need to find ways to engage diverse stakeholders that the projects may depend upon e.g. businesses and premises owners – to ensure involvement from the start, rather than as the project focus emerged. Early engagement with broad stakeholder groups is more likely to create a shared ownership for the projects and achieve greater collaboration.

**(iii) Evaluation.** In the rush to join in with the international schedule for delivery of this, the first the

DESIS thematic cluster project, we did not make time to set specific goals with stakeholders – beyond the aims of the Green Camden initiative described above. Nor did we establish what success would look like for the projects we were engaged in from the different perspectives of all the actors involved. This lack of clearly articulated project goals (beyond that of the students who had to meet course requirements in the given time) led to a feeling of deflation once the projects 'finished'. It meant that the projects necessarily became more about the students learning than the community's goals as the students had to complete tasks within a specific timeframe to achieve their required course outcomes. This was disappointing in terms of community expectations. Our usual way of delivering collaborative design projects with non-design actors is via fostering ongoing partnerships/relationships with actors and establishing means for (open) evaluation and feedback on project progress and outcomes. We feel such an approach, where there is more familiarity between collaborating partners, would have enabled communities to direct student research more easily than this project allowed. We found that where the students engaged with communities in meaningful ways the most promising projects developed i.e. they delivered the best results - though the lack of evaluative feedback so far means we can't be sure on this, as no agreed measurement protocols were set up.

**(iv) Expertise.** It is important to clarify precisely what necessary community 'expertise' means in the context of a collaborative design project. Also, to understand whether the necessary 'expertise' is available within the communities that are being collaborated with. Whilst community members are often 'experts' of their own experience and this experience is essential to appropriate collaborative design outcomes, our experience (with DACRC) is that specialist expertise/research is often needed to progress projects at the scoping stage (i.e. specialist crime knowledge is viewed more effectively at the beginning) and that this is not always located in community groups, but in Lissenden garden project where activism is now occurring to take ideas forward. We feel such expertise can be included and interrogated by, with and for the community without predetermining subsequent directions of the project. Also, some of our designers did not find it easy to engage as specialists (bringing their design expertise to the project) given they are still undergraduates. Not all the designers who engaged with the project were able to deliver the

<sup>13</sup> Dewey, J. (1927). *The Public and its Problems*. New York: Holt.

social interaction that is required for such community engagement, and for some of them the project made it clear this is not what they want to do in future, although other student designers made the opposite choice as already mentioned, and took to collaborative design for social innovation like ducks to water.

**(v) Easy access to ideas and concepts.** Terms such as 'stakeholder' and 'duty holder', 'mapping' and 'assets', and 'resources' and 'social innovation', were found to be inaccessible to non-design actors, who are not familiar with service design methodologies. One group (MA Applied Imagination) developed a toolkit for the co-articulation of desirable futures and how to tell a story that all actors could easily comprehend called 'The Magic Beans'. These tools were designed to help diverse actors to envision new ways of doing things and help the actors to think through who is involved in the story, in what ways and what actions and assets are required from/by them to move forward. We found such an approach interesting and progressive and a response to the problems the students encountered. This was a pleasing outcome of the project and provides a resource that could be used by and built upon by other students in future projects.

**(vi) Funding.** No funding was in place and this put a pressure on the time and staffing allocations and ultimately access to design courses that we could work with at CSM.

**(vii) Positive Outcomes.** The way the students and community reframed goals to accommodate student learning requirements was generous. However, we felt as coordinators that the students may have got more out of the projects than the community, given that the community members wanted to continue to 'harvest' some more benefits from the work and were not in a position to do so because of project deadlines and no funding in place to implement designs. As one of our residents pointed out; for him the project fell short because of the lack of implementation and realization. "The thing is here you have these designers, and a large percentage of the designs are practical solutions to problems, so why doesn't anyone implement them? Sometimes it is a question of cost, for example the solution for Lissenden garden; it's a lovely little [water] butt, but to build that thing will cost a fortune to implement." Another resident pointed out that the project he had worked on (rainwater car wash) led to

"just a little bag you can put that together with £50 or something and then just get Morrison's and the companies who have premises with large ceilings to start implementing it – so why hasn't that happened?"

The involvement of Camden Council may have produced some passivity in regards to implementation within the community given they are the official duty-holders. We recognize that some residents felt that Camden Council should take the project concepts they co-developed forward, even though the project started in full acknowledgement of austerity conditions present in the UK and the fact there was no extra finance available from Camden Council. Yet there was community hope that this might change and that extensive community fundraising would not need to take place in order for the ideas visualized to go forward and perhaps the community were not entirely wrong for having what Obama has called 'the audacity of hope'. The most positive outcome of the P&C project was that members of Green Camden who participated in the DESIS project went on to further exchange ideas (catalyzed by our students activity). Notably in the context of water harvesting and the Lissenden gardens projects activism is now occurring, to take ideas forward. It also brought some community activists in closer contact with our Research Centre. As one commented: 'As a signposting collaboration, it was very successful!'

In many ways this Public and Collaborative project confirmed many of our prior understandings about how best to deliver co-design projects. This project made us aware that prior community set up and dialogue at early stages before the project begins is crucial to the ability to co-design with the community. Also that not all our designers were equally gifted in terms of sociability and/or find it easy to work with participatory design processes. In our view these first Public and Collaborative projects are best seen as hybrid co-design/user-centered design projects, which delivered over-determined product touchpoints or boundary objects in order to address services, mainly because of course restrictions (which meant students had to deliver a product to pass their degree). Perhaps the most positive way of reviewing these projects is that they constitute 'action scoping' for the UAL DESIS Lab - a way of exploring possibilities for future collaboration (with Transition Towns and Camden Sustainability Team) and a way of delivering rapid prototyping of concepts with the community as part of a slow prototyping exercise

### DESIGN PRACTICE

1. Project as prototype – ‘Green Camden’ engaged a diverse community of social actors in a co-design process for the first time and should be viewed as a prototype. A holistic and equitable co-design project is dependent on establishment of commonality between actors in regard to the process and potentiality of design for social innovation. A common understanding amongst actors of what design is and what design(ers) may contribute needs to be established and takes time. In the absence of such understanding the project itself becomes a prototype toward development of such an understanding. This project constitutes a single iteration within a ‘slow prototyping’<sup>1</sup> approach to co-design with a community in that it may not have achieved the project objective of co-designing sustainable services that are implemented by communities (yet!) but builds ‘new capacities [that] are necessary for a new model to succeed’ Hillgren et al argue with Schulman that slow prototyping ‘can be a way of creating good teams and to build capacity, which means enabling policy people, practitioners, and users to run parts of the prototype’<sup>2</sup> and define ‘infrastructuring’ as ‘characterized by a continuous process of building relations with diverse actors and by a quite flexible allotment of time and resources’. Whilst this co-design infrastructure was absent at the outset of the project it’s development is evident by the social capital and experience/knowledge base that has been developed by the project.

2. Effectuation as a response to DESIS as situated practice – ‘Green Camden’ is an example of situated practice<sup>3</sup> in that it is contingent on the situated context of the design process/project. Ehn speaks of the impotence of meta-design to meet the ‘unachievable design challenge of all-encompassing anticipation or envisioning of potential design to take place in use after project design’<sup>4</sup>. This challenge is amplified in socially situated practice. The designers of the ‘Green Camden’ project responded to this challenge as best we could by drawing on the principles of effectuation<sup>5</sup> as derived from entrepreneurial practices that apply adaptive and opportunistic tactics to deal with unpredictable scenarios. Meta design has similarities with causal reasoning in that it assumes that ‘if one can predict the future one can control it’. Effectuation is predicated on the belief that ‘if one can control the future one does not need to predict it’. In delivering the Green Camden project we were fast to adapt to challenges and opportunities, creating a scenario in which collaboration could occur between students and residents with shared concerns. However, it transpired that whilst effectuation creates opportunity for innovation it does not necessarily foster the climate for community collaboration. Suggesting that for innovation to

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1 Slow prototyping defined by the Young Foundation’s Social Innovation Exchange as ‘a term to refer to situations where new capacities are necessary for a new model to succeed. Fast prototyping methods are bound to fail in such circumstances’.

2 Schulman, S. (2010). Design thinking is not enough [online]. Available from: <http://www.inwithfor.org/2010/01/design-thinking-is-not-enough/> and Hillgren, P. A. et al (2011). Prototyping and infrastructuring in design for social innovation. *CoDesign International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*, 7 (3-4), pp 169-183. Special Issue on Socially Responsive Design.

3 Suchman L. A. (1987). *Plans and situated actions: the problem of human-machine communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4 Ehn, P. (2008). Participation in design things. *PDC ’08 Proceedings of the Tenth Anniversary Conference on Participatory Design 2008*, Indiana University, Indianapolis, pp. 92-101.

5 Sarasvathy, S. (2008). *Effectuation Elements of Entrepreneurial Expertise*. New Horizons in Entrepreneurship. Edward Elgar Ltd.

be social and sustainable a 'slow effectuation' approach akin to 'slow prototyping' is necessary. Although iterative effectuation would no doubt constitute such a process.

3. Forms of facilitation – The role of 'designer as facilitator' is commonly understood as one of enabling collaboration between diverse actors within the design process<sup>6</sup>. Within 'Green Camden' the role of designer as facilitator manifested in two forms; facilitation within the co-design process and facilitation within the process of social innovation. In both instances the facilitation took a form described by Ehn as a 'design device'<sup>7</sup> that affords certain functions and a 'design thing' that opens up 'new ways of thinking and behaving'. The collaborative visioning tool – 'The Magic Beans' created by students from MA Applied Imagination is a boundary object that facilitates the co-design process. Many of the products designed by students from BA Product Design aim to facilitate the collaborative delivery of public and collaborative services and in doing so facilitate social innovation.

## DESIGN EDUCATION

1. DESIS takes time and resources - In attempting to engage with the resident communities rather than the business or council community 'Green Camden' sought the most challenging co-design environment in that the community was not immediately accessible and the infrastructures necessary for effective communication and collaboration most difficult to establish. In relation to the achievement of the goal of co-designing services for sustainable ways of living to be co-delivered with and by residents this was a step too far given the time and resources available. However, as a practical proof of concept it has been effective in demonstrating the need for and nature of 'infrastructuring' for co-design by and with HE and social actors and communities outside HE. Similarly challenging was the attempt to deliver effective and sustainable public and collaborative service delivery (or other forms of DESIS) without economic resources for implementation. It is likely that both these challenges could have been met with time to establish a more diverse network of actors (including those with resources or assets that might be re-deployed to enable implementation of proposals) linked to a 'slow prototyping' approach as described above.

2. Learning environments beyond the 'Lab' and HE – Just as student designers need to learn the skills and competencies to collaborate with non-designers within the context of co-design for sustainable social innovations so do non-designers need to learn not just how to be effective users of design – but more importantly – how to be co-designers i.e. able to collaborate and contribute in the design process. Nussbaum glibly describes parallel trajectories to becoming a 'design thinker'<sup>8</sup> – paraphrased

6 Leadbeater, C. (2008). *We-think*. London: Profile.

Thackara, J. (2005). *In the bubble: Designing in a complex world*. Cambridge: Mass, MIT Press.

Burns, C., Cottam, H., Vanstone, C. Winhall, J. (2006) *Transformation Design -RED Paper 02*. Design Council and;

Sanders, E.B.N & Stappers, P.J (2008). Co-creation and the new landscapes of design *CoDesign International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*, 4 (1), pp. 5-18. Special Issue on Design Participation.

7 Ehn, P. (2008). Participation in design things. *PDC'08 Proceedings of the Tenth Anniversary Conference on Participatory Design 2008*, Indiana University, Indianapolis, pp. 92-101.

8 [http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/NussbaumOnDesign/archives/2007/10/design\\_vs\\_desig\\_1.html](http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/NussbaumOnDesign/archives/2007/10/design_vs_desig_1.html)

as (i) a design school graduate develops business skills in a business environment and over time becomes a 'design thinker' and (ii) a business school graduate develops design skills in a design environment and over time becomes a 'design thinker'. Similarly, is there a trajectory to design-led social innovation for non-designers just as there is a trajectory to design-led social innovation for designers? The contribution to the co-design process will be different but the appreciation of the process may be similar and thus the necessary commonality described above achieved. Should we be teaching non-designers skills and competencies necessary for design for social innovation just as we teach designers? Green Camden raises the question of how to 'teach' design for social innovation to non-designers and how to teach contextual nous to designers. The need for education (knowledge exchange) between diverse actors and students outside the academy suggests a role for a DESIS 'Lab' that operates beyond the academy. If the 'Lab' environment is 'in vitro' (in HE) then the proposition is for 'in vivo' (outside HE) not just to deliver design practice but also reflection on design process and contextual (situated) understanding.

3. Not all designers are co-designers but all design is situated practice – DESIS projects offer potential not just in serving the community but also in serving design educators and students by giving students experiences that put them on the spot, in the heart of the communities and contexts they are trying to serve, and in doing so developing an understanding of design as a situated social practice. In this scenario student designers learn by doing and deduce whether or not they enjoy working in sometimes demanding collaborative ways (our observation is that not all designers enjoy such contact or are as suited to it as others). For student product designers specifically the process of engaging in a public and collaborative context exposes them to what Margolin describes as a 'social model'<sup>9</sup> of design that considers 'product design within a process of social service intervention'.

## DESIGN POLICY

The activity of our students served to start new community conversations and open up new opportunities that we believe would not have occurred without such engagement. These opportunities demonstrated to Camden Council that design is not just something that is taken on at the end of a process to help deliver policy but rather, an approach that can be utilized to identify what policies are necessary to enable and facilitate desirable change within communities. Camden Council, in asking us to engage with further initiatives in collaboration with community groups, have indicated to us that they realize that design can fulfill a role in helping communities better articulate and engage with definition of policy agendas as well as development and delivery of policy recommendations. One outcome of this project has been that design educators have been asked to train Camden Council staff who finance and facilitate community projects linked to the Camden Social Innovation Fund which aims to help community groups to catalyze and implement social enterprises that address community needs and goals. We are very pleased about this unexpected development.

<sup>9</sup> Margolin, V., & Margolin, S. (2002). A 'Social Model' of Design: Issues of Practice and Research. *Design Issues*, 18, pp. 24-30.

Ultimately, students' ideas, about how social enterprise can help sustain social innovations, appear to have been recognized by Camden. It is evident that policy makers can benefit from the exposure and engagement that the process of co-design can deliver for new ways of thinking and doing. However, whilst policy makers may recognize that the processes of co-design may appear as significant as the products of co-design in delivering sustainable behavior change, it is important that co-designed outputs are followed through to delivery or that the expectations of the communities engaged are understood and managed so as to ensure that disappointment does not lead to disenchantment with collaborative processes and a backlash against sustainable behaviors viewed as a cheap option for policy makers seeking to support communities.

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that will facilitate future project delivery.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Adam Thorpe** is a 0.6 Reader in Socially Responsive Design and Innovation at University of the Arts London. He is based at Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design where he is Creative Director of the Design Against Crime Research Centre and coordinator of the UAL DESIS Lab. His research activities are practice-based and practice led exploring the role of design in meeting societal goals and challenges. He has written extensively on open innovation approaches to generating social benefit and has contributed to the development of research methodologies that seek to maximize stakeholder value through application of open and participatory socially responsive processes. Adam has directed delivery of award winning practice based research projects that have been celebrated as exemplars of social impact, and have led to the licensing of designs and the creation of commercial and social enterprises. As UAL DESIS Lab coordinator, Adam works with staff, students and community groups to co-design products and services and other 'things' that promote sustainable ways of living and facilitate socially beneficial behavior change. He is also co-founder of design consultancy Vexed Generation/Vexed Design (1993-present) pioneers in socially responsive clothing and product design, with a focus on 'Urban Mobility'.

**Lorraine Gamman** is Professor of Design at Central Saint Martins College and Director of the award-winning Design Against Crime Research Centre (she founded in 1999). Gamman is an international expert on offender techniques, design interventions and 'socially responsive design', and has catalyzed anti crime product ranges including 'Stop Thief Chairs' (recently exhibited at MOMA, New York), and with the designer Adam Thorpe, 'Karrysafe anti theft bags', 'M' bike stands, as well as numerous social innovation and design for sustainability projects. Lorraine has written many articles and several books on design and visual culture. Her PhD on shoplifting completed at Middlesex in 1999 engendered a spin off book *Gone Shopping; The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves* (Penguin), TV/Film rights were recently acquired by Tiger Aspect (2012). Lorraine is currently Vice Chair of the Designing Out Crime Association (DOCA) and in 2007-11 was a member of the Home Office's Design and Technology Alliance.

# APPENDIX 1 :

## DESIS GREEN CAMDEN BA PRODUCT DESIGN BRIEF

### BA Product Design

Client Project 2011-12

“Green Camden” – Co-Designing Shared Assets & Public and Collaborative Services to Reduce Carbon Emissions for Sustainable Futures

### BACKGROUND

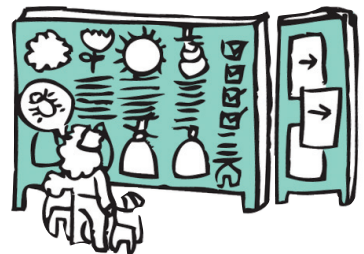
In the complexity of contemporary society, social innovation is spreading and its potential, as a driver of sustainable change, is increasing. To facilitate this process, the design community, in general, and design schools, in particular, can play a pivotal role. Ezio Manzini, DESIS International

### Social Innovation

“Social innovation is a new idea that works in meeting social goals” (Mulgan, 2006). In other words, social innovation can be seen as a process of change emerging from the creative re-combination of existing assets (social capital, historical heritage traditional craftsmanship, accessible advanced technology) and aiming at achieving socially recognized goals in new ways. A kind of innovation driven by social demands rather than by the market and/or scientific and technological possibilities (i.e. because the innovation is socially desirable not solely because the innovation is possible. Typically, this social innovation is generated more by the actors involved than by specialist. For product designers this may require a re-emphasis of focus. Systems as well as objects need to be addressed in the design process, and can be part of its delivery i.e. “Systems thinking is an essential part of schooling for sustainability. A systems approach helps ... people understand the complexity of the world around them and encourages them to think in terms of relationships, connectedness, and context”

### Emerging Sustainable Ways of Living

Over the past decade social innovation has spread: a variety of social actors throughout the world (institutions, enterprises, non-profit organizations and, most of all, networks of collaborative people) have moved outside mainstream models of thinking and in so doing, are generating a variety of promising initiatives such as community-supported agriculture, co-housing, car-pooling, community gardens, neighborhood care, talent exchange and time banks. See case studies discussed in the book “What’s Mine is Yours”. Also see the DESIS website <http://www.desis-network.org/> and/ or those case studies included in the Socially Responsive Design, special edition of Co Design (2011) Journal edited by Lorraine Gamman and Adam Thorpe, These initiatives propose viable solutions to complex problems of the present (e.g. social cohesion, urban regeneration, healthy food accessibility, water and sustainable energy management). Some of your projects may end up encouraging use of shared assets or promoting collaborations that figure out new ways to create products, services, environments, and experiences that promote the idea of, or are at least conducive to, sharing. There are many examples of such approaches that have already been generated by design. For example, commercial service design solutions such as Street Car – now merged with Zip car (<http://www.zipcar.com/>), and Zimride (<http://public.zimride.com/>) which aim to get more people to share cars





to help reduce carbon emissions has been successful. Or there are those architectural projects, listed by RIBA who are concerned with longevity, and deliver buildings that can have a longer lifespan so that they can better withstand chronic use. Some services, like neighbourgoods, (<http://www.neighborgoods.net/>), take advantage of technology to enable people to efficiently and effectively share tangible products, spaces and services in real-time in the communities where they are. These are the sort of examples of social innovation we have in mind.

Sharing by many people of the same product, space or environment means a long-term effect of less production and therefore less waste. In addition, sharing is more cost effective than buying something for one use or occasion. Many people in urban areas find sharing increasingly attractive where neighbors are plentiful and storage space is scarce. Maybe such ideas can inform your project for Camden, you will need to consult to know if your ideas are viable for the communities you work with. Certainly, many design agencies are now engaged in delivering these sorts of design services from IDEO to Participle, from Think Public to Engine, from the Helen Hamlyn Centre to Socially Responsive Design and Innovation Hub and Design Against Crime Research Centre, from the Design Council to Livework, designers are co-designing their ideas with the community and leading and generating design led social responses. These projects appear as part of a paradigm shift in terms of socially responsive design. They provide new tangible models of design that product designers can engage with, services that enable new more sustainable ways of living including collaborative consumption.

### **Design for Social Innovation**

Today, social innovation is generating a constellation of small initiatives, some design led, all trying to make the world a better more sustainable place. If favorable conditions are created, these small, local social inventions and their working prototypes can spread. They can be scaled-up, consolidated, replicated and integrated with larger programmes to generate large-scale sustainable changes. To do that, new design competencies are needed, and this is where you come in. Indeed, social innovation processes require visions, strategies and co-design tools and approaches to move from ideas to mature solutions and viable programmes. These new design capabilities, as a whole, can be defined as design for social innovation.

### **Public and Collaborative Services**

An interesting phenomenon is emerging worldwide: more and more people are choosing to behave actively and collaboratively (see bibliography). These new attitudes are driven by several social and economic factors and often leverage access to new technologies to enable a higher level of connectivity. In this new context, people are enabled to establish direct links between interested peers. This connectivity opens new opportunities for meaningful activism and effective collaborations.

Given this new social and technological environment, and given the growth of problems people are facing in their everyday lives, new solutions are being invented and enhanced. Within these solutions those who have traditionally been individual end-users tend to become collaborative co-producers of the services and organisations that facilitate their everyday lives, as people who traditionally had been considered as “parts of the problem” become agents of the solution. In these scenarios the services that these social innovations generate, are “co-designed” and co-delivered with the involvement of the final users: their knowledge and creativity, in conceiving them, and their time, energy and expertise, in delivering them. This project will require you to engage with such processes, that are already being used by DACRC/SRVDI team and will be taught to you not just in theory but through practice.

When they appear, these everyday life (or ‘bottom up’) social innovations are rather fragile and highly localized entities. To last in time (i.e. be sustainable) and spread to involve larger numbers of people and other geographic

locations their value must be recognized and supported. To do this a new generation of public services are needed. Public services capable of supporting local, collaboratively produced and delivered innovations, to make them more effective and to promote their diffusion in other contexts.

The idea that, facing the current economic and social challenges, the public sector in general and public services in particular should be radically reshaped is widely diffused, the governments big society agenda is an example of this sort of thinking. However, what is less well defined and diffused are the strategies and means with which to do it.

This project will provide tools and techniques to deliver social innovation. It will seek local and collaborative strategies for reducing carbon emissions in the London Borough of Camden. It asks you, the designer, to work with Camden Council's sustainability team and Camden residents to collaboratively design innovations and/or services that themselves are locally and collaboratively delivered to facilitate behaviors and ways of living that reduce carbon emissions and contribute to achievement of a new vision for a sustainable, low carbon Camden. And, in so doing, to explore what public services could become if, instead of offering final services to individual, passive end-users, they would be conceived as platforms to trigger, enable and support citizens' active and collaborative behaviors.

## THE CLIENT

The Design Against Crime Research Centre (DACRC) and its Socially Responsive Design and Innovation hub (SRvDI) are working with Camden Council and student groups to develop ideas with residents and community groups to co design sustainable change. Camden's Green Camden campaign is already moving in the right direction, and our job is to use design to make such initiatives more effective. To make it clearer and easier for residents to take green action linked to social innovation. As part of its Green Camden programme the Council has created and delivered a number of engagement streams, a user friendly website, a green directory of local businesses, a green map of resources and services, face to face workshops and stalls, a free phone helpline and a Green Camden Zones programme, so there are already resources available for students to use.

The client team will include Adam Thorpe (project lead) and Professor Lorraine Gamman (SRvDI @ CSM) and Anna Ware, Ines Carvalho and Katy Mann (Green Camden),

This project asks you, the designer, to choose an issue that you can or could feel passionately about. Then to work with us (DACRC/SRVDI/Camden Council) as the client to approach the residents and community groups within a Green Camden Zone to co-design new ways to achieve carbon reduction through collective action to make such change easier and more effective.

## Brief

The programme has 5 overarching aims:

- Reduce their carbon emissions
- Adapt to a changing climate
- Reduce, reuse and recycle perhaps linked to collaborative/shared assets
- Improve air quality
- Improve biodiversity.

The Council has identified 27 actions with 73 sub-actions that people can take to help to achieve these aims.

The Green Camden Zones programme encourages residents to engage with their neighbors to take these actions collectively. Each zone is focussing on at least one of the 27 actions (such as cycling or food growing), and is creating an action plan to achieve their goals. Your job is to think about what can you do, after consulting with residents, to help us and them make effective change happen, through co design.



### ***Stage 1. Sustainable actions and promising cases: Green Week events and briefing on 8th February***

The project will have been introduced to you by tutors on 30th January – when you will be asked to start reading from the bibliography. The first week of activities will occur during CSM's "Green Week", and you will be expected to attend a briefing with us on 8th February at 1.15 and then Jonathan Chapman's lecture that has been organised for all students in the afternoon. During these early weeks of the project we will require students to familiarise themselves with Green Camden's sustainable actions. Also to listen to a number of presentations from us and during Green Week that will introduce the ideas and approaches, processes and methods that have been proven to be effective in collaborative design of social innovations, to form a student group, chose a set of actions to engage with and then find and research precedent case studies of collaborative innovations that have been used to address these actions and/or their objectives. Students will then create a first research presentation that will communicate the meaningful case studies that groups have found, and thus begin to collate a 'innovations pool' comprising examples of innovations and services that the group feel have potential to facilitate effective collaborative achievement of Green Camden action objectives. These findings will be presented to class and project partners, as indicated below, when students will be required to identify the actions they wish to and/or action themes they wish to explore with Camden Green Zone residents and community groups.

### ***Stage 2. Community engagement and collaborative research: 14th February, 21st February and 20th February (RSA brief launched)***

Each student group will be matched with one of the Camden Green Zones. Students will work with the residents and community groups within the Green Zone to collaboratively explore the diverse demography of residents within the zones and their 'assets' and 'needs' in relation to sustainable objectives. Also, the actions already being taken by residents to address Green Camden and other community sustainability objectives and the potential for further collaborative achievement of the Green Camden actions and other community sustainability objectives. The groups will also identify the existing and potential barriers to achievement of the actions and objectives, and try and generate first concepts in responding to these challenges. Students will visualise their findings and feedback to the class, the Green Zone residents and other project partners.

NB Further concept work and development will occur during the Easter Vacation (15th March – 15h April). By 20 February, when entry forms will be available students may consider entering the RSA "Shared Assets" competition whose final deadline for submission is 27 March, 2012

### ***Stage 3. Co-design of collaborative innovations and services: 17th April – 30th April – co-design/organise workshops 1st May – workshop day***

Using the case studies they have collected, as well as initial design concepts that have been generated as a starting point for discussion students will deliver co-design workshops with Green Zone resident groups to explore ways that design may i) facilitate further achievement of existing actions and ii) catalyse and facilitate achievement of newly identified actions objectives and concepts. Students will visualise the results of these workshops and iteratively co-develop proposals (with residents) for innovations and services that Green Camden Zone residents and community groups consider to be viable and desirable strategies (innovations and services) for achievement of Green Camden actions via collaboration.

### ***Stage 4. Public service facilitation and integration: 2nd May – 14th May and final hand in on 15th May with presentations***

Final proposals will be presented to Camden Council and project partners to explore how the Council might enable and support the residents' active and collaborative proposals.

## **METHOD**

Many design agencies use a model of the design process to help them structure their activities. We think our adaption of the Design Council's Double Diamond model (<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/designprocess>) can help you structure your thinking too. So we ask you to follow these stages:

## Diagnose

The diagnose phase will deliver research to inform the appropriate set up and study area of the project. It will also scope the key challenges of the project. The diagnose phase will include the following tasks:

- *Familiarisation and investigation of geographic and demographic study area(s) (Green Camden Zones) and high carbon and low carbon behaviors (Green Camden actions).*

## Discover

The students learn about the needs and aspirations of their Green Zone Residents by studying their background, interests and routines, and by charting their activities of daily living. This may involve documenting journeys or tasks undertaken by the residents.

- 'Discovery mapping' of the geographic study area(s):
- Journey/scenario mapping (activities of daily living)
- Stakeholder mapping
- Agenda/driver mapping
- Resource mapping

These insights are visualised and used to aid communication/understanding between diverse stakeholders and also to locate specific opportunities for design intervention or further, more detailed, exploration.

- User centred design research methods:
- Observation
- Shadowing
- Design probes/video diaries

## Define

The define phase of research will review the findings of the discover phase activities to define the sustainable behaviors to be focused upon and design of the co-design workshops to follow. Students may also create 'personas' that define the diverse demography and characteristics of the residents they are working with and visualise their user centred research findings so that they can be shared with the group within the co-design workshop activities.

## Develop

Student design teams, assisted by the SRvDI Hub team and BAPD tutors, will work with the resident groups to deliver workshops to co-design proposals for innovations and services that are appropriate and effective for promoting sustainable lifestyles among residents.

- Co-design workshop – date to be agreed with client
- Co-designed prototypes developed by student groups (Iteration 1)

Student researchers, facilitated by SRvDI Hub researchers and BAPD tutors, will develop outcomes of co-design workshops as agreed with residents.

- Feedback workshop 1

Developed proposals will be presented back to the residents for review and further collaborative development.

- Co-designed prototypes developed by student groups (Iteration 2)



Student researchers, facilitated by SRvDI Hub researchers and BAPD tutors, will develop outcomes of co-design workshops as agreed with residents.

- Feedback workshop 2

Co-designed proposals 'signed off' with resident groups.

### **Deliver**

Student and resident group representatives will present the outcomes of their collaboration to Camden council and other partners and stakeholder

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES –SEE BA (HONS) PRODUCT DESIGN COURSE HANDBOOK**

### **COURSE SUBMISSION**

- On 15th may you will give a formal visual presentation to the course team.
- You will show materials from up to four a3 boards (max. 4), Or digital material no longer than 5 mins in running time, showing design development and final designs
- You will produce a short, typewritten text not exceeding 200-300 words (1 page) and set in 12pt type describing your solution, and the process by which you reached it, and the benefits you believe it will create, possibly to be used as your show board or a catalogue entry if dacrc/srvdi create one.
- Any models or mock-ups in addition to your boards will be looked or can be presented in photoshop. We have decided not to subject 3d work to precisely the same deadlines as last year because we found 3d work for show was finalised over a longer period and arrived later.
- We will also look briefly at any sketchbook or other material you care to submit illustrating development of your solution in response to the brief – if you want us to. All work should be referenced for relevance in your final presentation and in the short typewritten write up of the project if you want it assessed.

### **TIME-SCALE**

*The project will run from 8th February to 15th May when final presentations are made. After that material will be prepared for your Summer Degree Show.*

# APPENDIX 2:

## DESIS GREEN CAMDEN EXHIBITION PRESS RELEASE

FRESH\* LOCAL\* INNOVATION\* ECO\* STYLE\* IMPROVE\* ADAPT\* COMMUNITY\* UPCYCLE \* RECYCLE\* DESIGN  
CENTRAL SAINT MARTINS COLLEGE OF ARTS AND DESIGN **DESIS GREEN CAMDEN EXHIBITION**

**Tetrapack**  
Edouard Burgeat



The Tetrapack Plant Pot project finds a new way to engage local communities in sustainable behaviours like growing their own food and re-using difficult to recycle materials. Tetrapack Plant Pot is a design device that gives carers a low cost activity to enjoy with their children whilst promoting food growing and re-use.

Fruit juice cartons are surprisingly difficult to recycle. Tetrapack Plant Pot turns them into something useful and beautiful – a plant pot that lets us grow plants in even the most limited space to 'green up' dull gardens.

Download the information sheet here: [www.edouardburgeat.com](http://www.edouardburgeat.com)

[View more on vimeo.com/44040989](https://vimeo.com/44040989)

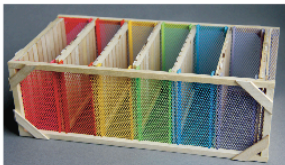
**BagBank**  
Lubna Jamaludin



How many bags do you have stashed away? We all shop, collect plastic bags and forget to reuse them. Each bag takes 500 years to breakdown in landfill. Every year supermarkets give away 10 billion bags, that's 10 per household per week resulting in 104kg of CO2 per household. BagBank is a 'mass reuse' service that circulates bags locally, potentially reducing that CO2 by 60%. It involves the shoppers, the supermarket BagBank team and local businesses. Shoppers shop and save the bags they collect, taking them to the supermarket next time and depositing them in banks at the entrance. The BagBank team empty the banks and sort the bags. Useable ones are packed into specially designed dispensers distributed to signed-up businesses. The shopper is offered a greener alternative, to use a BagBank bag rather than a new one. BagBank makes reusing bags easy - realising environmental benefits for everyone.

[View more on vimeo.com/44041830](https://vimeo.com/44041830)

**Compost Container For Public Space**  
Fernando Laposse



To promote local food growing, the entrepreneurial founder of Alara Wholefoods - Alex Smith - has dedicated the land in front of his warehouse to the distribution of "free compost". The North London Waste Authority regularly deliver 15 ton loads and Smith organizes "Compost Days" at weekends for the community to collect and use it. This scheme has been working well but as more people and groups join in some problems have arisen. How to estimate the volume of compost available at any given time and communicate this to the community, is no easy task – but must be addressed to prevent people turning up to find the compost has run out. Fernando Laposse met with Alex and brought some design ingenuity to the problem. A colour coded container easily measures and dispenses the compost. And is filmed and broadcast via live webcam linked to Alara's website. Now the public can visit the website and see how much compost is available for collection. An online message board exchanges advice to promote food growing.

[View more on vimeo.com/44040992](https://vimeo.com/44040992)

**Charge more - Pay less**  
Lu Li



Charge more – Pay less, promotes 'on street' electric vehicle charging points through in-store discounts for users. There are 22 such points in Camden, each has many businesses within walking distance. Some of these businesses offer discounts to Charge More – Pay Less users. When you park and charge your car at a Charge More – Pay Less point you scan a QR tag with your smartphone, or receive an SMS text, offering discounts at local stores. A SCVNGR app shows a map of businesses within walking distance and the deals they are offering. Follow the map and do some discounted shopping nearby while your car is charged. Participating businesses display stickers to guide you and promote the service more widely.

[View more on vimeo.com/44040995](https://vimeo.com/44040995)

Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability (DESIS) GREEN CAMDEN exhibition, part of the degree shows at Central Saint Martins. DESIS Green Camden asked the student designers of BA (Hons) Product Design and MA Applied Imagination to work with Camden residents and community groups to find new ways to make it simpler and easier to take green action by working together. The DESIS showcase, presented by the UAL DESIS Lab at the Socially Responsive Design and Innovation Hub, promotes some new ideas for more sustainable living.

For further details  
[www.desis-clusters.org/central-saint-martins-london](http://www.desis-clusters.org/central-saint-martins-london)  
[e.desisgreencamden@gmail.com](mailto:e.desisgreencamden@gmail.com)



**Public Water Butt**  
Han Byeul Min



Saving water is a major challenge facing London and the UK. But many communal houses can't collect rainwater from their rooftops as the downpipes are at the front of their buildings and currently available water butts aren't suitable for public access and display. The Public Water Butt addresses the 3 key challenges of public installation.

1. Fits diverse downpipe locations – such as acute corners or between narrowly spaced windows.
2. Aesthetics harmonise with domestic surroundings.
3. Tap avoids water wastage through tamper resistance.

Public Water Butt seeks a manufacturing and distribution partner so more people can collect rainfall and save water.

[View more on vimeo.com/44040993](https://vimeo.com/44040993)

**Grow Your Own Sandwich**  
Tahiya Mueen



So much of the food we consume is imported and produces carbon emissions. We need to inspire more people to grow food at home – but how?

Inspired by Transition Town Dartmouth Park and their efforts to promote local food growing, sandwich packaging was targeted. The idea is simple! Eat the sandwich, put the soil and seeds provided into the carton, add water and then stand it on a windowsill and let it grow.

The registered packaging design doubles as an attractive plant pot and includes hygienically sealed seeds and compressed soil in which to grow some of the ingredients in the sandwich - basil, lettuce, mustard, rocket, or tomatoes.

[View more on vimeo.com/44042404](https://vimeo.com/44042404)

**Ecorain Carwash**  
Natalie Denise Ng



Did you know London receives 625mm of rainwater annually! That means a 10,000m<sup>2</sup> roof can harvest 60m<sup>3</sup> L of rainwater annually. That's enough to fill 24 Olympic-size swimming pools. We can reuse rainwater for daily chores like washing cars, and even make this a business opportunity. We're all aware of the recent drought, with more predicted. Now is the perfect time to introduce EcoRain Carwash that uses rainwater harvested from large roofs to wash our cars. Washing with hosepipes uses 500L of water, pressure washer 225L, carwash facilities 200L, and by hand 27L of water. We'll use 27L of rainwater. If every car in the UK was washed with rainwater, the mains water saved would fill 300 swimming pools! EcoRain Carwash is inexpensive to operate, economical, ecological and profitable for both the community and businesses. EcoRain Carwash is looking to work with supermarkets, shopping malls and entertainment venues, to provide their customers with EcoRain Carwash Services.

[View more on vimeo.com/44042404](https://vimeo.com/44042404)

**Super 2S**  
Fei Xie



UK households discard over 25% of the food they buy. This greatly wastes energy, water and packaging used in food production, transportation and storage and contributes significantly to greenhouse gases driving climate change. This happens because we buy and prepare too much or don't use it all in time. People in collective accommodation could buy together and/or share the food they would otherwise waste. Super2S is a free kit and App given to shared households. The kit includes a 'group-able' Shopping Discount Card; that allows several people to achieve discounts by combining purchases; a 'Sharing Area' sign to put in a communal fridge to locate food nearing its end date and stickers to clearly identify the food placed there. A Super2S App is designed to track and notify consumers of foods' use-by date, reminding them to eat it or place it on the sharing shelf.

[View more on vimeo.com/44040991](https://vimeo.com/44040991)

Camden Council identified 30 Green Zones – local neighbourhoods in London Borough of Camden (including King's Cross) that are characterised by the presence of community champions and/or community groups that are committed to delivering sustainable change. Students worked with some of these groups to create public and collaborative services, delivered by communities for communities, with the aim of helping neighbourhoods to:

- reduce carbon emissions
- improve air quality
- adapt to a changing climate
- improve biodiversity
- reduce, reuse and recycle

For further details  
w. [www.desis-clusters.org/central-saint-martins-london](http://www.desis-clusters.org/central-saint-martins-london)  
e. [desisgreencamden@gmail.com](mailto:desisgreencamden@gmail.com)



# CHAPTER 3:

## EXPERIMENTAL PLACES FOR SOCIAL AND PUBLIC INNOVATION

1. PARTICIPATORY DESIGN FOR SOCIAL AND  
PUBLIC INNOVATION: LIVING LABS AS SPACES OF  
AGONISTIC EXPERIMENTS AND FRIENDLY HACKING

PER-ANDERS HILLGREN

2. FROM WELFARE STATE TO PARTNER STATE:  
THE CASE OF WELCOME TO SAINT-GILLES

VIRGINIA TASSINARI, NIK BAERTEN

3. INNOVATION WITHOUT BOUNDARIES: ECOLOGY OF  
INNOVATION AND MUNICIPAL SERVICE DESIGN

LUIGI FERRARA, MAGDALENA SABAT



# PARTICIPATORY DESIGN FOR SOCIAL AND PUBLIC INNOVATION: LIVING LABS AS SPACES OF AGONISTIC EXPERIMENTS AND FRIENDLY HACKING

Per-Anders Hillgren

## ABSTRACT

*This article will present some learning's and reflection on what role we as a design school can take when running a DESIS lab where we approach several of the urgent challenges that face society today. First I will introduce the base for our work, which takes place in the intersection between social innovation, participatory design and living labs. Then I will give four examples of what we call agonistic small-scale experiments, where we not only explore potential solutions but also try to raise questions and dilemmas and allow controversies to reside side by side. Finally I will present four sets of reflections from what we learned so far where I more deeply discuss the implications of doing agonistic experiments. I will also reflect on how we recently have tried to build alliances with other research disciplines and civil servants to perform 'friendly hacking'. A strategy where we through policy work push the boundaries of the lab and expand the potential impact of our activities.*

**PARTICIPATORY DESIGN**  
**SOCIAL INNOVATION**  
**LIVING LABS**  
**AGONISM**

**PROJECT TITLE:**  
Malmö Living Labs

**UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:**  
Malmö University DESIS LAB

**CITY/COUNTRY:**  
Sweden

**SERVICE AREA:**  
Social Cohesion,  
Urban Development

**PROJECT WEBSITE/BLOG:**  
<http://medea.mah.se>

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Agonistic public participatory design

Our background is since many years within participatory design (PD), which is the foundation of our research activities. This discipline emphasizes the issue of democracy and started from the simple standpoint that those affected by a design should have a say in the design process. It has for many years been concerned with power relations [1, 15], which means paying attention to 'weaker' voices and social exclusion. Recent years PD has moved from a strong focus on 'work place' controversies related to information technology to become increasingly engaged in public spheres and everyday life, where design activities are rather heterogeneous, partly open, engaging users and other stakeholders across organizational and community borders. Moving towards the public we have been inspired by the pragmatic philosopher Dewey. For him 'the public' was not an undifferentiated mass and he rather emphasized the plural form where multiple publics emerged around an issue [13, 14, 4, 5]. As many others we have also for long acknowledged how new design solutions needs to be tried out and situated in the real world context, where heterogeneous elements, such as people, practices, processes, artifacts needs to be interwoven into artful integration [39], from this follow that we have paid a lot of attention to the act of performing small-scale experiments in real world contexts [3]. Experiments or prototyping is also well established within the design and social innovation practice and most often done as way to test a possible solution [7, 8]. However, prototyping can also be seen as an approach that can raise questions, controversies and dilemmas. Together with other researchers we have been inspired by Chantal Mouffe who use the term agonism to describe a political process that allow controversies to exist side by side, instead of negotiating them into consensus. For her, 'agonistic spaces' allow polyphony of conflicting voices which, despite their opposition, respect each other and are united by passionate engagement [30]. Though social innovation deals with complex problems that not easily can be negotiated into consensus and where people inevitably will disagree when you make solutions more concrete, agonism has emerged as a fruitful approach to frame our experiments within (see illustrated boxes). Also, rather than see these experiments or prototypes as designed 'objects', we see

them as a way to construct 'socio material assemblies' or 'Things' where we bring very diverse stakeholders and artifacts together to explore issues or matters of concern [2, 4, 5, 6, 16].

**“Though social innovation deals with complex problems that cannot be easily negotiated into consensus and within which people will inevitably disagree when you make solutions more concrete, agonism has emerged as a fruitful approach to frame our experiments within.”**

### 1.2 Community and design driven living labs

The living lab (LL) concept originates from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and William Mitchell [18] and has been spreading rapidly around the globe the last 10 years with more than 400 labs as members in the umbrella organisation ENOLL [17]. There exist no clear consensus of the definition of what a living lab is [20, 37], but most describe them as long-term environments for open innovation that enables experimentation with real users in real contexts [20]. The project Corelabs (connected with ENOLL) tried to define a best practice of LL and stressed some key concepts as crucial; continuity, openness, realism, empowerment of users, and spontaneity [11]. These concepts fits very well with what we see as essential in an enabling platform. However most living labs are strongly driven by industry and their interests with consequences for how open 'open innovation' can be [25] and what is regarded as innovation [4, 5]. Our platform is by some researchers considered to be one of the few living labs driven by the interests of user communities [32].

### 1.3 Social Innovation in Malmö

Our Research Institute and we as design researchers have been positioned within the fields of IT and New media for many years. However, when we aim to build Malmö Living Labs on the historically and geographical qualities of Malmö, Social Innovation

### **BOX 1. Small-scale agonistic experiment: Blue Bus**

One of the stakeholders we have been collaborating with the longest is the grass root group RGRA that is populated by second-generation immigrant youngsters who in their daily work use hip-hop as a tool to learn about and change society. They are not only feeling marginalized from the Swedish society in general they also lack distribution channels for their locally produced hip-hop music. During an early workshop the idea emerged that local buses could become a distribution channels for their music. Through Bluetooth technology available by our technology partners Do-Fi we realized that we easily could test this idea. We contacted the public transportation company Skånetrafiken and Veolia who operates many of Malmö's local bus routes. Together we conducted some simple experiments where we commuted for some hours on a local bus with a laptop in our knee equipped with software that through Bluetooth could send out RGRA's music to people's mobile phones. The experiment was very well received by the commuters and allowed the disparate constellation to see very different potential outcomes and results. RGRA saw the potential of a new distribution channel for their music. The bus company saw a potentially new commuter service beyond traditional transportation. Do-Fi saw the potential of developing a new product and new services. The researchers saw the potential of developing a new research project focusing on place-specific media.



### **Agonistic issue**

Maybe the most interesting aspect of the experiment regarded what kind of public space the interior of a bus could become (especially if a new media service would be a part of that space). Who owns and can appropriate this space? Could it be transformed into a more public and inclusive space or would it remain an exclusive space leased out only to commercial actors, as is the case today? Some years ago, public transportation, such as buses and trains, was owned by the Swedish state. Today they are, to a large degree, outsourced to commercial actors who in turn outsource the media spaces on the buses to media and advertisement companies, which diminish citizen access to public spaces.

inevitably becomes a crucial field for us to learn from and engage in. Ten years ago, Malmö, with some 300,000 inhabitants in the south of Sweden, was a dormant city. All major industries had disappeared. Today, it is a vibrant university city with an increasing number of small and medium-sized information technology (IT), media and design companies and

regarded as internationally leading when it comes to ecological sustainability and clean tech. However it's also a segregated city, with the highest number of immigrants in Sweden. Among these immigrant groups many are unemployed and a recent report present that the differences in health between different areas are huge, where people in some parts of Malmö live nearly

## BOX 2. Small-scale agonistic experiment: Urblove



Malmö is a segregated city, and people living in the city centre rarely visit the more peripheral districts and our partner the youth organisation RGRA (see example above) whose members live in these areas felt that their neighborhoods were largely unknown by people living in other parts of the city. (A common view is that their neighborhoods are dangerous). The open-ended structure of Malmö Living Lab enabled us to evolve the network into a constellation that could explore this issue. RGRA connected us to the 'Little green house' (a meeting place run by the municipality in one of Malmö's suburbs) and we connected them to the game company Ozma that aimed to develop a game platform for urban exploring. Together we initiated a set of small-scale experiment where youngsters constructed mobile game paths in their local neighborhoods and others where invited to come and explore these neighborhoods by playing the games. In a follow up experiment we collaborated with local schools to explore if this mobile game could become a part of their curriculum (of which one of the schools was located in the area Rosengård that is considered to be the most dangerous in Sweden). Regarding the results, we could see that the game platform provided a framework from which the youngsters could construct local stories and where visiting 'gamers'

not only got new stories from these neighborhoods but also started to interact with locals to get clues for their games. We also connected a leisure studies researcher to the experiments who concluded that the games provided increased geographical mobility and awareness about the neighborhoods, but also an increased 'sense of place', which implied a stronger sense of local security.

### Agonistic issue

On an over all level the experiments brought awareness to what parts of the city that are worth attention? Malmö is a segregated city and most often areas such as the newly built area of Western Harbour which is populated with middle and upper class people and media companies gets to represent the city. Other areas with many immigrants such as Rosengård and Fosie are depicted less favorable by media. The experiments allowed the people living there to tell other kind of stories that potentially could attract people to come and visit.

seven years longer than in other parts of the city [27]. This can't be ignored and it brings our attention not only to the scope of social innovation but also to several concepts that flourish within that field.

Within technological innovation the concept of Lead user [41] has been praised. We have found much more clever concepts within design and social innovation such as the notion of 'creative communities' [29] which makes much more sense when targeting societal issues and it has inspired how we have been looking for capacity and ongoing initiatives in Malmö different neighborhoods. In this process we try to see marginalized groups as unused assets, with a valuable and skilled street level perspective on problems and opportunities. Also the approach of including them in designing networks and build relational qualities and trust [24] has been fruitful for us, as well as the strategy to connect bottom up grassroots initiatives with more established top down actors (as Murray et al frame it 'linking the bees with the threes') [31]. Finally we find it inspirational with approaches aiming for

large-scale sustainable changes such as the 'planning by projects' approach suggested by Manzini & Rizzo and the concept of 'framework project' where local initiatives and projects are triggered, coordinated and amplified to reach change on a bigger scale [28].

## 2. FOUR SETS OF REFLECTIONS

### 2.2 First set of reflections – the intersection and first steps of agonism

Working with Malmö Living Labs some years in the intersection of the approaches presented above and being a university and design school we have seen an enabling platform emerge that engage, trigger, mobilize and connect competences. If social innovation is our scope and inspiration, participatory design is our approach and normative guide, then living labs provide the more 'squared' framework for friendly hacking, scaling up and connecting top down and bottom up actors.

#### BOX3. Small-scale agonistic experiment: Arabic Game Jam

The market for computer games in the Middle East is growing rapidly [9] and there are few computer games that are designed from the perspective of the Arabic Culture [33]. Though Malmö and the surrounding region have a great number of strong actors involved in the game industry as well as a huge Arabic population that to a large degree are unemployed the idea emerged that unutilized competence in the local Arabic community potentially could be used in the games industry. Together with RGRA, The municipality of Malmö and Media Evolution we initiated a design experiment to explore the potential in bringing the competences of Arabic culture together with game design competences. Through a set of workshops that culminated in Arabic Game Jam, a 48-hour full scale experiment, where participants from these two groups got together to develop new game ideas building on Arabic culture. The event got massive media attention and during the experiment six new games were created and new networks were emerging.

##### Agonistic issue

Although some of the results include new game concepts and new constellations of people with mixed competences (bringing forward unutilized competence and unemployed people), the most central issue in this experiment was to challenge how different cultures are depicted within computer games. It's a quite hegemonic world where American (and to some degree Japanese) culture dominate the market. If at all Arabic culture or people is represented it's mostly as terrorists.

#### BOX 4. Small-scale agonistic explorations: Herrgård's Women Association



Five women started the multi ethnic Herrgård's Women Association (HWA) more than 10 years ago in Rosengård Malmö as a response to feeling excluded from the Swedish society. Many have limited skills in Swedish; many are illiterates, most lack higher education and most live on social welfare. At the same time we could see a lot of valuable qualities: They have a huge network within different communities with trust and tight relations in the group. They are curious and take a lot of initiatives! There is a huge amount of collective knowledge

in the group. They are friendly and service minded with a welcoming attitude. They are strong as a group. Together with them we started to explore what kind of role an NGO potentially could play to become a resource in society. Several experiments have been conducted including exploring how they could offer new forms of catering services or how they could support newly arrived refugee orphans. Many of these experiments showed very good results from a service perspective where the women were able to provide new kind of services that others didn't have the capacity to deliver. [22] At the same time, we could see several obstacles, such as the fact that the women lacked a full understanding of the Swedish cultural context and knowledge about business processes. To address this, we connected HWA with the Göran Network, a large network of businesswomen who initially were very enthusiastic to collaborate and together they formulated several business ideas. However the collaboration soon imposed several implications. The most severe regarded how to approach the collaborative process and if you could do it as a collective (which HWA preferred) or if you should do it as an individual (which the Göran Women preferred). During this phase HWA's premises was also put on fire three times which definitely put stop to the ongoing collaboration.

##### Agonistic issues

The experiments revealed many opportunities for how an NGO could offer new services to the society. Still, it has also created some frustration among us as design researchers, because the ideas have been too hard to implement and scale up. However the process has been the most generative of all our processes regarding an agonistic perspective where many dilemmas have been generated: If an NGO would produce new services in society, what will then be the implications? For example, during the prototyping process with HWA some trade union representatives responded very negatively to the idea of a non-commercial NGO doing business and accused the women to compete under unfair conditions and "stealing" regular jobs. Another dilemma, revealed through the prototyping, concerned power relations within their families. Upholding patriarchal traditions are common in many Afghan and Iraqi families where the husband is seen as the family provider. What happens when the women get a position in society that their husbands lack?

Also, both Herrgård's Women Association and Göran network fight for women's rights, but they do it in different ways. For HWA, the individual woman is not as important as the group, while the individuals participating from the Göran network emphasized the individual women as the foundation to build from.

From PD we have learned how to bring in a democratic agenda and an inclusive approach and pay attention to 'who' we work with. We also try to take on the hard cases (High hanging fruits) where immediate success not lures around the corner and where we build long-term relations between diverse stakeholders. Inspired by the idea of framework project where local cases are amplified [28] we also aim for real societal substantial impact. However, for us its important to start from the local projects

**When looking back we can see that these public agonistic experiments have resulted in project ideas, and have revealed issues, but we can also see that the infrastructuring and the agonistic Things have been too short-lived.**

and having the framework project emerge bottom up, where we as Nabeel Hamdi argues 'don't design to much'. Overdesign often inhibits progress and development and we rather tries to create a balance between emergence and strategic design [21]. This process which we have described as infrastructuring [4, 5] allows a more on going and open-ended structure to evolve, both regarding constellations, who will participate, and questions and issues, what to explore and how to do it. Its characterized by a continuous process of building relations with diverse actors and by a flexible allotment of time and resources. This more organic approach facilitates the emergence of possibilities along the way and tries to make use of the creative potential in the heterogeneous city, where serendipity could play a role and unexpected and exiting combinations of people could become productive through a continuous matchmaking process.

Being part of the living labs movement have provided some advantages when acting as an enabling platform and aiming for impact. It offers opportunities to 'linking the bees to the threes' [31] where we bring together bottom up grass root initiatives with more

powerful and established (conservative) top down stakeholders (where the LL concept has been fairly well rooted). ENOLL is also as a huge community to spread and scaling up ideas and even though most living labs have tech innovation (rather than social innovation) as the main focus the concept of living lab is still contested terrain.

When looking back we can see that these public agonistic experiments have resulted in project ideas, new services and products, in new constellations and revealed issues, but we can also see that the infrastructuring and the agonistic Things have been too short lived. Although issues have been raised during the experiments, we have found it difficult to manage and package the result so that they would have enough impact to challenge the dominant hegemony. For Malmö Living Labs the challenge is how to maintain an agonistic platform that sustains and facilitates debates and struggles while protecting the people involved. Should we, together with RGRA, have gone into an agonistic negotiation with the bus company concerning who should own and occupy the digital spaces on the buses? In the case of HWA (see below), should the business controversy between a Swedish businesswomen's perspective and an immigrant NGO collective's perspective have been made public? So far we have only been taking the first steps to explore this approach but we believe in line with Carl diSalvo that agonism can work as a generative frame for PD [14].

## **2.2. Second set of reflections - Friendly hacking into the incubator**

To create more space for our experiments and acquire the power to reach impact and large-scale change, we have recently been inspired by the French innovation lab La 27e Région [26] and their friendly hacking approach [39] and tried to reach into the public sector. Our way to do this has been to build alliances with key civil servants and other research disciplines such as Urban Studies (that have more mandate, power and respect among civil servants). Through this approach we got involved in a process initiated by the municipality that aimed at establishing an incubator for social innovation in the city. We got the commission to elaborate how the incubator could be structured, as well as how its main features and support functions should be designed. Once more, the first crucial question for us, as in all participatory

projects, was: Who should have a say in this process? Who should be included? Our strategy was to start the design process from needs expressed by six local grass-root initiatives or small companies that could act as potential users of services that the future

**Once more, the first crucial question for us, as in all participatory projects, was: Who should have a say in the process? Who should be included? Our strategy was to start the design process from needs expressed by six local grass-root initiatives or small companies that could act as potential users of services that the future incubator could provide.**

incubator could provide. Besides these initiatives (including RGRA & HWA) we also invited civil servants representing different municipal departments, people from organizations supporting social entrepreneurial initiatives, investors, business developers and researchers to a series of workshops.

The results from the workshop revealed something quite different than a traditional business incubator. It was a structure that stressed a free zone where the different actors (civil servants, grass-roots, SME:s, researchers) could co-own processes, learn from each other and enter into new working roles and relations outside their ordinary inhibiting everyday practice. One of the more central and interesting outcomes regarded the basic structure and the location of the incubator. The municipality had stated that they preferred a centrally located incubator with a more traditional set-up with some few people employed (such as business developers). During the workshop that structure was contested and many participants favored a more distributed model, closer to social innovators such as RGRA, HWA and local city services, hence, building on already existing resources and locating activities out in the different city districts.

After the three workshops, we had a meeting with the civil servant responsible for the incubator process and the civil servant responsible for writing the memorandum and official report that would be the basis for further decisions in the city council. These civil servants thought it would be hard to gain support for a distributed incubator model in the city council. However, they realized that a traditional central incubator would need ideas and initiatives coming from the city districts with social problems and that it was important to consider the whole chain of innovation, including mobilizing and supporting existing grassroots resources. During the meeting these considerations opened up for a creative act of bureaucratic translation. The distributed incubator model (including most of the findings from the workshop) was transformed into a new model consisting of two interconnected parts: a traditional incubator and a pre-incubator (where the latter contained most of the findings from the workshop). The skills of the bureaucratic civil servants made it possible to translate the workshop findings into a document that presented something new (and slightly radical) and that was still within the safe zone for being accepted by the city council.

Although this document seemed promising, what happened next was that the friendly hacking approach didn't manage to hack all the way into the center of power. During the actions that followed (and to which we didn't get access) two things happened that took the process into a much more conservative direction. First, some politicians didn't understand the concept of social innovation and therefore requested that everything related to it should be removed from the final policy-briefing note. The other thing was that a new initiative from the local trade and industry that focused on growing existing companies, had strong ideas



about what the incubator should be (a more traditional incubator that focus on creating new jobs). In the final memorandum that was the base for the political decision to invest in an incubator the concept of social innovation was gone. Although we had assembled a wide group representing all sectors including civil servants and creative but marginalized grass root communities. A much smaller group representing powerful stakeholders within trade and industry and a few civil servants within the business and trade office got to decide what kind of incubator that was needed.

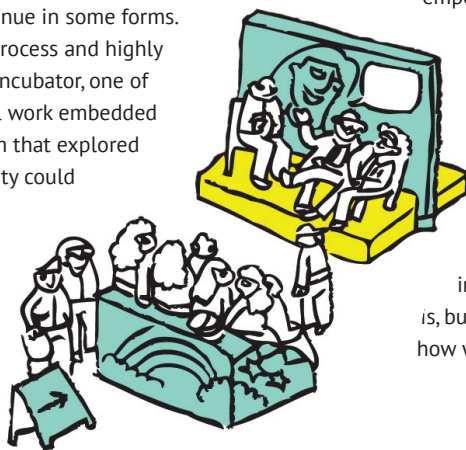
We lost the battle of reaching radical change this time. However, the process will continue in two tracks; through alliances with other researchers where we will try to challenge the political consensus and hegemony on a Meta level (might be through unfriendly hacking). In this track we will explore how this kind of political governance processes where small informal network (that stretch between the public and private sectors and makes crucial political decisions) could be extended to include many more actors. Political scientists have recently been studying the established governance networks in Malmö and revealed that they have the ability to act and get things done, but they pose implications for democracy as well as the issue of accountability [12]. This seems to be a general dilemma in governance processes where some always will be excluded from the informal networks [36] and most often involves trade and industry but not “the third sector or representatives of people with low participation in elections” [34, p. 31].

The other track will continue as a friendly hacking approach though it turned out that several civil servants on different levels where disappointed with how the process developed and it seems like the ideas of the pre-incubator is not completely dead and will continue in some forms. In parallel to this process and highly related to the pre-incubator, one of us did some crucial work embedded in a municipal team that explored how the municipality could work with design inspired methods. This turned out to pose several challenges; one of them

regarded the design vocabulary, which provoked many civil servants. A serious effort where therefore made to re-formulate this vocabulary so it would fit the municipal language and culture better by using phrases such as: The empathic perspective! Collaborative problem formulation! Test early and test again!

### 2.3 Third set of reflections – Challenge those who feed you

Another strategy to reach impact is to be able to challenge financing bodies (that very much control and steer what we can do). One of the funding bodies of our activities is the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth that channel money from EU structural funds to regional development projects. The larger project Malmö Nya Medier (in which we are a smaller part) have very distinct project goals and indicators such as supporting regional growth and creating a specific number of new jobs and new companies. This has some implications for us because we also want to challenge and discuss the concept of growth, something that many of our project activities also elaborates. This have also been brought up by the external evaluator of the project, who has criticized some of our actions and arguing that our focus should be more directly targeted towards activities leading to commercial business. Luckily for us we found an allied in a group of researchers that had been assigned by the same financing body (the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) to do a Meta level study on different projects financed by them. During their study they could connect the rationale behind the call to a larger context of European policies regarding social cohesion and the connection between integration and growth. According to them Malmö Living Lab had achieved to establish new forms of collaboration, utilized unused competences, empowered people and connected stakeholders in forms that potentially could become role models in the future. “Here they have succeeded in something many regard as impossible, but its not assigned any value” [35 p.49]. They conclude that the problem is not how MLL operates but rather how the labs are measured and evaluated in a to short perspective with to limited indicators. We still don’t know the impact of is, but hopefully it can open up more opportunities how we can operate in the future.



## 2.4 Final set of reflections – Agonism is here, be ready!

The need for a long term agonistic public platform became urgent recently (late 2012) when the coordinator of RGRA Behrang Miri with whom we have collaborated in several projects (see illustrated boxes ) moved a bunch of Tintin comic magazines some few meters from the children section to the adult section at Stockholms Kulturhus where he had a part time job as responsible for artistic development among youngsters. He moved them because he believed they depicted Arab and African people in a very stereotypical way. When public media wrote about it was re-framed as cleaning out Tintin from the library and the media chaos didn't wait. New media platforms such as Twitter pushed a shallow and

How to do this is a truly agonistic issue where people never will agree. Still the format of twitter allowing extremely short (not deepened) messages spurred a public hegemony ruled by the Swedish middle class. Being abroad when this happened we couldn't avoid the media storm and we acted quickly and sent a mail to Behrang Miri offering a suggestion to take the opportunity and establish an agonistic platform where a constructive debate could be played out. New media doesn't have to be shallow. Re-mix and mashup culture could provide tools for young people to play with and reconstruct national identities. So the final lesson would be; agonism is here, be prepared and build up the ability to act on unexpected opportunities! [social\\_innovation/](#) [Accessed 29 January 2013].

**And as the journalist Rakel Chukri reflected: “The core question is still there: how to represent different nationalities and non-white people in the cultural sphere?” How to do this is a truly agonistic issue where people never will agree.**

unreflective debate that mainly criticized Behrang's initiative. The books were moved back and Behrang took a long term break and then resigned. Media researcher Rasmus Fleischer stated that: “After a few hours critique through Twitter the head of Kulturhuset claimed that they decided to move back the Tintin books. Who had the opportunity to participate in the debate? The minority that can spend an afternoon with Twitter and make most noise”(19). What Behrang tried to do was the same as many had been doing e.g. in Brooklyn Public Library (38), to move the Tintin books from the children to the adult section. More and more people gave Behrang support and citing Rasmus Fleischer again: “when the longer in-depth Blogg posts were published the critique cycle was finished and the debate closed. The pundits on twitter were looking for the next issue” (19). And as the journalist Rakel Chukri reflected: “The core question is still there: how to represent different nationalities and non-white people in the cultural sphere?”(10)



## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

Crucial for us has been to see the heterogeneous city as the design lab from which we can explore alternative futures. In this lab we facilitate and trigger creative communities, but we also connect them to other more established top-down actors. Although we have made some few strategic design decisions (such as working explicitly with an inclusive approach) most of our work has been spent on ruff patchwork to make things grow bottom up and allowing serendipity to happen. Instead of following pre-defined plans we have been navigating among the stakeholders and opportunities that we have encountered. This has brought our focus to very different levels of design engagement, sometimes we have zoomed in and paid attention to the details of an experiment and when we have realized that the potential results have been blocked we have zoomed out again to elaborate and possibly change the bigger picture. In this process of 'friendly hacking' we have tried to re-design and 'move the walls' in our design lab to create more room for maneuver and overcome obstacles that might limit the impact of our actions. Finally, being a design school and a public body, means we can pick the hard cases (where you might end up without a success story) and have to live with uncertainty. It also gives us the possibility to think long-term collaborations where we build trust between diverse stakeholders, rather than short projects with very tight deadlines. Another specific opportunity we as a university have, is to see the design practice, not only as an approach from which you can create new solutions, but also as an agonistic platform from which you can explore issues, produce knowledge and allow controversies to reside side by side.

### DESIGN EDUCATION

The Malmö DESIS lab demands a very close collaboration between, researchers/tutors and students, (PhD, Master and undergraduate students). The researchers/tutors provide the cases and the setting from the networks of the living labs and do (most) of the matchmaking between stakeholders. Matching the curriculum with external cases and research projects demands a lot of work and makes the student assignment/brief very complex. Sometimes we have had to remake the brief entirely in the last minute when outside circumstances have changed or new opportunities have emerged. Therefore we aim for curriculums that allow a lot of flexibility. The majority of students and courses related to the lab are situated within the field of interaction design. This means that some of the lab activities are more relevant and achievable for the students (such as setting up small-scale experiments). Doing 'friendly hacking' demands other kinds of skills beyond what we can demand from interaction design student and it's also a long-term process that goes beyond individual courses or terms. One exiting opportunity we have discussed (and started with in small scale) is to offer design courses and lectures to other disciplines outside the design school e.g. within urban studies where more typically future civil servants might study. Such an approach would open up for long term friendly hacking by providing design perspectives and training for people that later will become embedded within public organizations.

## POLICYMAKING

Policy work has become increasingly important when the lab has matured. All our 'friendly hacking' activities has been attempts to open up and widening the capacity of the lab and to spread design approaches into the public sector. Our experiences is that being part of a design school and being design researchers gives us a weak position compared to other disciplines when it comes to influencing innovation policy within the public sector. To gain a stronger position our strategy has been to build alliances with other research disciplines and with key civil servants within the municipality. From this the lab can become a platform for mutual learning where experiences and methods from the design practice, in a modest and bottom up way, can influence and become integrated in the public sector and where we as designers also can learn from others. We strongly believe that the design practice can make a difference and contribute to social innovation. However, we have also learned that you cant impose a design practice into a new sector, rather you have to respect other professional disciplines. Although many civil servants are eager to learn new methods and approaches and willingly collaborate with us, others have been skeptical towards what design and design researchers could bring to their everyday work. One example described in this article was that we had to re-formulate typical design terms in forms that could be accepted within the municipality.

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# FROM WELFARE STATE TO PARTNER STATE: THE CASE OF WELCOME TO SAINT-GILLES

Virginia Tassinari

## ABSTRACT

*Nowadays, we are witnessing a shift in policy making, in which citizens are increasingly becoming part of the process of creating the res publica. Both policy makers and civil servants are starting to realize that the old models of policy making are becoming inadequate to contemporary society's needs and challenges. Within this framework, design can help to facilitate a shift towards new models that lead from a welfare state towards a partner state. Public Innovation Places (PIP) are places where such experimentations on the ground of social and public innovation are supported and facilitated. Here citizens, policy makers and civil servants prototype new societal solutions in a collaborative fashion, through co-designed and co-produced public services. PIP represent the exception to our society where it is eventually possible to grow a new idea of policy making alternative to the current one. This article shares a series of reflections on the nature of these places, looking at the process that eventually can lead to establish a PIP and at the role of design schools therein - starting from the concrete experience of the project Welcome to Saint-Gilles. Furthermore, this article will also present a more theoretical and philosophical reflections on the nature of these experimental places.*

**SOCIAL INNOVATION**

**SERVICE DESIGN**

**COMMUNITIES**

**PUBLIC SPACE**

**SOCIAL COHESION**

**PUBLIC INNOVATION  
PLACES**

**PROJECT TITLE:**

Welcome to Saint-Gilles

**UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:**

Social Spaces Cuo-  
DESIS Lab, Mad Faculty-  
Luca

**CITY/COUNTRY:**

Belgium

**SERVICE AREA:**

Reciprocity Triennial Of  
Design, Recentre, Wallonie  
Design, I-D Campus.

**PROJECT WEBSITE/BLOG:**

<http://sustainabilityatschool.wordpress.com>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide we are currently witnessing the rise of services co-produced by common citizens, civil servants and policy makers, i.e. what we call people-powered public services. There are several examples of initiatives similar to one another which are proving successful. One could assert that these initiatives can be read as signals of a paradigm shift, which leads from the idea of the welfare state as we know it - with all the different configurations this concept assumed in the different geographical, economical and socio-political contexts in which it has developed - towards something new. This emerging idea of state, based on the direct participation of citizens in the co-creation of public services, has been recently defined in different ways: for instance as “partner state” and “relational state”.

In the following pages a brief journey will be taken through the history of philosophy in order to frame the idea of partner state as a state of exception. The “state of exception” is linked to notion of the exception grounding the rule. As such, the partner state as a state of exception can become the basis for a new paradigm of governance, as an alternative to the current mainstream one.

Finally, attention will be paid to possible steps which can fuel the paradigm shift, the role of people-powered public services therein, the physical touchpoints supporting such services, and the physical spaces where they can be co-produced, i.e. Public Innovation Places (PIP).

### 1.1 An emerging alternative political paradigm

*We might ask ourselves: Who is in charge of policy making nowadays? Is there a change taking place in the idea of citizenship? How is the financial crisis playing a role in all this? Is there a new model of policy making emerging?*

These are the kind of questions which arise in our contemporary landscape, as we witness a growing amount of examples worldwide - such as community gardens, urban farming initiatives, co-housing projects, and so on<sup>7</sup> - which illustrate that it is becoming increasingly difficult to trace a distinct line separating public from private. All such examples show empirically how the process of decision making concerning the

res publica no longer seems to be only in the hands of policy makers, but is slowly also becoming also a prerogative of private citizens. One can see these bottom up initiatives as weak signals of an emerging political paradigm, alternative to the current one.

Words such as “public engagement” and “participation” have moved from the specialist’s vocabulary into the mainstream vocabulary of contemporary society. They are key terms which redefine the meaning of the word “policy”. Yet, although these words have become more common, one has the impression that this shift in policy making - from top down towards bottom up, from hierarchical towards participative - still needs to be further questioned, challenged and develop. What is the nature of the shift they represent? What could be the consequences for contemporary society?

In order to reply to these questions, one probably needs to look at how we used to manage with other shifts in models of policy making in the past. How did we interpret them? The French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau describes a major shift in policy making’s model, from one based on rules which originate in the state of nature - which cannot be called political yet - to one grounded on the social pact. He sees in this a sign of the beginning of the idea of politics.

In his “*Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes*”<sup>8</sup> Rousseau stated that the social pact led man out of the state of nature. So, what constitutes the modern human nature has in his eyes to do with the configuration of the social pact. He considered the social pact as something that formed human nature and determined man’s character. As such, that which affects and changes the social pact also ends up affecting and changing human nature.

*Can we consider this shift towards a more participatory model of policy making as a new social pact emerging between citizen and state? If we assume that the emergence of an alternative political paradigm we are witnessing actually represents a new social pact, which repercussions would this have on human nature? Which new idea of “man” would ensue from this?*

The aim of this article is not to find answers to those questions, but rather to formulate new questions. Our first feeling is that one probably needs to look at

these complex issues through multiple lenses starting from the concrete practices from within which some of these questions arise. Both philosophy and design can work hand in hand here in order to come to a better understanding of this paradigm shift, which - if we follow Rousseau's argumentation - does not solely affect politics but also human nature itself.

The UK designer Hilary Cottam has recently attempted to describe the shift at hand in more detail, starting from her personal experience in the creation of people-powered public services with her design collective Participle<sup>9</sup>. Cottam reads this shift largely as the result of the co-creation of solutions that eventually allow people to face societal challenges - such as ageing and wellbeing - in which the citizens, and not only policy makers, are involved in the decision making. She describes this as a "more social, collaborative approach to welfare."<sup>10</sup> Cottam also stresses the importance of human relationships in this shift.

She writes: *"Key features of these new approaches to care, education, welfare, food and energy are the intensive use of distributed systems; blurred boundaries between production and consumption; an emphasis on collaboration; and a strong role for personal values and missions."*<sup>11</sup>

## **"The aim of this article is not to find answers to those questions, but rather to formulate new questions."**

This "emphasis on collaboration" is reflected in the definition she gives of a new model of state, i.e. a "relational state"<sup>12</sup>. Through this term, she indicates a shift from the welfare state towards a new social pact amongst state and citizen, in which the private citizen is incrementally more and more actively involved in the policy making process.

Cottam appears to find in human relationship the key feature that leads us from the welfare state towards what she calls the relational state, a new model for the creation of public services which is "shared, collective and relational."<sup>13</sup>

Michel Bauwens uses a similar term, i.e. the "partner state"<sup>14</sup> which to him represents a move away from a hierarchical model of policy making to one in which political, economic, and social systems transform themselves into distributed networks, i.e. *"a transformed state that moves from being a patron of corporate interests to being a supporter and organizer of the networks' productive activities."*<sup>15</sup>

The network becomes the way in which citizens can participate in the process of decision making of the res publica. Besides public and private one can foresee, according to Bauwens, a third way, not solely public and yet not solely private. He names it "the third mode of governance"<sup>16</sup> and defines it in the following terms: *"... (it) is governed by the community of producers themselves, and not by market allocation or corporate hierarchy: this is the Pear to Pear governance mode, or 'third mode of governance'."*<sup>17</sup>

This third way of governance is central to the partner state, in which private and public realm work together in a network-like fashion and by doing so create a new model of state.

We will look at some examples in which people-powered public services illustrate how they can contribute to the creation of a new partnership amongst private citizens and the public sector, to a "partner state".

## **2. PEOPLE-POWERED PUBLIC SERVICES**

### **2.1 The state as partner: concrete cases of People-powered public services**

There are many examples where policy makers and civil servants facilitate and support services created through their collaboration with citizens, i.e. what we call people-powered public services. For instance, the Institute Without Boundaries<sup>18</sup> and the Dublin Institute of Technology<sup>19</sup> are at this moment working together on a project called "City Systems: Innovation in Public Service Delivery for the 21st Century City"<sup>20</sup> in which they - as a design school - facilitate the co-design process amongst citizens, civil servants and policy makers of the city of Dublin. The students have been asked to work for five weeks in the city of Dublin together with local organizations and local authorities: Design Twenty-first Century<sup>21</sup>, the Dublin City Council<sup>22</sup> and particularly with an initiative of the Dublin City

Council<sup>23</sup> called The Studio<sup>24</sup>, a public office dedicated to provoke and involve participation - between citizens and civil servants - in the design of public services.<sup>25</sup>

In the preliminary research phase of this project both Dubliners and Dublin's civil servants have been strongly engaged in becoming a pro-active element in the creation of new services and becoming, in Bauwens' terms, partners of the state. In this process the public authorities were conscious about the necessity arising within their city to find alternative models for the creation of public services. As such, they have been inviting design schools - a local one together with an international one<sup>26</sup> - to collaborate and create people-powered public services.

Authorities are sometimes, as in this particular case, co-initiators. Nevertheless, the records are most variable. Sometimes it is up to design schools to see opportunities and take, as pro-active agents of social change, initiatives without being explicitly asked to do so by public authorities.<sup>27</sup> Other times it is up to service/social design companies or NGO's to take up this challenge, often in collaboration with design schools.<sup>28</sup> In the majority of cases, when such initiatives take off, it usually happens out of a spontaneous, sincere and tangible sense of urgency. Society itself shows signals of a growing need to express its participation at all levels of policy making.

There are many other examples of the citizen's will to participate in creating a new society in an everyday fashion, starting up or engaging in new initiatives concerning for instance mobility, waste management, and so on. If this signal we are identifying in society corresponds to a real movement of change, could this mean - by extreme extrapolation - that in the future the full range of public services could be covered by private citizens? To follow in the footsteps of Peter Sloterdijk's provocation<sup>29</sup>: does this mean we will not need a Welfare State anymore?

Instead of the radicalism of Sloterdijk's point of view, we could see herein also the possibility of the model introduced by Bauwens, in which one does not get rid of the welfare state but rather re-thinks it as part of a new constellation of collaboration between authorities and private citizens as partners. Instead of the state producing services, we will possibly have the state co-

producing services in a network-like manner together with citizens and public service institutions. This is no mainstream model yet. Nevertheless, as we already mentioned, there are various examples, tangible signs that we could interpret as weak signals of a shift towards a partner state, as 'replacing' the welfare state in the way in which we currently know it in most Western, industrialized societies.<sup>30</sup>

In order to further understand how this collaboration between public and private realms can collaborate in a third way of governance, we will look more closely at a specific case on which we have been working in the last year.

## 2.2 Welcome to Saint-Gilles

As a design school we have been working together with seven other design schools in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine<sup>31</sup> within the framework of a project entitled "Sustainability at school #3 / Welcome to Saint-Gilles"<sup>32</sup>. Together possibilities have been created for civil servants, policy makers and citizens of a neighborhood of the city of Liège (B) called Saint-Gilles to collaborate and co-create solutions as an answer to the neighborhood's needs. For a full year, the design schools involved in the project 33 worked together with the local community, exploring explicit and latent needs to be addressed. New collaborative solutions were envisioned to develop in, with and for the neighborhood of Saint-Gilles. The initiative to do so came from the public sector.<sup>34</sup>

After mapping the neighborhood together with design educators and local stakeholders a series of key challenges<sup>35</sup> were identified. Students worked on them together with the local community<sup>36</sup>, which resulted in about a 100 micro-projects, of which some were neighborhood interventions, products, and co-produced services all aimed at enhancing the social cohesion and resilience of the neighborhood.<sup>37</sup>

All concepts were collected, clustered, and presented within an exhibition of the International Design Biennial Reciprocity which took place within the neighborhood of Saint-Gilles itself.<sup>38</sup> Also



during the exhibition, the local community was asked to give its feedback and thus to continue the conversation in which it had become engaged from the beginning of the academic year onwards. After the exhibition it soon became clear how spontaneously the inhabitants of Saint-Gilles adopted some of the projects and started to implement them.<sup>39</sup>

They started ‘tuning’ the prototypes to their needs and actual resources, sometimes blending them together in an unexpected way.<sup>40</sup> The local inhabitants, thanks to the work of the students of our partner ID campus, recently formed a new neighborhood committee or “street movement”<sup>41</sup>, as they called it, which is now working to develop some of the micro-projects proposed. These micro-projects have become seeds of a new kind of relationship which is forming between the inhabitants of Saint-Gilles and the public authorities of Liège: a partnership. Again, people-powered public services showed to contribute to create this partnership between private citizen and the public sector, which changes the way in which we intend the word “policy”. The cluster Public & Collaborative<sup>42</sup>, together with the DESIS Public & Collaborative Seminar that Reciprocity has

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been hosting<sup>43</sup>, have made us even more conscious about the importance that people-powered public services are assuming and the related shift of political paradigm they are contributing at.

Our project gave us some answers but most of all raised new questions. The first one is about continuity.

## 2.3 CONTINUITY

It is tempting to be satisfied quickly by the enthusiastic reaction of the moment. However, one must remind oneself that the aftercare of a project is key to its success. As such, within the Saint-Gilles case we decided to continue the project for one more year with a smaller - and as such, more manageable - group of students<sup>44</sup> so that we could follow through on and support the development of the micro-projects that have already been “selected” by the citizens themselves somehow. This is one way to give a sign of continuity, of shaping the handover phase and support the local community, of not letting things die out immediately after only the first steps have been taken. As we could experience in similar projects before, the gap between first enthusiasm and really getting things done is generally difficult to bridge for inhabitants once the design-team - in this case the design schools - disappear from the picture.

The aftercare of a project ought to be considered an actual step in the design process, one in which design students take care that the micro-projects they came up with together with the community, are also adopted by that community. In order to facilitate this process of building a sense of (co-)ownership in this phase, students need to be present in a slightly more discrete fashion, more in the background so to say. They need to be ready to step aside and eventually step back into the process when needed.

The participating schools, with the experience they have been gaining throughout the past years of working in the field and with the freedom they are granted to experiment, play a key role in recognizing, promoting and supporting what is needed by the local community throughout the different steps of a project. As such, schools can be said to be well-positioned to take on small-scale but nevertheless profound societal challenges.

Nowadays, they are often the ones to start up new initiatives and eventually look for some financial support, in dialogue with the public authorities. It are also often the design schools, because of the experience they gain in the field, which point out the importance of aftercare of projects, which is something often not foreseen or thought of enough by local partners and authorities.<sup>45</sup>

Another element required in order to guarantee continuity, is the active involvement of “local heroes”, enthusiastic, motivated and pro-active people willing to take ideas and initiatives a step further. During the last months of the Welcome to Saint-Gilles project, the coordinating team has been working to identify these local heroes, since we are aware of their importance to the success of the project. Besides identifying the local heroes, we also decided to map some of the local places which could be employed/transformed for inhabitants to come together, discuss and work together. In the Saint-Gilles case, we found the place and our local hero together.<sup>46</sup>

He turned out to be a civil servant, responsible for the Botanical Garden of Saint-Gilles. He currently oversees and manages the space where the “street movement” meets, i.e. one of the underused spaces of the Botanical Gardens. The location had already been envisaged as a place for the neighborhood to meet, discuss and work together on its improvement. Hence, the will was there as well as the resources. What the schools did was to create the momentum for these elements to find one another and merge. The place was not granted by policy makers, but by a civil servant who saw potential in the initiative and was open to welcome the initiative under the umbrella of a pre-existing one.

In July this year, the schools will leave. But before that, we are creating toolkits for the street committee to facilitate their dialogue, to introduce new ideas, share their tools and knowledge, and so on. We are basically supporting them with design skills, empowering them to become the “(co)designers” of their process. We are confident that the initiative can and most likely will continue, since it has now become “their” initiative, of the local inhabitants: they became a street committee, they developed their own magazine, their own initiatives, they have their own place where to meet, someone from the public sector who is professionally dedicated to the initiative. In a nutshell, they could cut the umbilical cord. Even though it will take some time to evaluate the project, we have the feeling that somehow we have achieved one of our main goals: the local community has managed to establish itself as a first local hub in the game of social innovation, materializing on the new dynamics created by the school-driven project.

Also local (and other) public authorities are currently noticing the new dynamics brought about by the project in the neighborhood and start to be hungry for more.

## 2.4 A local touchpoint

Enabling people to co-design and co-produce people-powered public services can be regarded a meta-service in its own right. Just like every service to be designed, as such, it would require processes and touchpoints. During the project it soon became clear that infrastructure would be needed to render it possible for the local community to gather around the initiative, and allow them to interact with designers or design students when needed. The physical working space that has been found for the meetings of the street movement forms the physical touchpoint of what can be called a PIP<sup>47</sup>. A PIP or Public Innovation Place, is a term which came to be used within the Public & Collaborative Cluster, to denote places for public innovation where citizens and public sector staff come and work together to create solutions which enable positive social change. In the case of Saint-Gilles, the location of which we speak is a beautiful, abandoned, art-deco building. Its character could undoubtedly enhance its function as a community center where to design, sow and grow seeds of social innovation.

The community itself has been growing and continues to do so. At the first meeting of the street movement, when the location was not identified yet, more than 50 people showed up. One could read in this a sign of support for the initiative. 50 people in a relatively small neighborhood coming together on a positive, constructive note around joint issues, also attracted the attention of other stakeholders such as civil servants and local policy makers to look for ways to tap into this energy and make use of the momentum generated. The creation of a PIP generally benefits from starting in a bottom-up way, from the local community itself, yet facilitated by a third party - e.g. designers or design schools in our case - to help them express their needs and challenges, and transform their dynamics towards co-designing and co-producing solutions. When the need for public infrastructure arises, the public sector can be a strong enabler however in seeking and/or providing the right location.<sup>48</sup> Many times however, there are already empty or underused public spaces and pre-existing resources that can thus find a new context and purpose of use.

Furthermore, having worked first on weaving the community tissue and building capacity within the neighborhood of Saint-Gilles and then on the location has been advantageous to the process as it put people first. Hence it has been the community adopting their space on the basis of shared goals and needs, not the other way around. To put it in a simple metaphor: a community can grow a garden, but it is rather difficult to care for a garden without having a local community. Shaping and dealing with these preconditions, is part of the co-design process of the PIP and the services it will roll out.

In terms of the exhibition organized to celebrate the outcomes of the initial “Welcome to Saint-Gilles” project and the community of stakeholders who made it possible together, could also be regarded a touchpoint in the meta-service role of the PIP. It provided a venue and carefully crafted experience for the local community to engage with the project results to which they contributed, with the designers and design schools and as such also with each other to co-decide how to take the ideas further and implement them.

## **“Enabling people to co-design and co-produce people-powered public services can be regarded a meta-service in its own right.”**

A similar way to achieve this could be to organize a so-called market of ideas. Within the context of a previous project “Design for togetherness” in Genk (B)<sup>49</sup>, the authors coached students to dress up an improvised booth during an evening market in the neighborhood in order to allow local community members to interact with prototypes, gather feedback from them to improve upon ideas etc. Other ways include digital spaces, online platforms for social innovation<sup>50</sup>, a public office, a street party, an sms’ street service, a design biennial or event embedded in the local community. Essentially, anything which stimulates and supports active communication and facilitates physical gathering and action, can help to physically ground neighborhood dynamics and initiative.

A stable ‘base-station’ - recognizable and accessible to all sharing the will and idea of improving their neighborhood, as a shared common good - takes such temporary initiatives one step further.

### **3. PIP**

#### **3.1 Public Innovation Places & Design Schools**

Public Innovation Places (PIP) can be considered enabling platforms where citizens, civil servants and policy makers can co-design sustainable solutions for societal challenges. The design schools, because of the freedom they are granted to research and experiment with new ways for design to be meaningful to society, have the possibility to work as a laboratory for social innovation and as such facilitate this kind of initiatives. This is basically one of the reasons why we started a DESIS lab within our research group Social Spaces CUO<sup>51</sup>, so that we could explore new modes of interaction between design and society in a sustainable way. This is a core value shared with the research group as such. From an educational and academic perspective, the lab’s activities allow to learn from the collaboration with other schools and from sharing experiences, how to better shape new interfaces and modes of interaction between design, design schools and society. As activities take place in a real-life context, they also nudge school projects and students to leave behind (at least some of) the naiveties commonly associated with them and step up the quality of work even though it has a pioneering character.

PIPs can find support in design schools in various ways. As mentioned earlier, because of their freedom of action and ‘non-profit’ nature, schools often take on the role of initiator of projects, there where economic realities. As such they also prepare the ground for other players to enter the game and continue on the basis of their work. They can also offer a context for others to experiment and learn, e.g. local inhabitants, civil servants and policymakers become familiar with design for social innovation, its power, requirements and limitations. Involving design students also brings in an element of mixing generations of working across the young/old divide and hence improve mutual understanding and value.

In the case of Welcome to Saint-Gilles the small PIP that just took off - in a bottom up way - has the potential to become a valuable catalyst of local

initiative and a valuable medium in supporting the aftercare of the project. This will hopefully help to empower the inhabitants of the neighborhood to incrementally improve their quality of life and eventually reduce the sense of fatalism connected to the fact of always waiting for solutions to 'descend from the heavens'; e.g. in a top-down way. While several valuable ingredients to a PIP have been identified through the course of this and other similar projects, what makes certain recipes work and others fail, requires further experimentation, research and debate.

This is why the authors decided to study the nature of PIPs in a little more detail within the context of a course at the MAD Faculty this year, together with P&C partner institution: Parsons NY, The New School for Design.<sup>52</sup>

In the next sections we will take a slightly more reflective look at PIPs through the lense of philosophy.

### 3.2 Freedom to experiment

The freedom to experiment is a key characteristic of PIPs. They provide people - across boundaries of disciplines or backgrounds, yet with common interests - with the space and freedom to explore new modes of interaction within society, one in which exceptions are welcomed. They are places where various options are explored in parallel to one another. Showcases - collections of innovative concepts and initiatives with a unique touch to it - are built as inspiration for others to adopt or built further upon and diverse expressions of shared (added) values.

When one looks at our cultural history, several other such contexts of free experimentation and expression come to mind. One such example is the rarity cabinet, or rather "Wunderkammer".<sup>53</sup>

The Wunderkammer was a physical space where to collect different elements of reality, from the mineral, organic world but also from archeology, historical artifacts, artworks; in short, everything that was considered to be eccentric, beyond the everyday mainstream. The Wunderkammer was a "theatrum mundi"<sup>54</sup>, a heir to Guilio Camillo's "Cabinet of the World"<sup>55</sup>, where the way in which the different objects - naturalia and artificialia<sup>56</sup> - were presented, embedded in a sort of narrative, i.e. the story of the personal philosophy or "Weltanschauung" of the cabinet's

owner. The freedom to contextualize, creating personal collections on the basis of new connections represented a relevant change in the history of the Renaissance. Michel Foucault described the Wunderkammer's mindset, which characterized the Renaissance's "episteme"<sup>57</sup>, as that which allows true discovery and embodies the spirit of exploratory research.

The Wunderkammer can be a metaphorical source of inspiration when addressing the topic of PIPs. That what appears to be the exception to today's society finds in it a place to be nurtured and grown, so that it can become a kind of small-scale model, a seed for a new way of organizing or running society, an exception, a "rarity", which could hence possibly find its way into the mainstream in a near future.<sup>58</sup>

In this sense - returning to Foucault - one could also see PIPs as "heterotopias", literally "other places" or "places of otherness"; alternatives to the ones imposed by the actual state of things, the predominant paradigm of thought, in this case that of top-down organized, often consumption-driven and individual-oriented society.<sup>59</sup>

### 3.3 PIP as places of exception

PIPs can be regarded as a kind of in-between spaces in which exceptions, alternatives to today's market driven society are grown, in which people experiment with the preconditions for a new societal paradigm - participative, open, a-hierarchical. The exceptions to the current way of deciding upon the res publica which PIPs embody, could hence show new ways forward and possibly even become or introduce new rules.

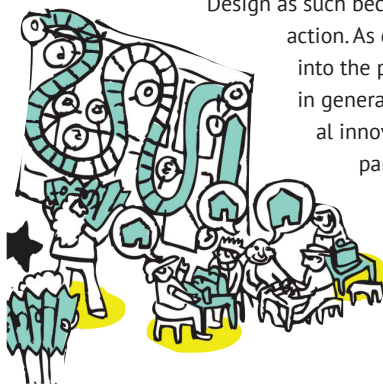
The idea of the exception as grounding the rule is something which we inherited from the notion of "state of exception" ("Ausnahmezustand") in the philosophy of both Carl Schmitt<sup>60</sup> and Walter Benjamin<sup>61</sup>. Both authors emphasize the way in which it is the exception that determines political action. The inside and the outside do not exclude each other, yet they determine each other.

In contemporary philosophy, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben<sup>62</sup> elaborates further upon this notion. According to him, since Roman Law, the establishment of the rule was based on the exception to the rule, namely the figure of the Homo Sacer, a man - both sacred and damned at the same time - who was considered to be outside of law and, as such, could

be killed by anybody without any legal repercussion. According to Agamben, it is this figure which delineates and thereby grounds Roman Law. In this respect, that which grounds the law does so from outside of it. Again, the established state of things - the rule - is grounded by what is outside of it, namely the exception.

From the point of view of the state of exception contemporary society embodies the *potentiality* to change the state of things and allow them to become mainstream. Reading PIPs as such, would emphasize the way people-powered public services could grow from a niche - a state of exception - to become mainstream, as could the way of co-design and co-producing services. Along the same line of reasoning, the partner state, as a state of exception, could eventually 'replace' the welfare state as we know it today. The PIP, as a means to open up the possibility of gathering and making the process of co-producing services tangible in all of its steps, is a powerful medium to create and support people-powered public services, as such, could be regarded a powerful instrument for the partner state as the exception to become the rule.

Referring back to Rousseau's theory mentioned earlier<sup>63</sup>, namely that the changing of political paradigm affects human nature, we can see how designers and design schools as key actors in the process of social innovation have a responsibility here. As a matter of fact, they are facilitators of this paradigm shift, as they are the ones that help, support, and often initiate the process of co-design of services which involve both citizens and public authorities, a role that in the past used to be fulfilled solely by public authorities. As such, their work can help to propel this state of exception forward.



Design as such becomes political action. As design extends into the public realm in general and soci(et)al innovation in particular, this awareness could and should be developed further. The field,

its practitioners and contexts of operations in which they are active, would benefit from a closer analysis of the consequences - both positive and negative - of its actions: i.e. their political implications, their potential or ability to change the state of things and, as such, to affect human nature.

The state of exception defines a threshold, a place on the borders of society.<sup>64</sup> PIPs as thresholds act within society but also in a way which differs from traditional *modus operandi*. Much like the Arcades in Walter Benjamin's *Parisian Passages*<sup>65</sup> - i.e. the Galleries of glass and steel which give the illusion of the outside world - PIPs are physical spaces of exception, of the threshold, where inside and outside of society and decision-making meet.

As in-between spaces PIPs also resemble in a way the rhizomatic<sup>66</sup> structures described by Deleuze and Guattari in their "A Thousand Plateaus"<sup>67</sup>: a-hierarchical, a-centric, open, able to take on a thousand different configurations. The metaphor of the "rhizome" also points towards new forms of knowledge sharing and development, beyond the rigidities of former structures based on strict categories, dichotomies and hierarchies. One could extend it as such to an image of society being structured in an alternative, 'exceptional' way.

Characterized by their in-between and experimental nature, their operating in an open, a-hierarchical, a-centric way, PIPs indeed seem to fit the mould of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic metaphor. Yet, new structures, new frameworks also require new ways to evaluate them.

Do these initiatives represent a genuine revolutionary power kickstarting systemic change? Could they continue to play that role? Or would they instead soon become just another instrument to reinforce the current state of things, being absorbed into the mainstream? How can we compare and evaluating the different experiences of PIPs we encounter on a global scale? Most of these questions can probably not be answered yet now, but are very much worth asking and reflecting upon. They further emphasize also the responsibility of designers and design schools to maintain their genuine vocation of representing and working towards valuable, positive societal change.

## 4 CONCLUSION

### 4.1 A participatory way of co-designing a new society

The previous sections have addressed many of the ways in which people-powered public services and their embedding within local contexts both physically and in terms of social fabric, could provide added value to society in view of positive change. Yet they also feature some risks ranging from the underestimation of their political impact and value to the risk of losing their exceptional character and becoming absorbed into the mainstream. The latter does not imply PIPs and the likes should not strive to grow or multiply, yet should be critical in seeking new alternatives, exceptional ways of approaching challenges continuously.

Time will tell whether initiatives such as these will grow powerful enough to bring about profound systemic change in society or not. Current signals which can be picked up globally however, do seem to signal such change or at least its potential and can be considered seeds of a new emerging paradigm of citizens, entrepreneurs and the public sector joining forces in a partner state kind of model.

Most valuable in this respect today is probably to experiment as much as possible with what people-powered public services can mean to our contemporary society, how such experimentation can be supported and kept going, e.g. through the setup of a diverse typology of PIPs. The latter appear to contain valuable ingredients. Experimentation with different recipes will allow us to learn from successes and failures. If it is true what we previously stated, i.e. that all these phenomena belong to a rhizomatic paradigm of knowledge sharing and creation, we need also to evaluate such successes and failures, such approaches, through the lens of a different mindset. This is a challenge for the community of practice to take up.

The co-design and co-production of people-powered public services can benefit greatly from the presence of a dedicated physical space, equipped to support the physical gathering of inhabitants, civil servants and eventually policy makers to co-create new solutions. Moreover, they provide added value to the solutions developed as such by supporting continuity, facilitating exposure and adoption by third parties. They can aid in the continuity of projects started by design schools/ designers, their aftercare, but also in initiating new

initiatives and bringing the right people and resources together, thereby further catalyzing positive change.

If PIPs support people-powered services, and the latter contribute to a paradigm shift, as mentioned by Bauwens and Cottam, then we can also say that PIPs - as physical laboratories for social experimentation and innovation - can imply an important lever in the transition towards a partner or relational state. Further understanding of PIPs and how they can be a valuable resource towards an actual societal paradigm shift requires further research. Design schools as such definitely have a key role to play in this. Essentially this is the direction in which several educational partners within the DESIS Public and Collaborative cluster<sup>68</sup> are working. Besides the ways in which they can be tools or platforms for change, also their political value and the more philosophical implications of the change they might bring about need to be investigated further. That discussion will also fuel the debate and help to better understand the role and responsibility of designers, design schools, PIP stakeholders etc. within today's and tomorrow's society.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

The collaboration with the Design Biennial of Liège (B) Reciprocity has been helpful and valuable in showcasing the possibilities provided by design schools as laboratories of action-oriented social innovation and the added value of such approaches/initiatives and collaborative settings of design for social innovation in the region. Although small in scale, the project received a lot of attention from the international press, thereby further contributing to a vivid discussion on the value of this kind of projects for society as well as the (sub)field(s) of contemporary design.

The collaboration with colleagues and projects within the P&C cluster through online meetings, conferences, papers and so on, has been stimulating, inspiring and informative in many ways. Especially also a more general reflection on the value of people-powered public services in society and the role of design schools as actors or catalysts in the field of social innovation has contributed significantly to a broader set of arguments pro and contra the adoption of certain roles by designers/design schools or other stakeholders within a project or specific phases.

### DESIGN EDUCATION

In the Euregion the project has managed to establish a local example of design for social innovation, raising awareness for the field and its societal contribution. Also within the design schools, e.g. the Department of Product Design of MAD Faculty the project has been referenced as an important example of the direction in which didactical and research activities can be combined and reinforce one another, while also delivering value to the societal context of the school in the region. Furthermore, the project has been showcased in the DESIS Showcase at the International Cumulus Conference in Santiago, Chile, November 2012

### DESIGN FOR POLICY

The project, by involving policy makers as stakeholders and promoters, and the exhibition, as a moment of public confrontation with the inhabitants of Saint-Gilles, have helped to inform and sensitize the public opinion regarding the use of design for social innovation. It has rendered the abstract concrete for them. Increasing their understanding in a learning-by-doing kind of way, has made public authorities more aware of the possibilities of the approach as well as the various stakeholders involved, not in the least of the roles design schools can play as agents of social change and the value of local inhabitants as an asset in the co-design, co-production and continuation of initiatives developed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the help and support of Giovanna Massoni of Reciprocity, Clio Barkzala and colleagues at Wallonie Design, and all the collaborators at ID Campus, especially Leonor Lupi Bello and Emilie Vandermeiren. Many thanks also for the unique experience to my dear “experts” that have joined us in this adventure: Nik Baerten, François Jegou and Thomas Lommée, the fellow lecturers of the other seven schools that have been collaborating with us on this project, all stakeholders and local authorities, the many students that have made this project possible and the wonderful inhabitants of Saint-Gilles.

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I close these acknowledgements with my sincere thanks to Luigi Ferrara, Michelle Hotchin, Susan Spiegel and the students of IWB and DIT for the great experience of co-designing services in Dublin.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Virginia Tassinari**, has a background in philosophy. Schooled in the critical theory tradition of the Frankfurt Schule, she now applies the study of criticism of society to the contemporary context, and translates its categories to the world of design. Actively engaged in both teaching and research activities at the MAD Faculty (Belgium) she develops socially relevant projects within her classes and contributes to various initiatives aimed at social innovation. She founded a DESIS Lab within her research group Social Spaces CUO. In her academic activities, through publications and lectures she mainly focusses on the relationship between social innovation and philosophy, practice and theory. She is actively involved in the collection and dissemination of international cases of social innovation through the DESIS Showcase initiative and feeds the discourse on the relationship between theory and practice of social innovation through the initiative of the DESIS Philosophy Talks. Besides her activities within DESIS, Virginia is also a member of the Executive Board of Cumulus, the international Association of Universities of Art, Media and Design.

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- 25 The Studio can be considered what we will later call Public Innovation Place.
- 26 IWB and DIT.
- 27 The involvement of the public authorities, even in this last case, are nevertheless essential in this process.

- 28 Design schools are complementary partners here and do not necessarily represent competition. They can enrich the work of Ngo's and design studios. Not being "in a market situation", gives them the freedom to experiment and fail. On the other side, Ngo's and design studios can be complementary to and/or provide follow-up services to the work of design schools because of expertise, professional know-how, quality assurance etc.
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- 32 <http://sustainabilityatschool.wordpress.com/>
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The languages spoken were four, belonging to three countries, respectively Belgium, Holland and Germany. The initiative came from a the Design Biennial of of the city of Liege (B), called Reciprocity- with the support of the regional public institution for Design, Wallonie Design, and of Recentre, an Euregional Project for Sustainable Design.

- 34 The initiative came from a local design event - the Design Biennial of of the city of Liège (B), called Reciprocity- with the support of the regional public institution for Design, Wallonie Design, and of Recentre, a Euregional Project for Sustainable Design.
- 35 What we counted for instance amongst those was the scarcity of social cohesion and social control, the perception of danger in the neighbourhood around the local park, the lack of sense of safety, a big amount of squatted houses and empty buildings and shops, the problem of seasonality, and the lack of variety of shops and services. Many of these issues had to do with the fact that one third of the people living in Saint-Gilles are basically students. This disproportion can probably be considered the neighbourhood's wicked problem.
- 36 The students have been working with cultural and urban probes, making street performances in order to engage participation and collect useful information.
- 37 For instance the creation of house restaurants, of new rituals of brushing together each evening the public spaces, of a collective artwork for connecting the side streets with the park and so on. For a full list of the projects' description please visit the online exhibition Welcome to Saint-Gilles: [http://www.designliege.be/FCK\\_STOCK/File/thomas\\_lommee-postcards.pdf](http://www.designliege.be/FCK_STOCK/File/thomas_lommee-postcards.pdf)

For more details on the making of each singular projects please visit the blog: <http://sustainabilityatschool.wordpress.com>.

- 38 The designer of the exhibition Welcome to Saint-Gilles is Thomas Lommee, that was also involved in the project as teacher and expert of one of the eight schools (Design Academy Eindhoven in this case). For more info please see: <http://www.intrastructures.net>
- 39 The way in which the exhibition was designed intended to facilitate the communication of the projects and the possibility to empower people. A postcard format was used for the different projects so that the visitors could take home the ideas they intended to develop. On the cards one could find the contact of the key stakeholders and of the students. This encouraged the private initiative and the rise of spontaneous initiatives initially powered by the students.

- 40 For instance they merged a project of chocolate packaging of a local chocolate maker with storytelling, with that of the creation of new rituals by making together lanterns out of recycled material, with a pre-existing street music festival and with a forgotten neighborhood tradition. Now it became a pilgrimage of musicians, happening once a year, whose story is told in the packaging of the street chocolate, where the street lanterns are used See: <http://journalsaintgilles.wordpress.com/about/le-pelerinage-des-musiciens/>
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- 45 A similar line of thought could be followed for professional designers, with the main difference being that design schools can often operate more freely than professionals and as such can more easily experiment, are implicitly allowed to fail and as such also can spend time and effort to research and try out new forms of interactions amongst citizens, policy makers and civil servants.
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- 48 A first step in this sense has been taken by our partner ID campus in setting up a neighborhood committee.
- 49 [www.socialspaces.be/projects/current-projects/design-for-togetherness](http://www.socialspaces.be/projects/current-projects/design-for-togetherness)
- 50 In Welcome to Saint-Gilles some students for instance have been working on an online platform called "+vert", where to post tutorials of actions of guerrilla gardening and facilitate some offline gathering moments where to create together nests for the park, musk graffiti, and so on. [www.jokeverbeeren.be/jokeverbeeren.be/Saint-Gilles.html](http://www.jokeverbeeren.be/jokeverbeeren.be/Saint-Gilles.html)
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# INNOVATION WITHOUT BOUNDARIES: ECOLOGY OF INNOVATION AND MUNICIPAL SERVICE DESIGN

Luigi Ferrara, Magdalena Sabat

## ABSTRACT

*The Institute without Boundaries (IwB) has worked extensively with North American and international municipal governments. The Institute's emphasis on design thinking and an ecology of innovation approach have enabled creative interventions and design solutions for the public service sector. The article describes the IwB's latest collaborations: the COLAB project conducted with the City of Markham in 2011-2012 and the Dublin Project conducted with the Dublin City Council in 2012-2013. These partnerships have built bridges between municipal governments and citizens, producing tangible solutions to innovate public service delivery in both cities. They have also sparked and developed inter-organizational collaboration and co-creation, showing that forming global design based networks is an important aspect of contemporary service design. The IwB's ecology of innovation approach in the Markham and Dublin projects serves as a model for building and discovering new strategies to innovate public service.*

**SERVICE DESIGN**  
**ECOLOGY OF INNOVATION**  
**TORONTO**  
**MARKHAM**  
**DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL**  
**THE STUDIO**

**PROJECT TITLE:**  
COLAB & The Dublin Project  
  
**UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:**  
Institute Without Boundaries  
  
**CITY/COUNTRY:**  
Toronto, Canada

**SERVICE AREA:**  
Public Service Design  
  
**PROJECT LEAD:**  
Luigi Ferrara  
  
**PROJECT WEBSITE/BLOG:**  
[www.worldhouse.ca](http://www.worldhouse.ca)

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

When thinking about how design, social innovation and public policy intersect, the discussion typically focuses on only one of those variables, an indication of how challenging it can be to bring the three together. The final decades of the 20th century saw experts emphasizing technological innovation as a connective and utopic force to drive social change and economic opportunity. However, this approach has also been critiqued as a form of technological determinism that reduces complicated environmental, spiritual and social problems to issues of connectedness and access to new technology.

The potential of technological innovation has been reevaluated and redefined. Technology is increasingly seen as embedded in a system of processes that when understood and translated become socially useful. For instance, at the Fifth European Academy of Design Conference in 2003, Hendrik Reynders emphasized, "Technology is not limited to the so-called hardware that we produce, but relates to that complete process of translating inventive scientific thinking into new processes and new forms of production."<sup>2</sup> Thus, 'technology' is not a singular object but rather a process that functions in a web of social, political and economic relationships.

An increasing number of politicians, business people, activists, and scholars are beginning to examine social innovation as an alternative tool to solve 'wicked'<sup>3</sup> global challenges such as income distribution, resource depletion, over development, and environmental degradation. In these debates social innovation is synonymous with tools, strategies, or relationships that enable social change. The concept of social innovation is a welcome tonic to the over emphasis on technology, but its promotion as an end in itself could lead to similar short sightedness in the management and promotion of innovation. Innovation has its own ecology comprised of a number of factors that need to harmonize before it can take root and have effect.

There is no single ingredient that drives successful innovation. In "Systems Design: Working with Change" (2012), Nigel Snoad argues that innovation has to account for the emerging interconnectedness and interdependence of complex systems that focus on users' functions - in other words, how we live today. He states: "we actually live in multiple communities at once: the places we work, the places we travel, where our parents live."<sup>4</sup> According to Snoad, to address the complexity of our lives, innovation has to be multi-directional and multi-faceted.

The Institute without Boundaries (IwB) uses an ecology of innovation approach. Figure 1, shows the interconnectedness of political, social, design, technical, and business innovation. Here an ecology of innovation is firstly an understanding that innovation is multi-directional and multi-faceted. The figure proposes that it is a constellation of factors in balance and alignment that makes true and lasting innovation possible. While social innovation may help us determine how we might want to live differently, technological innovation can build platforms that allow for these new possibilities to operate; design innovation can contextualize those possibilities into formats we can understand and use; business innovation can render the formats replicable and propagate them in society; and political innovation can assist in institutionalizing innovation, creating a pervasive environment of innovation that becomes a background that guides and regulates how we live. As a conceptual method, an ecology of innovation is based on the proposition that all these forces interacting on a level plane are required to make social change. The method promotes a culture and attitude of change and experimentation and considers innovation as inclusive of tools, strategies, and the development of key relationships, recognizing that it is the synergy of these factors that enables social change.

The implementation of an ecology of innovation in the public sector has different challenges than those in the private sector. City bureaucracies have established speeds, processes and budgets that can seem resistant to change. Municipal bodies have a metonymic relationship to the cities they represent and govern, and on a smaller scale they represent the whole of

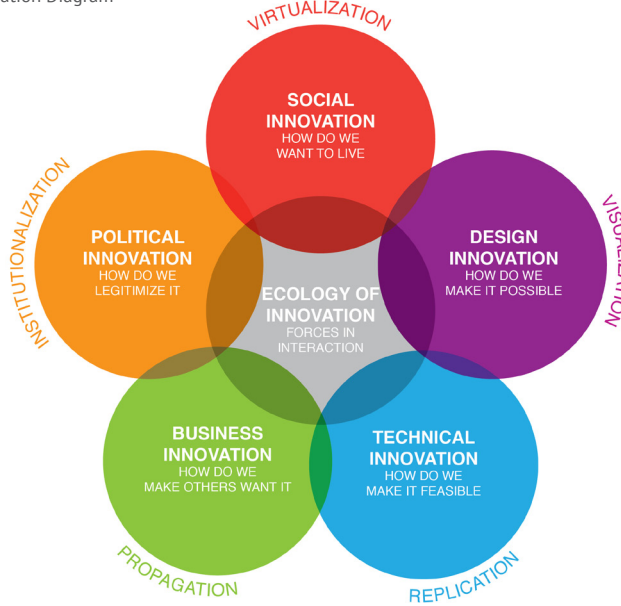
1 Parts of the introduction and the discussion of an ecology of innovation were delivered in a keynote lecture by Luigi Ferrara at the Orion Lecture Series in Fine Arts, University of Victoria, British Columbia, September 2012.

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3 See Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," *Policy Sciences* 4, no.2 (1973), 155-169.

4 Nigel Snoad, "Systems Design: Working with Change," *The Journal of Design Strategies, Transdisciplinary Design*, Parsons The New School for Design 5, no.1 (2012), p.57.

**Figure 1.** Ecology of Innovation Diagram



the city structure. Differences in perspectives and approaches within the municipal government body make it difficult to address the whole organization and the whole city. When viewed as a constellation of factors and attitudes that accounts for the complexities of everyday life, innovation in public service is multi-dimensional and complex, but not impossible to manage and change.

The Institute without Boundaries has been working with municipal partners since its inception in 2003 as a collaborative studio environment and academic program that seeks to achieve social, ecological and economic innovation. In its most recent projects, it has worked with the City of Markham in Canada and the Dublin City Council in Ireland. Markham and Dublin are very different cities, with different problems, still there are many similarities facing these municipal governments in terms of public service delivery, specifically how to channel new ideas into public service and build better relationships with citizens. The IwB's ecology of innovation approach is an evolving method that can be used as a framework for service design. The work here presented not only showcases the innovative ideas created by the IwB students, staff and project partners, more importantly it discusses the benefits for municipal governments of working with an interdisciplinary body like the IwB. The discussion below highlights the experience of

collaboration from the perspectives of the municipal government, IwB staff, and students to show that at its core innovation is an ecology that requires the development of organizational relationships as much as it needs new research, tools, and strategies.

### **Working with Cities: The IwB and its partners**

The Institute without Boundaries (IwB) is located in Toronto. It was founded in 2003 by the School of Design at George Brown College, in consultation with Bruce Mau. It is a unique academic, research and development program focused on collaborative design practice with the objectives of social, ecological and economic innovation through design research and strategy. Central to this work are real projects of public and global significance that are executed by students, faculty and industry experts as part of academic curriculum, research initiatives, and creative projects.

The IwB has worked with several city entities, and many not for profit organizations and industry partners. Along with the Municipality of Markham, Ontario, and the Dublin City Council, some of the Institute's past project partners include: the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Ministry of Housing in Costa Rica, Habitat for Humanity Canada, Evergreen Canada, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, and the Chilean City of Lota. These and other partnerships are

part of the IwB's research program, which has evolved since 2002 when the Institute began its first major project called Massive Change, a two year initiative that examined the role of design in addressing social, environmental and economic progress. Massive Change spurred World House, a four-year project between 2004-2008 that explored the design of shelter, advanced housing solutions that promote inclusion, sustainability, affordability, and technological and environmental responsiveness. From this initiative came the City Systems research project from 2009-2012 that looked at the evolution of resilient twenty-first century models for large-scale social housing, towns rebuilding after natural and economic disasters, edge cities needing to become complete cities, layering and density in city centers, as well as the design of public service delivery.

The City Systems research focus was the framework for partnerships with the City of Markham and the Dublin City Council. It addressed the micro and macro levels of service provision within cities to understand the systems present in municipal governance and how an ecology of innovation can realign and make these systems more efficient. The work conducted shows that in a short time municipal governments can reinvigorate their internal organizational communication, develop better communication with citizens, and generally add social and economic value to the municipality. The success of the projects has been in large part due to the open attitude of municipal staff, a disposition that project participants have described as leadership that is forward thinking and able to understand and mediate the conditions for change. The IwB's collaboration with Markham and Dublin has pinpointed opportunities for infrastructural and urban beautification, expansion of cultural programming, new efficiencies in public service communication, as well as proposals for innovation units within the municipality. The Markham and Dublin projects serve as models for new forms of collaboration and strategies for building strong partnerships to innovate public service delivery.

#### **COLAB: A Future Change Lab for Markham**

In 2011, during the third year of City Systems research, the City of Markham became a major sponsor and project partner of the Institute. The IwB spent nine months studying Markham, Ontario, exploring its municipal systems, and proposing design strategies and key interventions for Highway 7 and the other

main streets of Markham. At the outskirts of Toronto, Markham is an 'edge city' in many respects, with homogenous residential areas, large distances, and little

**“The IwB's collaboration with Markham and Dublin has pinpointed opportunities for infrastructural and urban beautification, expansion of cultural programming, new efficiencies in public service communication, as well as proposals for innovation units within the municipality.”**

density to promote pedestrian culture. But it is also changing both spatially and demographically. Markham has an incredibly diverse and growing population of more than 300,000 citizens, over fifty percent of whom are Chinese and South Asian, and many of whom are also new immigrants. The city holds a powerful position as a high tech capital in Canada, but it also has one of the best maintained historic zones in its Unionville district. The City of Markham employs close to 1,000 regular full time staff, and is supported by 800 to 1,500 part time, seasonal, and temporary staff. Its emphasis on leadership and innovation has drawn many businesses to Markham, like IBM, AMEX, and Toshiba.

The IwB partnership took place at a crucial time during which Markham was redefining itself. In 2011, The City of Markham was still a township, and a rapidly expanding suburb of Toronto, but in 2012 it was officially recognized as a city. As Markham changed designation from town to city, the municipal government wanted to address business closures and a shrinking population due to youth moving to Toronto's city centre. Markham realized it needed to be proactive to fuel economic and cultural growth that would attract people to their city and prevent young people in particular from moving away, simultaneously, continuing to make itself attractive for business.

Between 2011-2012, municipal management, staff,

members of the community, and local business representatives, worked with IwB students acting as advisors during charrettes, reviewing proposals, attending presentations, and providing ongoing feedback and support; the 'client's' voice included a wide spectrum of observations and comments from the wider Markham community. The City was a generous sponsor that contributed cash, staff time, organized community gatherings and advising groups to aid the students' research, provided an incubator space in the Markham Convergence Center, and an exhibition space at the Varley Art Gallery in Markham for the year-end student exhibit. Asma Khanani Caporaletti, an IwB alumna who worked on the COLAB project, claims city managers and staff were extremely open and generous with their time and resources, and understood well their own demographic composition and cultural identity. They took a realistic approach to

**“Ultimately, the students’ work culminated in a proposal for a pilot project called COLAB - an interdisciplinary design solutions unit for Markham that creates a space where the political, social, design, business, and technical forces of innovation can meet and be leveraged in a neutral space.”**

their large Asian immigrant population and its needs, in terms of new immigrant resources, employment, cultural programming, etc. For Khanani Caporaletti, it was the city's self-knowledge, understanding that their growth is inevitable, their openness to new ideas, and their forward thinking and encouraging leadership that made the collaboration a success.<sup>5</sup>

Through design thinking and systems analysis, the IwB students generated ideas for infrastructural and service design improvements citywide. They considered

alternative uses for parking lots and green fields; created tools to empower small business; identified and celebrated community landmarks; and defined creative industry hubs. The focus became Markham's main streets like Old Kennedy Road and Highway 7, roads that are more accommodating to car than pedestrian traffic, with low-density of public and green areas. The students took a 'complete streets approach'<sup>6</sup> and made project proposals to restructure Markham's main streets by enhancing accessibility, residential and commercial infill, and public infrastructure.

Ultimately, the students' work culminated in a proposal for a pilot project called COLAB - an interdisciplinary design solutions unit for Markham that creates a space where the political, social, design, business, and technical forces of innovation can meet and be leveraged in a neutral space. COLAB uses the resources of the municipality, the dynamism of the private sector and the wisdom of the community to research, design, develop and prototype innovative solutions to twenty-first century urban challenges. Ultimately, the student's work became about demonstrating the usefulness and suitability of a change lab in Markham that would be onsite and online, project based, and ongoing - a virtual and physical space where Markham's ecology of innovation could be explored.

According to Khanani Caporaletti, Markham had the resources but needed help on how to direct the city's potential growth. The City needed to direct the 'softer' and creative processes that could address the gaps in infrastructure and cultural planning in Markham. The IwB was able to bring in many tangible, creative ideas that resonated with citizens and city employees. Khanani Caporaletti explains that COLAB as a pilot project for the city would enable implementation of these ideas and introduce an interdisciplinary perspective that could break the formula of everyday bureaucracy; it presents a way to invigorate government, give it a creative outpost in which city officials and interdisciplinary design staff could meet and think through city problems together. She notes: "For me it was a realization that good solutions take time to implement, time to settle and become part of everyday life."<sup>7</sup> COLAB is a pilot project for Markham that gives a space for ideas to develop locally over time.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Asma Khanani Caporaletti, April 22, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Established in 2005 the National Complete Streets Coalition aims to make streets more universally accessible and livable: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Asma Khanani Caporaletti, April 22, 2013.

Markham gained the commitment, enthusiasm, and immersion of the IwB students whose sole focus was the City of Markham for nine months, but also the support and expertise of the IwB mentors. The IwB works by teaming its students with mid-career professionals and expert mentors from fields such as architecture, urban planning, digital media and design, marketing, fine arts, finance, public policy, geography, etc. The student's enthusiasm and energy is matched with contemporary knowledge from professionals working on current projects, as well as experts further in their career that can provide a deep knowledge of their industries. Thus, Markham gained not only the commitment of IwB students, but its network of professionals and experts. Together the IwB and Markham's different stakeholders created a community of knowledge where ideas could be explored from multiple perspectives.

For Stephen Chait, Director of Economic Development at the City of Markham, the IwB partnership "provided a unique and valuable opportunity for alternate service delivery solutions that were inspired by a wide diversity of precedents and innovative, cutting edge thinking."<sup>8</sup> Chait believes that in addition to the conceptual and creative value, there are financial benefits to working with interdisciplinary design entities like the IwB. Instead of hiring a consulting firm or using city resources and employees, the city is able to pool a talented and interdisciplinary team. Further, according to Chait, the experience was unique because for the students the project was the central focus and not one of many company projects on the table: "there is an involvement and enthusiasm that would be difficult to find elsewhere."<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, Chait claims it is a "financial imperative" for municipalities to look at alternate solutions in view of shrinking city budgets and growing city challenges.

Unlike a consulting firm that uses proven formulas, IwB students' objective was "not to diagnose problems, but to identify strategic opportunities and leverage existing public and private assets to effect the greatest impact."<sup>10</sup> Through the design process that includes public charrettes, exhibitions, and internal critiques, proposals were presented, refined and represented for internal and public scrutiny. More important than one

particular strategy or proposal was the framework the students used to achieve design innovation that included an emphasis on interdisciplinarity and collaboration between community, industry, and government. Figure 2, the COLAB Organizational Model, situates the future change lab as a unifying space for Markham's different stakeholders, the municipality, private sector, and citizens. The innovation made in the COLAB model is that these players would collaborate contributing both funds and human capital. Here, COLAB is featured at the intersection of these different stakeholders. Indeed, in the COLAB proposal book the IwB students maintain that:

*Our most consistent and high quality results were achieved when we worked at the intersection of the municipality, community and private sector, harnessing the knowledge and resources of each to develop strategies that went above and beyond. Innovation in this context is about enabling dialogue and collaboration between diverse partners, and providing a laboratory for new ideas and best practices to be shared and celebrated.<sup>11</sup>*

The students' work became about creating an environment where ideas about enhancing and restructuring Markham could continue to take place. The project work mapped out the systems and challenges in Markham, and proposed new tools and strategies for addressing these issues. But the COLAB project proposes more than new urban regeneration strategies, it shows an understanding that innovation is an ecology that needs to address problems by leveraging community, industry, and government and providing a neutral space for these entities to brainstorm, finance, and test solutions together. These networks provided the base understanding for the challenges facing Markham, and when synergized they created the best solutions to Markham's challenges because they stemmed from ideas generated in tandem with Markham community, government, and industry stakeholders.

### **The Studio, Dublin City Council, and Service Design Innovation**

Beginning in 2013, the IwB began a partnership with Dublin City Council (DCC), the municipal authority for the City of Dublin. DCC employs 6,000 staff and provides over 500 services to Dublin City and the

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Stephen Chait, April 17, 2013.

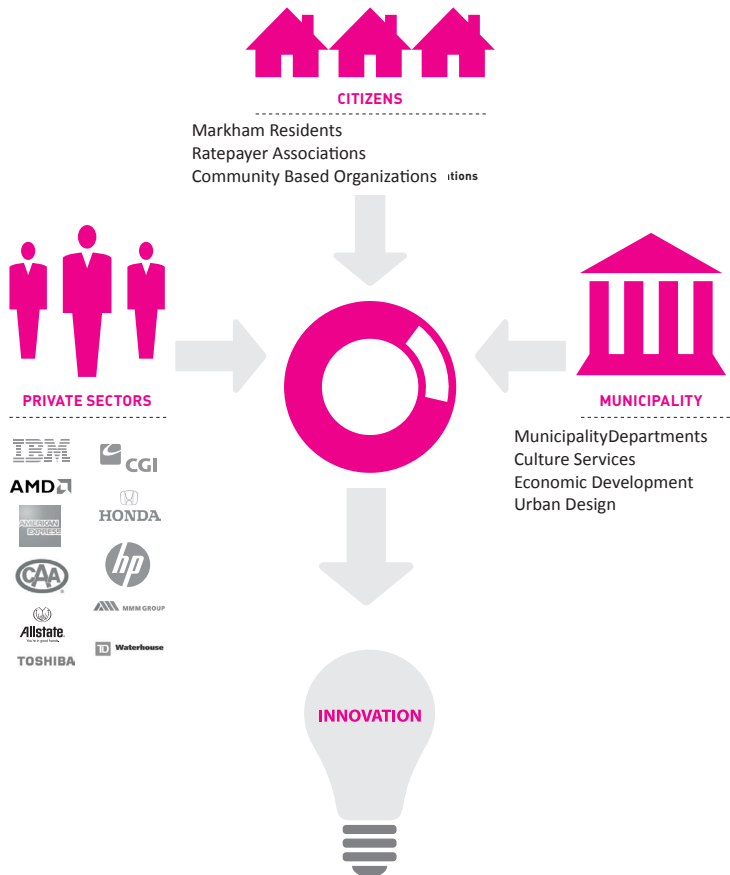
<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Institute without Boundaries, *COLAB: A Chang Lab for Markham*, Toronto, Institute without Boundaries, 2012, p.11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.19.

Figure 2. Colab Organizational Model

## MARKHAM MEET COLAB



wider Dublin region. These services include, planning, housing, roads, water, wastewater, culture, recreational and emergency services. Dublin is one of the oldest cities in Europe. It is small in comparison to most world capitals, but is considered a 'global city'.<sup>12</sup> It led Ireland's expansion during the Celtic Tiger economic boom, it also felt the equal brunt of the economic crisis starting in 2009; along with a host of challenges, the recession has meant dealing with derelict properties known as 'ghost estates', rising crime rates, and a decreased budget for the city to deal with these new problems.

In 2010, DCC created The Studio, a multidisciplinary unit within city government. The Studio is a new and

experimental phenomenon in city governance that came out of a project series called Designing Dublin, a collaboration between the firm Design Twentyfirst Century (D21C) and several creative professionals in Dublin and Europe, including an IwB alumni.<sup>13</sup> The Designing Dublin collaborative looked at how Dublin City could be improved in the wake of an economic crisis that left many derelict properties in the city centre. The project looked to find potential in these spaces and to generally make the city centre more attractive to people. The project materialized the potential of a city innovation incubator and gained the attention of Dublin City Manager John Tierney, who decided to form The Studio to make organizational

<sup>12</sup> See Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton/New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on Designing Dublin please see <http://www.design21c.com/node/2>

change in Dublin's government. The Studio was brought together as an interdisciplinary team, including an architect, planner, human resource specialist, financial advisor, information science researcher, etc. Tierney envisioned The Studio as both an interior and fringe space in city government that would enable the City of Dublin to cultivate new ideas to confront the city's socio-economic problems and to counter the public's suspicions of the municipal authority. The Studio has worked on Public Realm Projects, improving service design in the city, and initiated programs such as Dublinked, and the DCC Staff Ideas Scheme.<sup>14</sup>

The relationship between the lwb and The Studio developed over a four to five year period during which the two entities worked together in different capacities on several projects, including Designing Dublin. In 2010, The Studio approached the lwb to discuss a full partnership. The Studio's Senior Executive Officer, Deirdre Ni Raghallaigh, describes the motivation for the partnership as in part an interest in connecting with other interdisciplinary design studios, and a particular interest in working with the lwb.<sup>15</sup> She emphasizes that the partnership offered The Studio an opportunity to grow its international network, and encouraged DCC and The Studio to look outside itself; it was important from her perspective to give DCC and The Studio's staff this experience. Further, the high standard and the scope of the lwb's past projects demonstrated to Ni Raghallaigh the usefulness of setting up a similar academic program in a Dublin institution, where design methodology could be taught locally. Thus, The Dublin Project became a partnership that also included minor project partners: Design Twentyfirst Century (D21C), an Irish not for profit, charitable organization dedicated to innovating Irish society, and a major academic institution the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), and their School of Art, Design, and Printing in Dublin.

The Dublin Project collaboration has created a strong and unique partnership. Dublin staff and students became embedded in the lwb's 2013-2014 curriculum and have given time and energy as mentors and participants in many respects. In October and November 2012, the lwb students and staff spent five weeks doing primary research and working with DCC and The Studio staff in Dublin; the visit culminated in a charrette held

for all participants at DIT. Throughout 2012-2013, the lwb students presented small case studies to the client suggesting cultural projects and agendas to encourage public engagement, urban regeneration projects to create better public spaces, and a range of propositions to create transparency and clearer communication between the city and the public. Ultimately DCC, choose the latter as the focus of the major project. The lwb students proposed Our Dublin, a system of programs intended to support and activate civic engagement and collaboration. Our Dublin responds to DCC's aims to innovate and create intelligence around the issue of public engagement and to improve trust between the citizens and the municipal government.

The project is focused on making better connections with citizens and gathering data from citizens about the city. Figure 3, shows the Our Dublin Project Overview. "Sense it, see it, make it" frames the organizational, and digital components of the program. Through sensor software, data mission applications, and an open and accessible digital dashboard DCC is able to collect information about city issues from citizens. Users can analyze, understand, and react to the data through interactive tools. In addition, the program features a Project-Maker Starter Kit, an information and digital resource kit that fosters public imagination and problem solving around city challenges and helps citizens start and collaborate on projects to build their community.

While Our Dublin strives to embed interactive tools in city space and in the citizens' hands, the program's focus on new technologies such as sensors and digital applications is balanced by on the ground delivery of program components like the DubBus, a rotating bus with regular stop points in Dublin City where citizens can assemble and share ideas onsite with local staff, and participate in community engagement around service planning. Indeed, how ideas are circulated, stored, and locally implemented are on the forefront of The Studio's agenda and the lwb's proposal for Our Dublin.

Currently, Our Dublin is being proposed to the DCC City Manager's bureau. Our Dublin may become the new face of the DCC, or parts of its vision may be implemented. What is most important however, is that proposals like Our Dublin are being circulated, and are opening up staff and citizens' minds to facilitate change in service provision. Ni Raghallaigh explains that whether an idea

<sup>14</sup> For more information on The Studio's projects please see: [www.dublincity.ie](http://www.dublincity.ie).

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Deirdre Ni Raghallaigh, April 26, 2013.

is implemented or not is dependent on the ambition and scope of the concept, but not exclusively so, “A project has to be localized, someone has to adopt it,” she notes.<sup>16</sup> She explains that sometimes a project has great potential, but it may not be implemented because of budget limitations, or a competing project elsewhere. What is crucial is that the ideas circulate and gain an audience, she stresses, “it’s important to keep ideas circulating so they catch on, if more and more people are exposed to them they are more likely to happen.”<sup>17</sup> An ecology of innovation approach recognizes that ideas not only have to be generated but also need time to circulate and be accepted before they can become reality; this process assures many perspectives enter the project, fine-tuning it to local needs while maintaining a larger scope. For The Studio, working with the lwB created more visibility for local projects, stirring organizational synergies and wider debate locally, demonstrating that innovation is not only the idea generating process itself and the tools created to foster it, but rather the larger process of creating onsite and virtual spaces where innovation can be harnessed and propagated.

### CONCLUSION

Sabrina Dominguez, a student at the lwB working on the Dublin Project, describes The Studio as a department that keeps at “arms-length” from the other municipal departments, they intentionally keep a “foot in and out of city operations.”<sup>18</sup> Susan Speigel,

16 Interview with Deirdre Ni Raghallaigh, April 26, 2013.  
 17 Ibid.  
 18 Interview with Sabrina Dominguez, April 18, 2013.

Figure 3. Dublin Project Overview

|           |                                                                                     |                |               |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| SYSTEM    |  |                |               |
| PLATFORMS | app                                                                                 | website        | bus           |
| PROGRAMS  | sense it                                                                            | see it         | make it       |
| TOOLS     | data missions                                                                       | data dashboard | project maker |

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a Toronto based architect and an lwB advisor, states “The Studio is like a COLAB, a think tank that acts as a bridge between the municipality, the citizens, and industry,” a space where municipal employees can “innovate from the inside.”<sup>19</sup> The key to forming lasting innovation in public service is this fringe positioning that bridges the social, political, business, technical, and design aspects of the ecology of innovation. A design studio is an *advisory body* capable of researching, organizing, presenting, and circulating new concepts in public service. It is *a process* through which the government, community, industry, not for profits, and other design studios can debate and propose solutions. Importantly, it is also *a place* where new ideas can be presented, stored, and circulated.

There are many differences between Markham and Dublin and this paper has not tried to form a comparison, but rather present two case studies taken on by the lwB. Markham is a new municipality that faces problems typical of an edge city, while Dublin is one of Europe’s oldest cities, dense, diverse, and politically complex. Yet there are similarities here. Through the Dublin Project, The Studio has gained ground in implementing many new ideas in Dublin, and the City of Markham is, since the COLAB Project, contemplating a change lab as a permanent feature in Markham.

Municipal governments are recognizing that developing better relationships with their citizens and industry can lead to improved city processes. Today’s municipal leadership is seeing the necessity in interdisciplinary design studios collaborations as a way to build and pilot solutions to city challenges. But it takes an open attitude. The Dublin Project and COLAB Project participants emphasized that Markham’s and Dublin’s city managers created an environment of respect and curiosity, they were open to innovative ideas and willing to take risks. Further, design can act as a bridge that synergizes the different stakeholders needed for lasting social innovation to happen in public service, but it doesn’t do so over night. Navigating the constellation of factors that make up innovation, leveraging that ecology in a neutral space is a localized and evolving process that requires continuous public debate; ideas need to be circulated in the public domain, they also need a space where they can be cultivated to drive change.

19 Interview with Susan Speigel, April 18, 2013.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

An ecology of innovation approach is inclusive. It places social innovation in a context where innovation synergies can enhance project viability. By designing together, co-creating with the public, clients, sponsors, and professionals of various disciplines, holistic propositions can be developed into formats that society can adopt. Design studios must engage in deeper research that considers an ecology of innovation in each project. Collaboration with other design studios, think tanks, not for profits, etc. enhances projects by diversifying the conceptual ground from which project ideas spring forth.

### DESIGN EDUCATION

Design education must constantly evolve technologically, but also methodologically. While it is important to give students practical training in design skills and historical context to their design learning, design education must equally concentrate on method. Design program curriculums that are flexible can gain insights from student feedback and evolve the curriculum. Design programs can similarly benefit from working with real world partners and on real world problems that force new methods, tools, and strategies. The IwB's Interdisciplinary Design Strategy Program curriculum emphasizes immersion of students in projects and professionalization; ongoing contact with the clients, accountability for the project deliverables, integration with a global network of experts that advise the project and face to face contact with the project's users. The IwB curriculum both mirrors design firm practices because students are engaged in the design process from conception of projects ideas, to research, prototyping, visualization stages, and project testing and delivery, but also differs from firm practices because unlike a design firm the IwB's ecology of innovation methodology forces a trans-system analysis.

### POLICYMAKING

The Studio in Dublin, as well the proposal for a COLAB in Markham, demonstrate the advantages of interdisciplinary hubs working with municipalities. These labs are new phenomena in public service design, but an increasing number of municipalities globally are looking to harness interdisciplinary and design thinking methodologies because they are faced with increasingly complex challenges and have limited budgets. Collaboration with design schools and design studios can invigorate public policy, strengthening internal communication, developing new relationships with citizens, industry, and other city organizations. A public sector that is forward thinking and anticipatory should be open to new methods that will better equip it to face the increasingly multi-directional and multi-faceted challenges affecting citizen's lives.

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# CHAPTER 4

## COLLABORATIVE DESIGN METHODS AND TOOLS

### 1. THE TEEN ART PARK PROJECT: ENVISIONING SPACES FOR ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

MARIANA AMATULLO

### 2. PHYSICIANS AS CO-DESIGNERS: CHANGING THE PRACTICE OF CARE

KRISTIN HUGHES, PETER SCUPELLI

### 3. NEW PUBLIC'S ROLE IN ACUPUNCTURE PLANNING

FRANÇOIS JÉGOU, CLARA DELÉTRAZ, GIOVANNA MASSONI, JEAN-  
BAPTISTE ROUSSAT, MARIE COIRIÉ



# THE TEEN ART PARK PROJECT: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN TOOLS FOR ENVISIONING PUBLIC SPACES FOR ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Mariana Amatullo

## ABSTRACT

*This essay presents the Teen Art Park Project as a case study of a collaborative public sector design endeavor that includes planning for a recreational environment that is intended to serve disadvantaged teenagers with structures co-designed to foster safe, artistic expression. Insights about tools and design research methods that foster collaboration with a multiplicity of stakeholders and amplify social innovation outcomes are offered.*

**SOCIAL IMPACT DESIGN**  
**SUSTAINABLE**  
**COMMUNITIES**  
**URBAN PLANNING**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN**

**PROJECT TITLE:**  
The Teen Art Park Project

**UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:**  
Designmatters at  
Art Center College of Design

**CITY/COUNTRY:**  
Pasadena, CA, USA

**MAIN PARTNERS:**  
The Armory Center for the  
Arts, Flintridge Center, And  
Learning Works Charter  
School.

**SERVICE AREAS:**  
Youth and Recreation  
Services

**PROJECT WEBSITE/BLOG:**  
[http://www.  
designmattersatartcenter.  
org/proj/teen-art-park-a-  
place-for-artistic-expression/](http://www.designmattersatartcenter.org/proj/teen-art-park-a-place-for-artistic-expression/)

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David Mocarski, Chairman,  
Environmental Design  
Department;  
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Environmental Design  
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*“What safe spaces can teenagers claim for themselves? Policy makers must begin to address this question in urban centers and involve youth planning in these spaces.”*

*Teen Art Park Partner, in studio critique at Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, Summer 2012.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, there is widespread understanding among policymakers, community leaders, designers and educators that creating public spaces that build flourishing, inclusive communities and promote a sense of belonging, local identity and social networks is a difficult undertaking. Imagining such spaces that target a teen demographic not usually served by any planning or creative process becomes even more of a challenge.

The Teen Art Park project addresses that challenge head on. A community-driven vision for a dynamic public venue with innovative infrastructure and arts programming benefiting underserved populations of teens in the cities of Pasadena and Altadena, California, it puts forward a compelling case study. Notions of well-being and quality of life, as well as emerging issues concerning participation, needs and social capital among a diversity of stakeholders may well be “soft” indicators of the resiliency and creativity of our built environment, but they are also increasingly recognized as key determinants of cohesive and socially sustainable communities.<sup>1</sup> These are the vibrant communities we all strive to live and work in, as well as to call home: ones in which the design of the physical realm supports social and cultural life, systems for civic engagement and space for all people to evolve and thrive.

What might be new approaches to designing places that can shape the aspirations and opportunities of teens from seriously disadvantaged backgrounds? How might one envision safe spaces for creative expression that these teens can claim for themselves? These interrelated questions provided a critical point of departure for the collaborative framework that drove forward the vision for the Teen Art Park Project.

## 1.2 Vision & Design Brief

The concept was simple: an innovative arts center for at-risk youth. A place where teenagers could more than just escape from their problems, but would also be encouraged to deal with them through the arts. Believing that people’s lives might be transformed if given the chance to channel their negative emotions into positive ones through the canvas, the wall, paper or a loud speaker, Art Center students sought out to design a venue for self-expression and an art park to foster social change for at-risk teens.

The park concept was developed during a two-term trans-disciplinary studio led by the Environmental Design Department in the 2011 spring and summer academic terms. But it was born over months of conversation among twenty-nine community partners. Among those contributing ideas, insight and resources along the way were the Flintridge Center, the Armory

**“The concept was simple: an innovative arts center for at-risk youth. A place where teenagers could more than just escape their problems, but would also be encourage to deal with them through the arts.”**

Center for the Arts, Learning Works! Charter school, Day One, and the project initiator, the Designmatters Department at Art Center College of Design.<sup>2</sup> The design brief called for students from environmental design, product design, illustration and graphic design to consider and create alternative positive environments for youth to explore various forms of art-making activities.<sup>3</sup>

Over the two core academic terms that comprised the investigation and collaboration with partners, students formed small teams and worked in the first studio to

<sup>2</sup> The process of the two studios and the partnership are documented in the Designmatters publication: *The Teen Art Park Project: A Place for Artistic Expression*, Designmatters at Art Center College of Design, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> The Art Center students that participated in the studios are: Jori Brown, Adam Patrick Easter Cottingham, Breon Waters II (Team ArtPas); Anycia Lee, Evian Olivares, Joshua Wong (Team Freesol); Seth Baker, Hugh Chuang, Thomas Kong (Team Hub).

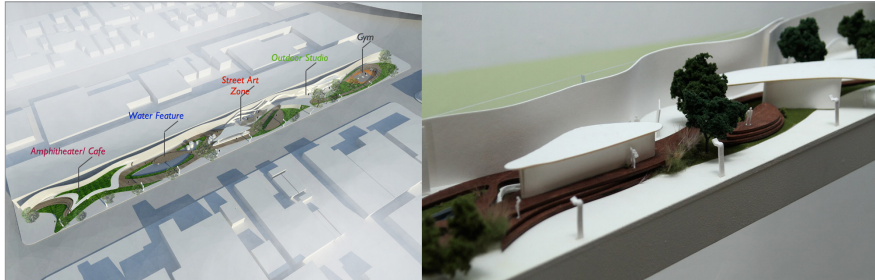
<sup>1</sup> Saffron Woodcraft with Tricia Hackett & Lucia Caistor-Arendar. Foreword by Sir Peter Hall. *Design for Social Sustainability: A framework for creating thriving new communities*. The Young Foundation, 2011.

Figures 1-3: Sketch & Model

1.  
Team Art Pas digital  
render and scale  
model of their Teen  
Art Park proposal.



2.  
Team Fresol digital  
render and scale  
model of their Teen  
Art Park proposal.



3.  
Team Hub scale  
model and sketch of  
their Teen Art Park  
proposal.



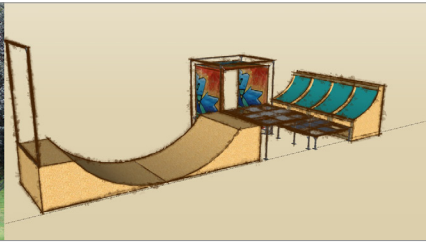
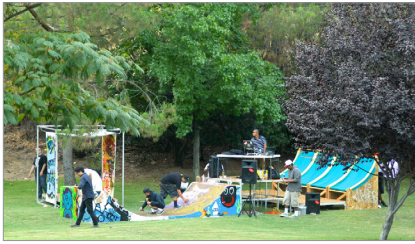
research and sketch large-scale proposals for public spaces working within the context of three different site possibilities where the Teen Art Park could be situated within the city of Pasadena (see figures 1-3). In the second studio, students iterated on the key concepts that emerged in the first studio from close collaboration with a group of twenty teenagers who engaged in workshops and critique sessions with the designers. The teens were recruited from local after-school programs offered by three of the main partners of the project: La Pintoresca Teen Education Center, Muir High School and the Armory Center for the Arts. In this second phase, the design teams transitioned into creating full-scale prototypes of modular structures that could animate various different configurations of the Teen Art Park independent of specific site constraints, (see figures 4-6) in order to explore a broad scope of actionable options with the stakeholders of the project.

### 1.3 Context: Innovative Design for Social Sustainability

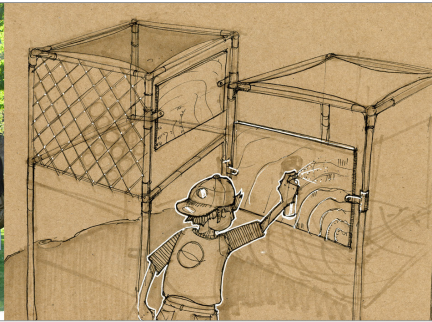
The youth that were identified for the Teen Art Park project are residents from Northwest Pasadena and West Altadena, neighboring cities in Los Angeles County that have struggled with lack of economic opportunity, declining public education and youth-led gang violence since the 1970s. The region is prone to high rates of youth unemployment as well as a high percentage of public high school dropouts. In addition, both cities include a dichotomy of contrasts with areas of great affluence in close proximity to areas of income levels that are below the US National “poverty threshold.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The poverty thresholds are the original measure of the federal poverty measure. The US Government poverty threshold is adjusted for inflation and the consumer price index. For 2012, the poverty level was set at \$23,050 (total year income) for a family of four. 2012 HHS Poverty Guidelines. Accessed February 2013: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml>.

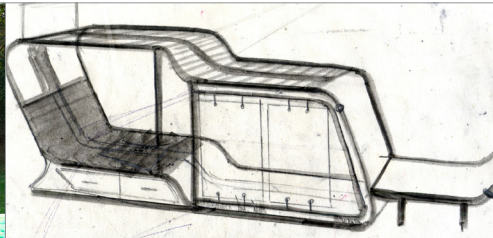
Figures 4-6: Full-Scale Prototypes



4.  
Team Art Pas full  
scale prototype and  
original sketch.



5.  
Team Hub full scale  
prototype and original  
sketch



6.  
Team Freesol full  
scale prototype and  
original sketch.

In a recent study about Design for Social Sustainability (2011), the Young Foundation defines social sustainability as:

*“A process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places they live and work. Social Sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world—infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve.”<sup>5</sup>*

The participation of the teenagers and a wide array of staff and educators from the community-based organizations in the Teen Art Park consortium afforded the design teams at Art Center the opportunity to think about the long-term success and sustainability of the

social life that would animate the design schemes proposed for the Teen Art Park, infusing the physical designs with the user-centered aspirations uncovered in the collaborative framework of the project.

## 2. RESEARCH PROCESS AND DESIGN

### 2.1 Methods

Participatory design research methods defined the investigation of the Teen Art Park initiative: the design learning in the studios relied on a fertile ground of co-design where students were encouraged to access an immersive context enriched by the multiplicity of perspectives and life experiences that the participating teens in the studios imparted. Envisioned as a safe environment for creative expression and human development for underserved teens, some of the underlying concepts that emerged from the research of the Teen Art Park included

**Table 1. UNDERLYING DESIGN CRITERIA**

| IDENTITY AND BELONGING                                                                                                                                                                                            | ACCESS TO CREATIVITY & SKILL DEVELOPMENT                                                     | POSITIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Designers Perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                            | Teens Perspectives                                                                           | Teens Perspectives                                                                           |
| The teen art park we envisioned is one that would be a place for transformation, where you could become the best version of who you can possibly be.                                                              | I want to build on my skills so one day I can go to art school and have a successful career. | We want a place of our own, just for teens, but also a safe environment.                     |
| So many of the kids we met feel as though society is just pushing them into a corner and leaving them to fend for themselves. All these teens have a deep desire to be heard. Together, we can give them a voice. | I feel connected with art. These pieces make me feel like drawing.                           | I wouldn't change anything about the space. I like the uniqueness, the colors, the textures. |
| The number one thing in this project is that it's about the teens. Everything about the space has to be about them. And it has to be genuine.                                                                     | I am motivated to keep up my own style and develop my graphic skills.                        | It makes me feel at peace and connected to the world.                                        |

the idea of designing spaces that would promote opportunities for dialogue, collective activities, and mentorship with peers. In this sense, the park would therefore be not just a destination, but also a starting point for the journey toward visualizing and reaching one's creative potential. The table above captures a few statements from the design teams and participating teens and summarizes the design criteria underlying the design development of each projects. From the dialectic process of exchange with the

**“...Some of the underlying concepts that emerged from the research of the Teen Art Park include the idea of designing spaces that would promote opportunities for dialogue, collective activities and mentorship with peers.”**

participating teens, the following drivers emerged as important features that the environments would need to create or foster: 1/ identity and belonging, 2/ access to creativity and skill development and 3/ positive and safe environment.

## **2.2 From Concept to Implementation: Final Modular Designs**

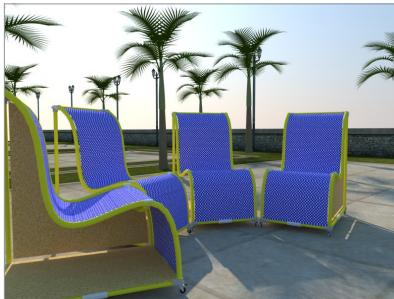
Following the conclusion of the second studio, semi-permanent homes within the context of the project partners' facilities (such as indoor lounge and exterior courtyard areas) were found for the various structural components of the design prototypes and deployed across various locations in the city of Pasadena. After a period of approximately six months of testing of the modular structures by teens and partners, in fall 2012, Designmatters convened an independent study seminar directed by Professor James Meraz, the principal investigator of the project, with a sub-set of students who were committed to seeing their proposals go forward to a manufacturing and implementation-ready stage. This final design process included a rigorous phase of iteration based on new feedback and insights collected from users and partners that addressed considerations of durability,

Figures. 7-10: Final Modular Designs

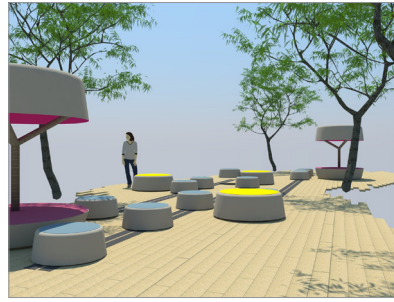
7.  
**Freesol**  
3d digital render.



8.  
**Chairmock**  
(an outcome of  
team Art Pas)  
3d digital render.



9.  
**Hub**  
3d digital render



10.  
Silhouetted  
renderings of  
Chairmock,  
Hub and Freesol.



mobility of the structures, and cost. At the time of this writing (spring 2013), the following designs are included in an executive report developed by the Designmatters Department that lays out a set of recommendations for the project partners to take forward the proposed designs as the continuing policy work to designate a possible site for the Teen Art Park unfolds in the City of Pasadena.<sup>6</sup> The three projects that fully developed in this final phase are:

*Freesol Graffiti Lounge*, lead designer Anycia Lee: a transformative structure for creative self-expression that includes a lounge area, a performing stage and detachable painting boards for graffiti and art making (figure 7).

*Chair Mock*, lead designer Adam Patrick Easter Cottingham: the over-size chair concept is a sturdier and more flexible iteration of the original piece that resulted from the second phase studio. The chair structure is now made of steel; it includes a light-weight customizable mesh material for the seating

area and wheels for ease of mobility and flexibility in seating configurations (figure 8).

*Hub*, lead designer Seth Baker: this is a system of components that can be layered onto a wide array of landscapes and public spaces ranging from parks to courtyards and commercial malls. The system includes “boom tubes” an umbrella-like seating area that is designed to amplify sound and encourage music listening, as well as “parked-stools” and “roller-stools,” seating areas that can take on moving and permanent configurations depending on the setting (figure 9).

### 3. DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Collaboration, Alignment and Divergence

The Teen Art Park concepts that underwent final development are intended to be not just an end unto themselves, but a departure point for the teens that will animate and use these structures. A common denominator of all of the design schemes proposed is that users had a say in shaping the structures functionalities and as much as the designers did in conceiving them. As one of the instructors of

<sup>6</sup> The Teen Art Park Project: Executive Report and Design Recommendations. Designmatters at Art Center College of Design, 2013.

the studio, Chris Adamick remarked, the necessary interactions and collaboration that characterized the process throughout involved a multiplicity of stakeholders who had diverse and sometimes conflicting interests. The inherent challenges that surfaced were “solved through collaboration— an extremely valuable aspect of this experience from a design educational standpoint.” The faculty saw this collaborative dimension for the design teams and the teens as somewhat of an uncharted territory and a transformative proposition.<sup>7</sup>

The value of collaboration in this initiative – which specifically entailed getting to a common understanding of the capacity of art to improve people’s lives in their neighborhoods—defined all of the project interactions Designmatters facilitated with the main partner organizations that make up the Teen Art Park consortium. As the Executive Director, Scott Ward of the Armory for the Arts cites: “We believe that art is an essential component of the human experience: a highly effective tool to promote creativity, self-confidence, tolerance, individuality and, at the same time a sense of community—the Teen Art Park project fits right into that sense of mission.”<sup>8</sup>

Pretending however that the alignment with partners and synergies the Teen Art Park project uncovered was free from junctures where the collaboration was also characterized by divergence of aims and timelines between the educators, community leaders and nonprofits engaged in the initiative would not be honoring the richness and complexity of the undertaking. If anything, the most invaluable and intangible lessons from the initiative as far as the practice of social impact design education is concerned, originated, in this author’s view, from the difficulties at times in reconciling academic calendars, educational learning outcomes and grant research aims, with the day-to-day pressures and obligations of resource constrained organizations serving a very vulnerable population of teens. As Dr. Mikala Rahn, the founder of Learning Works Charter School explains: “We are pioneering a model that does not exist in California—a last chance program. We have 400 students that

we call ‘youth in crisis,’ because they are way beyond at risk....To work with these students one must be inordinately loving and forgiving every single day.”<sup>9</sup> For the design educators of Teen Art Park and for the partners, perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of

**“We believe that art is an essential part of the human experience: a highly effective tool to promote creativity, self-confidence, tolerance, individuality and at the same time a sense of community—the Teen Art Park project fits right into that sense of mission.”**

**— Scott Ward  
Executive Director,  
Armory for the Arts**

the collaboration was to witness the respect and trust that emerged between the teens and the design teams. The design process in the studios was characterized by active listening of the teens’ wants and needs, and built on them.

For designers Breon Waters and Adam Cottingham, their Teen Art Park concept was precisely centered on the teens’ aspirations they came to internalize. This inspiration drove them to create a miniature urban fun zone where the focus was all about “a park design as a place to chill, a place to be heard, and a place to grow for the teens to become stronger individuals.”<sup>10</sup> A final note about the complexity of the Teen Art Park project touches upon the fact that the initiative suffered somewhat as far as the actual implementation planning is concerned, because an anticipated commitment by the partners for a permanent site for the Teen Art Park project by the time the studios started did not materialize. This prompted the design teams’ need to anchor concepts around three plausible sites in the first studio, and

7 Chris Adamick and James Meraz, Teen Art Park, op.cit., p.70.

8 Scott Ward, Teen Art Park, op.cit., p. 99

9 Mikala Rahn, Teen Art Park, op.cit., p.32

10 Team Art Pas, Teen Art Park, op.cit., p.54

then shift strategy to develop modular components in the second studio that could function in a wide variety of sites in order to ensure that the city of Pasadena and project partners would have a range of actionable options to take forward at the completion of the design stage of the project. While this change

**“At the core of every Designmatters at Art Center educational project collaboration is the fundamental belief that good design brings value to society—with the potential of especially transformative impact...”**

of circumstances was entirely outside the scope and control of Art Center and many of the partners in the consortium, it is important to recognize that it is also part-and-parcel of practicing public sector design, which by definition is grounded in the context of what sometimes can be experienced as the frustrating

slower pace of decision-making at the policy level.

## CONCLUSION

At the core of every Designmatters at Art Center educational project collaboration is the fundamental belief that good design brings value to society— with the potential of especially transformative impact in the context of “wicked” problems and ingrained social inequities. The Teen Art Park project provides an important case study. The collaborative framework it offers exemplifies in many ways bottom-up social innovation as defined by the DESIS Collaborative and Public Sector cluster, and showcases a platform “to trigger, enable and support active collaborative behavior on the part of citizens.”<sup>11</sup>

As one of the design teams articulated, the Teen Art Park project is envisioned “to be a place for transformation, where you could become the best version of who you can possibly be.”<sup>12</sup> Today, that aspiration and relentless commitment to collaborate in order to serve some of the most vulnerable and promising youth in the community continues confidently driving the Teen Art Park project forward.

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11 See DESIS Network Public & Collaborative, Background Notes. Accessed March 2013: <http://www.desis-clusters.org/background-notes>.

12 Team Freesol, interview with the author, summer 2012.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

Design for Social Sustainability is a framework for creating thriving new communities. The current tools and metrics to foster urban development are biased toward environmental and economic sustainability. The Teen Art Park Project exemplifies an example that strives for the social sustainability that the Young Foundation's *Future Communities* program calls for.

### DESIGN EDUCATION

Embracing participatory design research approaches and co-design in the curriculum is essential in community design initiatives that aspire to add value to the community. Performing active listening, developing a two-way street for learning with, and from users, and establishing trust among partners are paramount goals of real engaged social impact design education.

### POLICYMAKING

Planning, designing and developing successful and socially sustainable communities require that the mechanisms and policies be in place for residents to be able to shape their own physical surroundings.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Teen Art Park Project at Art Center College of Design would not have been possible without our ongoing partnership with the City of Pasadena, the generosity of the Surdna and Ayshire Foundations, and the many dedicated individuals and public sector organizations that have participated in the initiative since its original conception in 2010. The leadership and collaboration of the project's main partners, Brian Biery and Jaylene Mosley at the Flintridge Center, Scott Ward at The Armory Center for the Arts, and Mikala Rahn at Learning Works Charter School, has defined this project in critical ways for which I am grateful. I would also like to especially recognize the direction of Art Center's Environmental Design Department in the two studios of the project: Chairman David Mocarski, Professor James Meraz, and Instructor Chris Adamick; the masterful project oversight and facilitation by my Designmatters colleagues Elisa Ruffino, Director, and Helen Hang, Coordinator; and celebrate the accomplishments of the student teams who invested all of their talent and hard work into their design proposals. Finally, I salute the vibrant teens who participated with our students in the various phases of design research, prototyping and testing of the developed projects—these young individuals remain at the center of the inspiration for the Teen Art Park, and it is the impetus to engage their creativity for a better future that continues to drive the next steps of the project forward in our community.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mariana Amatullo, Vice President, Designmatters at Art Center College of Design, founded Designmatters in 2001 with a task force of faculty, staff and students. Through her leadership, Art Center is the first design institution to be affiliated as a non-governmental organization with the United Nations. The award-winning and tangible outcomes of the projects and publications that are developed under the mantle of Designmatters have established the program as an exemplary effort within the landscape of social impact design—uniting educational objectives with highly effective advocacy and action-oriented outcomes. A native of Argentina, Amatullo received the inaugural 2012 DELL Social Innovation Education award for outstanding leadership in teaching and supporting student social innovators. Amatullo serves on the Executive Board of Cumulus, the International Association of Universities and Colleges of Art, Design and Media. She is a Non-Profit Fellow with the Doctor of Management, Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University. Her doctoral research focuses on the shifting role of the designer in the social sector. She holds an M.A. in Art History and Museum Studies from the University of Southern California and a Licence en Lettres Degree from the Sorbonne University, Paris.

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# COLLABORATIVE DESIGN STRATEGIES: HELPING TO CHANGE THE PRACTICE OF CARE

Kristin Hughes, Peter Scupelli

## ABSTRACT

*Over the past four decades the number of obese children in the US has increased dramatically. Yet, physicians still find it difficult to address issues of weight and health with young patients and their families during annual well-child check-ups. Physicians have few resources to help them overcome the barriers of time, perceived ineffectiveness and uncomfortable confrontation in order to have effective discussions with their patients. Using a design-lead approach we help physicians aid conversations around obesity prevention. This highly participatory, transparent approach in-turn purposefully educated and motivated physicians to change their perception on effective ways to deliver health education to their patients. This process informed the design of a product and service known as Fitwits MD. Our paper argues that scaffolds are necessary in determining the sustainability and evolution of a product and/or service. Illustrated examples show the efforts of physicians who initiated and co-designed new products, services and policies to improve their own lives and those of their patients. We describe the design process, dissemination, and evaluation linked to the making and development of Fitwits MD.*

## CO-CARE ADAPTABLE CO-DESIGN PRACTICE OF DESIGN

**UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:**  
Carnegie Mellon University

**CITY/COUNTRY:**  
Pittsburgh, PA, United States

**SERVICE AREA:**  
Healthcare

**MAIN PARTNERS:**  
UPMC St. Margaret:  
Family Medicine and Bloomfield-Garfield FHC

**PROJECT LEAD:**  
Kristin Hughes

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kh@cmu.edu  
kristin@fitwits.org

## INTRODUCTION

Obesity is an escalating problem in the United States. In the last quarter century, the prevalence of obesity in children and adolescents has tripled. Recent data from the Center for Disease Control (Ogden and Carroll 2012) estimates that an alarming 17% of children and adolescents are obese and 33% of children aged 6-11 years are overweight or obese. Many physicians feel unsuited by lack of training and the absence of an effective strategy to discuss child obesity prevention and improvement (Perrin et al. 2005). In a 2005 Ambulatory Pediatrics article reporting a survey of North Carolina pediatricians, only 12% providing routine office care felt high self-efficacy in counseling about childhood obesity; 39% felt that they could be effective with improved training and tools. Physicians also feel exceedingly pressed for time during the expected full responsibilities of a well-child care visit. Physician organizations and national agencies stress the importance of better health messaging, annual body mass index (BMI) assessment and related counseling during well-child visits. However, a minority of family physicians and pediatricians feel prepared to provide this counseling. Physicians and health educators alike have been looking for evidence-based educational programs to assist in broaching the subject of obesity with their patients (McGaffey et al. 2011). As noted by a local pediatrician, “A pediatrician’s number one clinical dilemma is how to counsel families about preventing and managing childhood obesity”. In fact, it is a dilemma for all who provide routine childcare (McGaffey et al. 2011).

## WHAT IS FITWITS?

*Fitwits* advocates for improved health education and resources in all facets of individuals’ lives and has been designed to reduce counseling barriers, to educate, and to stimulate conversations between children, parents, teachers and healthcare providers. *Fitwits* is a system of games, educational products and services that enable kids, and their family’s opportunities to adopt and maintain healthier lifestyles. At the heart of the brand are novel cartoon characters called the *Fitwits* and *Nitwits*. The *Fitwits* epitomize healthy foods and model good lifestyle choices, like physical activities. The *Nitwits* typify unhealthy food choices and the struggle to make better health decisions.

The novelty of *Fitwits* makes teaching and learning about health fun. It is designed to create interesting hybrid experiences merging technology with hands-on learning by allowing people of all ages the opportunity to interact with one another, ask questions, make decisions, and “try-on” new health behaviors. The *Fitwits* Program grew out of concern for the lack of available health related resources used to encourage

***Fitwits* advocates for improved health education and resources in all facets of individuals’ lives has been designed to reduce counseling barriers, to educate, and to stimulate conversations between children, parents, teachers, and healthcare providers.**

and enable positive lifestyle changes.

In this paper we describe one aspect of the *Fitwits* Program in which designers worked with family-medicine, pediatric care physicians, dieticians and their patients in an effort to design an effective tool to be used during well-child visits with their 9-12 year old patients and families. During the early stages of our initial investigation we learned that preventative care for obesity related illness has been known to increase patient health literacy (Hughes et al. 2009). Health literacy is often narrowly defined as a method of dissemination for use when making health decisions (Peerson and Saunders 2009), but recently health experts have observed a greater effectiveness of health communications’ potential positive impact when people directly interact with and use the messages in order to change or take action to improve their health.

## PARTICIPATING IN THE DESIGN PROCESS

When asked, “What are the boundaries of design?” Charles Eames replied, “What are the boundaries of

problems?” (Eames et al.1989). The general boundaries of obesity prevention described in this paper include health literacy, co-creation and adaptable co-design practices. The particular boundaries are tied to the context and the actors involved in obesity prevention. A collaborative and transparent design process is one that allows the community of use to not only be part of the initial discussion and emergence of the design, but that asks them to take ownership of the process and resulting design solution(s) and to adopt overtime as need arises.

## **Co-creation is challenging because both designers and in our case, medical professionals are called to work outside of their area of expertise.**

### **DEFINING CO-CREATION**

Co-creation happens when designers and non-designers are engaged and encouraged to participate in the design process. The role of the design team in a co-creation process is to create hands-on design activities that encourage participation and open engagement in a workshop like setting. The design activities are ordered to:

- Offer authorship opportunities
- Build trust between the participants and design team
- Acquire local knowledge and skills
- Iterate and refine the problem definition
- Learn about local community values, culture and practice
- Affords the designer the opportunity to enter into the problem space without a pre-determined outcome

Co-creation is challenging because both designers and in our case, medical professionals are called to work outside of their area of expertise. Designers must acquire medical domain knowledge (e.g., related medical research, clinical practice) while physicians are asked to participate in conceiving, making and prototyping future products and/or services,

iteratively beta testing them, and then integrating varied prototypes into their practice. Specific to our process, it was highly beneficial that physician staff participated in design workshops. Without their expertise, challenges specific to a medical educational program, such as a physician-training program, would have been difficult to ascertain. The task for the design team was to work alongside healthcare practitioners to articulate the difficulties they encounter in their practices and construct a framework for communicating the essentials of obesity prevention both visually and in simple language.

In order to get to this stage we needed to better understand what and for whom we were designing. We ran several participatory design workshops during which we helped lead participants through activities aimed at identifying misused and confusing health terminology, illuminating barriers that prevent open discussions about obesity with families, pinpointing issues they believed were most important to convey to patients, and discussing the types of physical aids that might help them during such interventions. Participants included faculty, a social worker, and a librarian from a family medicine residency program and family and pediatric physicians who provide routine childcare in Pittsburgh communities, along with registered dietitians, a faculty member from a research university, and four design students.

### **DESCRIPTION OF DESIGN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND SYNTHESIS**

Our first activity identified barriers to discussing weight, nutrition, and exercise with patients. Participants were provided with sticky notes identifying many possible barriers to in-office counseling. Results showed that the two most important barriers are 1.) time constraints and 2.) the fact that many patients are unwilling to change. Other barriers included patient issues (low educational level, denial, lack of interest, and perceived benefits of obesity, provider issues (lack of time, lack of training or knowledge), and community factors (high cost of healthy food, limited access to healthy foods, lack of role models).

We then asked participants to help write definitions for nine health-related terms. The word lists included a wide range of definitions, euphemisms for potentially

offensive words, and misused terms. Participants provided a surprisingly large range of answers for most of the terms and seemed to have varying degrees of understanding about many of the terms and reasons for why they would use, for example, the word “overweight” versus the word “obese.” Many doctors defined “obesity” and “weight problem” using a Body Mass Index (BMI) classification. Some explained that they prefer to use the terms “overweight” or “weight problem” with children to avoid “obesity,” which they deemed an offensive term; one even shied away from saying “problem.” The most important terms were also the hardest to define and describe, again pointing to a communication breakdown between physicians and patients during health education discussions. Clinical expertise did not translate into ability to consistently and simply impart knowledge to patients.

Participants were then split into “doctor-patient” pairs to role-play an encounter between a 9-to-12-year-old attending a well-child check-up and his/her doctor. Prior to the workshop, the design team developed two, three-minute scenarios. In the first, doctors received cue cards to help prompt questions regarding health and nutrition. In the second, we provided a “physician tool” to the doctor roles. After each scenario, roles were reversed and participants switched partners. We ran each scenario twice. Many doctors made little progress in the allotted time, often starting slowly and awkwardly by asking patients about favorite things they like to do at school and making light conversation. Participants were engaged but had trouble speaking confidently about obesity, continually reverting back to confusing “doctor speak.” Participants noted that this activity was a good opportunity for them to practice under a time constraint, a major barrier identified earlier. And, although not planned what emerged in our discussions with workshop participants was the need to look at the larger systems that would ensure our product would be used. It was clear that intra- and inter-office leadership and coordination are necessary to ensure participation, understanding and use.

## PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS

Several months after the workshops the design team ask participants to reflect on the following topics: 1) their perceived agency over co-created health communications, 2) the role of physicians as designers,

and 3) effectiveness of a “training the trainer” method. One physician noted how her perspective of design changed through her experience of the participatory design process and subsequent involvement in the iterative design and testing of the office intervention.

*Being involved in the design process has mostly made it glaringly obvious why the medical community is struggling with patient education initiatives. The processes, theories, etc., that designers utilize to create any product are well established and introspective. I don't think the medical community uses any well-established protocol or design methodologies to create any patient information. Furthermore, most often medical patient information is uni-directional; e.g., “Here is a pamphlet of information we think is important that you should read.” “Human centered design” creates a product around a conversation. This is the new era of medicine - the times are changing from “I am the doctor and this is what you should do ‘Because I said so,’” to an era of informed patients and shared decision-making.*

Participants truly saw themselves as designers, and the skills and methods they learned through the sessions carried into their own practices. By becoming part of the process, they were equipped to adapt it to their own needs in future scenarios. One participant remarked,

*We get to make sure our most important messages are in the materials but you help us do it in a way that is most appealing to our patients. We learn a lot about what our patients want and need from a conversation with their doctor, which carries into how we approach problems outside the realm of the specific design question.*



## THE RESULTS OF THE CO-CREATIVE PROCESS:

### FITWITS MD

Fitwits MD was the result of the co-creative process described above. It consists of a set of seventeen educational flashcards developed to help physicians start a conversation with their patients about obesity, family history, body mass index (BMI), and practical directives regarding portion control, nutrition and fitness discussions. The medical doctor starts the conversation with patients while the flashcards invite various engaging Fitwits characters to join in helping to clarify confusing health terms. These characters further define obesity and spark the dialogue about an obesity-related family history of type-2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Fitwits MD assists primary care family health physicians to increase health fluency and to affect wellness choices of children and their families. The tool allows all patients and their families the opportunity learn the content regardless of their diagnosis. Upon diagnosis continued interaction with the core health messages increases awareness of the problem. By design, the program is able to accommodate and teach the wide range of families.

## EVALUATION AND OUTCOME

Physicians reported that the Fitwits MD intervention facilitated conversation between physicians, patients and their families. They found the intervention engaging, and patients and their families were receptive to the material presented, which led to extended conversations and questions. Most felt the intervention allowed physicians, patients, and their families to identify and discuss behaviors relating to diet and nutrition (e.g. consuming fast food; amount of soda consumed in a day; number of weekly family meals) and activities (e.g. number of weekly visits to the gym; number of hours spent watching TV or playing on the computer each night). The study also indicated that Fitwits MD improved the physicians' level of comfort and competence when discussing obesity prevention with children and parents (McGaffey et al. 2011).

## THE CO-DESIGN PROCESS IN PRACTICE

The term co-design refers to a creative process through which collective creativity unfolds over the span of a design process (Sanders and Stappers 2008).

Figure 1. Example of 3 of the 17 Fitwits MD educational flashcards.

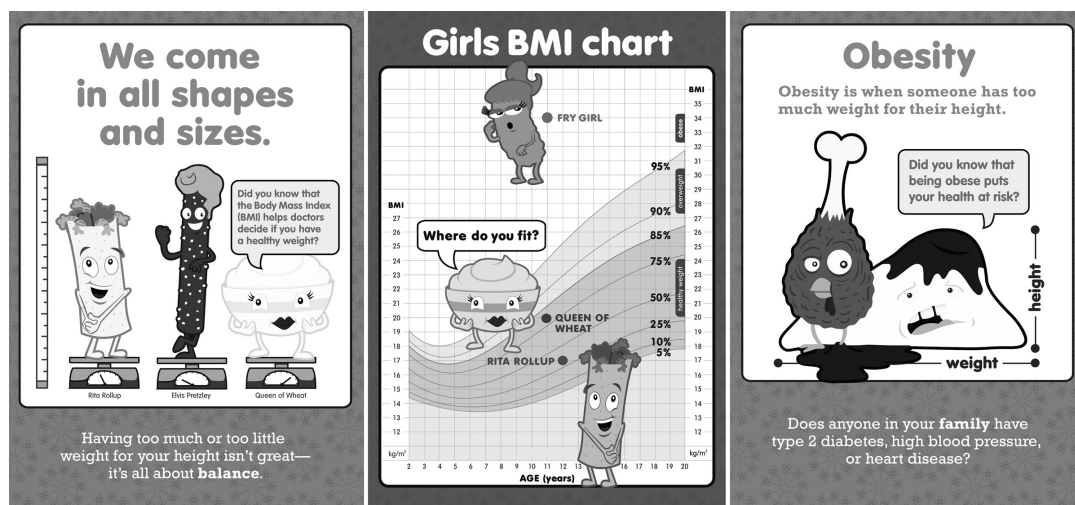
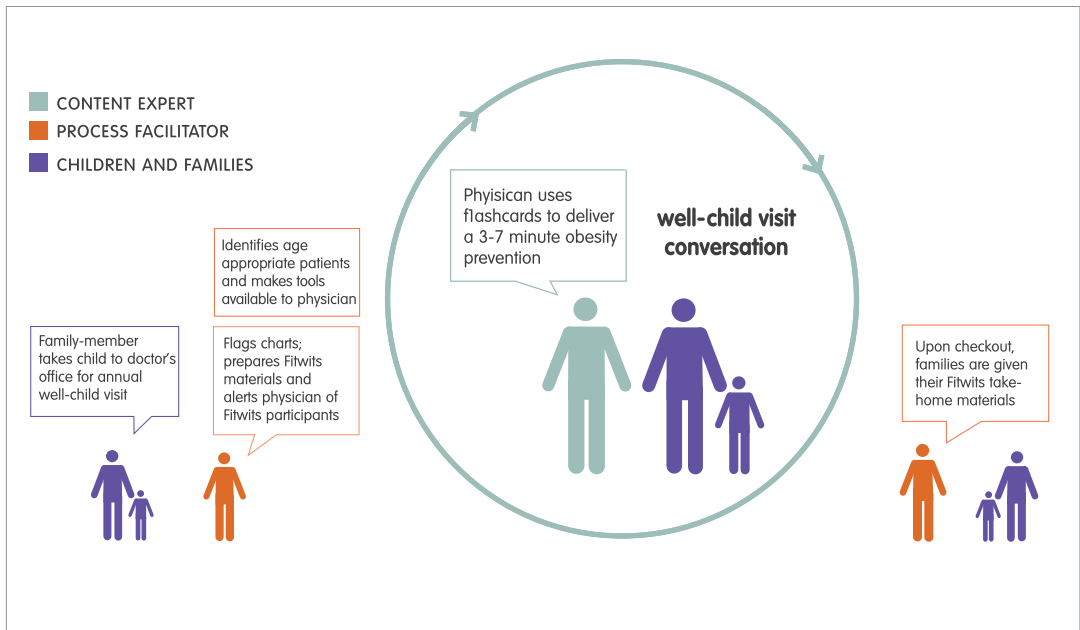


**Figure 2.** Service delivery process diagram.



Sanders argued that participation in co-design activity reflects the creativity levels demonstrated in peoples' lives. As the level of creativity grows, so does expertise, interest, passion, and effort (Frascara 2006). In high paced domains, such as healthcare delivery, tools and services are appropriated, adapted, and modified by the community of use (Nardi and O'Day 1996). We have come to understand that co-design is critical for the emergence, dissemination, and adaptation phases linked to communication tools and services, in our case physicians offices.

In our experience working with healthcare professionals and families, we learned that in addition to creativity levels of participants, co-design occurs by helping participants overcome barriers to participation. We identified four common barriers to co-design participation: 1.) limited understanding of the field of design 2.) the paradigm shift required to change from using to adapting and creating tools 3.) limited time available, and 4.) limited trust in the overall value of the design process.

We use three terms to describe the necessary scaffolding phases required for an effective co-design process: emergence, dissemination, and adaptation.

The *emergence phase* involves the creation of a new product and/or service in a design-based approach via participatory design methods, co-creation, and iterative testing. The *dissemination phase* involves recruiting, training, and championing the new product and/or service in the community of use. The *adaptation phase* involves empowering continued innovation cycles in the community of use. Innovation may involve product innovation, service innovation, process innovation, and/or social innovation.

In summary, participants in a co-design process experience the *emergence* of a design solution; others are involved in the *dissemination* of the solution in their organization and practice; and others yet are involved in the *adaptation phase* innovating, products, services, and processes.

We argue that an integral part of design research is missing—co-creation cannot simply stop after deployment of product or service; designers must instead strive for a process that enables co-design. This will help ensure that our community of use takes ownership of both the process and the outcome. In our study co-design proves to be a process that is adaptable by non-designers.

**Figure 3.** Reminder buttons and screen savers in the examination rooms to remind physicians to deliver the Fitwits MD intervention.



**Figure 4.** Poster competition held in one of the family health offices.



## PHYSICIANS AS CO-DESIGNERS

The physicians' as co-designers is evidenced by the quotes below in the emergence, dissemination, and adaptation phases. In the emergence phase, participants in the co-design process are engaged in thinking, making, creating, and evaluating the Fitwits MD intervention. In the dissemination phase, participants brainstormed and implemented protocols to deliver the Fitwits MD intervention. In the adaptation phase, participants developed new ways to engage physicians and patients with the Fitwits MD intervention.

During the emergence phase physicians learned about design and how to apply design methods to new challenges. Below a physician compares the design process and medical practice describing barriers physicians face.

*Having watched and admired the design process, I suppose it is something like the art of medicine but with observation and reflective listening by designers to several parties, all of whom must trust that their*

*thoughts and ideas are appreciated and are not subservient. That is an interesting proposition for any physician, who might expect to produce some ideas that trump others – but that is not the case. It so happens that the critical work really turns on the ideas, learning styles, and playfulness of children and oftentimes, of parents who may not have profited from formal education.*

The design process engaged some physicians to the point that they willingly took on more work, even amidst already hectic schedules.

*The collaborative design process generates more reflections, ideas and voluntary work than one might expect to contribute and there is an amazement and excitement that is palpable, especially as a tool or strategy is generated that almost seems "out of thin air" from diverse conversations and activities in design workshops.*

**Figure 5.** The waiting room interactive touchscreen game and mural.



Despite months of careful planning and iterating on the design of the tool, few interventions occurred during the first three months of the dissemination phase. It was unexpected that the tool would be unsuccessful or underutilized, since without the tool in use the team would have little to evaluate. The apparent lack of interest on the part of physicians motivated the design, medical, and evaluation teams to brainstorm solutions to increase the interventions. The resulting solutions were: (a) new dissemination protocols (b) assigned roles for dissemination (i.e., recruits, trainers, and champions); (c) physical reminders (e.g., buttons, screen savers), and (d) an intervention challenge game between the three participating Family Health Centers (FHC's) to encourage participation.

The resulting dissemination phase protocols for the staff described three roles related to the dissemination process: recruits, trainers, and champions. Once these were put in place, patients started to receive the Fitwits MD intervention, trainers learned the Fitwits materials and trained others, and champions organized and disseminated the intervention. These roles were developed to make the Fitwits MD intervention occur smoothly.

To help the office staff and physicians remember to deliver the Fitwits MD intervention, the team created "What is Fitwits?" buttons to wear and Fitwits computer screen savers for the computers in the visiting rooms. The physicians also launched an intervention challenge in the three FHCs to encourage competition in the deployment of Fitwits.

The physicians in one FHC launched a poster contest to win the competition by promoting an increased awareness of Fitwits in their medical center. The poster competition engaged both staff and patients, and increased participation in Fitwits overall. The positive response to the poster competition in the waiting room inspired the design team and the medical team to add a mural and interactive game to engage patients with the Fitwits MD prior to the physicians visit.

Additionally, without the prompting of the Fitwits design team, FHC's who accommodated the Fitwits MD intervention voluntarily made changes in the snack choices that the office staff and physicians brought into their office (such as fewer chips and more vegetables). Likewise, the outreach activities of the physicians continue to expand the network of Fitwits MD and bring the Fitwits message to people in other organizations (community centers, homes). This includes training social workers who visit individuals who are morbidly obese and cannot leave their homes.

## CONCLUSION

Obesity prevention is challenging for physicians in the office during well-child visits. The boundaries of problems related to obesity prevention are tied to context and the actors involved. We framed our argument around the value of co-creation, and identified scaffolds within the co-design process in developing effective health communications, prevention and behavior change.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

Long-term systemic change often takes time and patience. currently, the practice of design does not take this into consideration. time is needed to develop an understanding of how and why a design solution has had an impact and ways change is measured/evaluated.

Service design helping to change policy:

- a. Health literacy is a service and not an artifact, even though artifacts may facilitate the process that is being delivered to people.
- b. A health literacy endeavor helps people (in this case healthcare providers) learn what they need know what to do, and then how to act appropriately. In other words, know what to do, to do the right thing. Knowledge without action is similar to uninformed action.
- c. Health literacy applies to individuals, family, organizations, communities, and government. When addressing all levels individual behavior motivates others to change, resulting policy changes.
- d. Willingness to change plays a large role in ability to change behavior. Behavior change is a process in of itself.
- e. Many people are unaware, unwilling, or threatened by healthy lifestyle choices, so the idea is to create a safe environment for people to learn, try, and practice healthy lifestyles. Developing a service design model that can improve and sustain the practice of care is critical.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Kristin Hughes** (kh@cmu.edu) is an associate professor in the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University. Her work focuses on design as a catalyst for community and civic engagement. Hughes designs products and services that allow participants to shape their learning space and sustain learning over time.

Currently Kristin runs a program called Fitwits. Fitwits is a health improvement methodology and technology for patients, their families and the doctors they visit. Built on a foundation of co-care, or collaborative care, Fitwits uses character-based agents and game-based, health-inspired activities to engage children in meaningful, measurable health improvement practices. Through a set of digital and analog delivery tools, the solution is able to provide parents and doctors greater visibility into the health-impacting decisions a child makes so they can positively motivate change.

Prior to developing Fitwits, Hughes worked collaboratively with University of Pittsburgh Out of School Learning Environments (UPCLOSE) on Click! Urban Adventure, and Explanatoids. Click! Urban Adventure, is an interactive role-playing game designed to immerse middle school girls in discipline-specific science, technology, engineering and mathematics activities. Explanatoids brought science, technology, engineering and mathematics topics to the general public by placing signs and other artifacts in public spaces to encourage curiosity and understanding of science in everyday life.

**Peter Scupelli** (pgs@andrew.cmu.edu) is an assistant professor in the School of Design. He teaches both undergraduate and graduate level courses (e.g., Senior Studio, Basic Interaction, Interaction Design Seminar II).

Peter's design research centers on interaction design for artifacts, environments, and services. Current topics of interest include: behavior change linked to sustainable, healthy lifestyles and design evaluation.

Peter's training and career path link architecture, interaction design, and human-computer interaction research. He completed his Ph.D. at the Human-Computer Interaction Institute in the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University. His dissertation focused on how the architecture of the built environment around large schedule displays and nursing control desks support coordination services in surgical suites.

Peter has a master's degree in interaction design from the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University. His thesis essay explored the effect of affordances in communities of practice. His thesis project entailed making process work visible to design teams throughout a project in time-shared project rooms.

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# ACUPUNCTURE PLANNING BY DESIGN

François Jégou, Clara Delétraz, Giovanna Massoni, Jean-Baptiste Roussat, Marie Coirié

## ABSTRACT

*In the light of two experiences of design schools engaging in co-creating sustainable living scenarios with the population of Paris-Saclay Campus in France and Liège Saint-Gilles neighbourhood in Belgium, the article discusses both experimentations and question how design schools approaches may renew the ways local urban planning is usually conducted:*

*In-depth micro-investigation into the social fabric to inspire and complete macro urban planning approach; (re) starting from usage approaches to detect hardly visible local promising practices and emerging positive signals opposed to mainstream trends; immersing at local stakeholders place and enabling them to co-producing future projections with the support of the design students; production of a vision of sustainable and inclusive living on the territory through a particular and intrinsically bottom-up process based on the aggregation of a large number of single local projections.*

*The article then discusses how this new design-led approach based on explicit user-oriented simulations, tangible vision-based deliberation and a bottom-up visioning and action-oriented acupuncture of micro-projects can renew the governance of territorial development towards new roles of giving visibility to local bottom-up promising initiatives and adopting a backup posture to provide an enabling context for their development.*

**SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES**  
**SOCIAL INCLUSION**  
**COLLABORATIVE SERVICE**  
**URBAN PLANNING**  
**TERRITORIAL**  
**DEVELOPMENT**  
**CAMPUS**

**PROJECT TITLE:**  
Sustainable Campus Paris-Saclay,  
Diffused Campus in Saint-Gilles

**UNIVERSITY/DESIS LAB:**  
ENSCI Paris DESIS Lab,  
ENSAV La Cambre

**CITY/COUNTRY:**  
Paris, France  
Brussels, Belgium

**MAIN PARTNER:**  
Etablissement Public Paris  
Saclay/RECIPROCITY design liège  
(REcentre Sustainability@School #3)

**SERVICE AREA:**  
All Daily Living Area

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[www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/ensci-paris-desis-lab](http://www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/ensci-paris-desis-lab)  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

How can we produce urbanity combining bottom-up citizen-lead approaches on usages with top-down urban planning?

How scenarios based on a mosaic of micro-collaborative public services can generate new models of sustainable living in the city?

In the light of two recent experiences of design schools engaging in co-creating sustainable living scenarios with the population of Paris-Saclay Campus in France and Liège Saint-Gilles neighborhood in Belgium, the article will discuss how these new approaches based on bottom-up visioning and action-oriented acupuncture of micro-projects can renew the governance of territorial development towards co-creation of public services and a governance posture that enable and backup bottom-up initiatives. A short illustrated presentation of the different courses will introduce students' experiences and achievements on both local contexts. A second part will analyse the two experiences in parallel and present the lessons learned both in terms of collaboration between designers and urban developers and more broadly in terms of consequences for local policy making.

### 1.1 Sustainable Campus Paris-Saclay, France

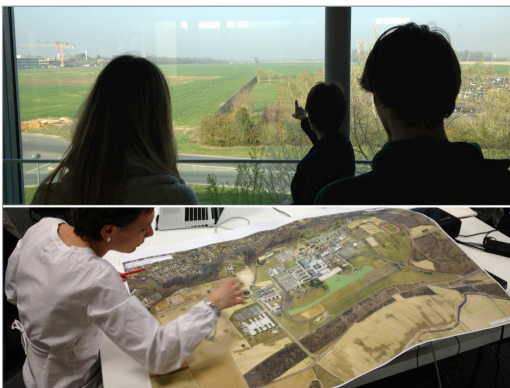
Design Students of ENSCI Paris DESIS Lab from Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Création Industrielle, Les Ateliers in Paris collaborate with the Etablissement Public Paris-Saclay (Paris-Saclay development agency) and explore scenarios of local development based

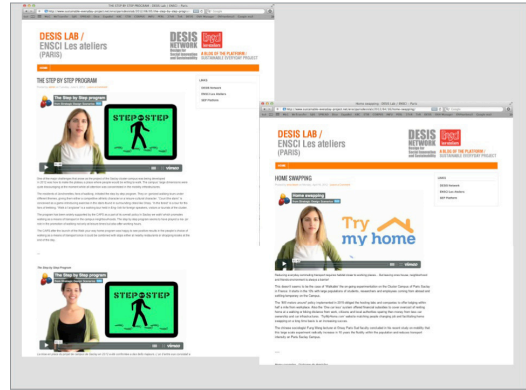
on collaborative services bridging social innovations and public innovations. The suburban area of Saclay, 20 kilometres South-West from Paris has been chosen in France to host a high level R&D Campus with universities, research labs, high-tech companies, etc... This top-down development project expects 30 000 researchers and 40 000 students and related infrastructures to settle down in what is now a mix of agricultural land and suburb, to work and live there or commute from Paris.

The course involved a group of 8 students over a period of 3 months. The students explore current initiatives developed on the field, potentials brought by the participating actors and co-develop with them scenarios focusing sustainable way of living, quality of life, integration and collaboration within the new mix of populations.

The field work was based on a week long immersion with a sample of local stakeholders such as research labs, high tech companies, university levels schools, neighborhood associations, non profits working in the area of territorial development and the EPPS local development agency. Student and staff organized also lodging through *couch surfing* spreading the group at inhabitant homes for the nights engaging more in-depth with the local population as part of the immersion posture.

*Squatting working sessions* have been organized with stakeholders at their place for a moment of free





A range of new sustainable services between Paris Saclays population and the scientists and students steering there is presented though story-telling on the project webpage for discussion with the participating stakeholders.

exchanges first followed by scenario development to directly co-develop the scenarios video-sketches with the hosts. The aim of *squatting* was again to accentuate the immersion within each institution: more than interviews, group discussions or working meeting the fact of settling in a place, booking a room for a day or so, having lunch and informal coffee pauses with them, invading in a way the place intends that the group of students is more considered as *colleagues for a day* by the population from the hosting place rather than just guests.

Scenarios focusing sustainable way of living, quality of life, integration and collaboration within the new mix of populations emerged and were finalized after the immersion week and posted on the course web platform ([www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/ensciparisdesislab](http://www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/ensciparisdesislab)). Participants from the institutions where the squatting working sessions took place were invited to react and fine-tune the scenarios online.

The final outcomes is constituted by 16 micro-scenarios presented through short video-sketches mimicking a journalist reporting in 2030 about sustainable and inclusive innovations, key places, daily ways of living, and promising areas of collaborative services exploring synergies between top-down enabling public infrastructures and bottom-up social initiatives.

## 1.2 Diffused Campus in Saint-Gilles, Liege, Belgium

Design Students of the ENSAV La Cambre in Brussels collaborate with REcentre's Sustainability at School project *Welcome to Saint-Gilles* a popular

neighbourhood in Liege. The action research project proposes to leverage on an original specificity of Saint-Gilles: this relatively small central urban area in a secondary medium-size town of Belgium is hosting more than 30 schools from infants-schools to universities and counts more than 10 000 students for only 5 000 inhabitants.

The core idea emerging from the course is to explore Saint-Gilles as a *Diffused Campus* in order both to build a new identity of the neighbourhood, to strengthen the social fabric between students studying there and other inhabitants and improve both quality of local living and sustainability in the neighbourhood.

A *Diffused Campus* is meant to be a campus due to the density of schools in the area. But contrary to a classical university campus as it can be seen all over the world, this hypothetic campus is not a dedicated place where only buildings and equipments for education are concentrated. Saint-Gilles *Campus* is diffused in the urban fabric and students and inhabitants are mixing together.

Students explores Saint-Gilles neighbourhood, meet representative of the institutions of the area, and interviews inhabitants at their place. The group of 15 students was hosted by ID Campus a spin-off project of the HEC-ULg University of Business Management of Liège and oriented to the dynamization and stimulation of economic and entrepreneurial initiatives in Saint-Gilles where the university is based. Students were engaged to develop first *collaborative services* (Jégou, Manzini, 2008) intended as rather informal

services co-produced by the local population that is likely to use them and benefit from them. The aim was to refurbish the social fabric between inhabitants and students providing reasons for collaboration, exchange and mutual help.

Students present scenarios of the collaborative services they imagine in collaboration with the inhabitants and the students through short video-sketches: mutual help bicycles repair; organic vegetable basket home delivery, students adoption by inhabitant families, mini-job and help platform, etc.

*J'irai laver chez vous* (I will do my laundry at your home) is one of the collaborative services scenario dealing with students not having a washing machine and going to Laundromats.

What a waste of time waiting there! Next door your neighbours has probably got a washing machine that you could use. Signs on windows show whether or not the machine is available to use or not. If it is, then knock at the door and see what you can do in exchange for your laundry, maybe you could go get some groceries, do some gardening or whatever might

#### EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATIVE SERVICES:

"J'irai laver chez vous" or "I will do my laundry at your home"



Services in the public space (Urban Playground)



be helping the one helping you. Save money, energy and meet the people who are living around you. A second range of services in the public space has been developed in parallel to support the instantiation of the concept of diffused campus in the neighbourhood.

*Urban Playground* for instance is an example of service in the public space that supports the idea of diffused campus playing on the idea that if the neighbourhood is a campus then the public space should recall an urban playground.

Every corner of a street, every bus station, every sidewalk could be an opportunity to play: quiz and riddles on walls, swing in waiting places, labyrinth on walking paths, trash cans to throw away from a certain distance, hopscotch, etc.

Finally a very basic visual identity has been developed to capture the new identity of Saint-Gilles as a *diffused campus*. It is based on the image of a map of the neighbourhood with spots localizing all and every collaborative services imagined by the students.

## 2. CO-CREATION OF A LOCALIZED SUSTAINABLE LIVING VISION

Both experiences of 'Sustainable Campus Paris-Saclay' in France and 'Saint-Gilles Diffused Campus' in Belgium are based on the same approaches and tools. This first part intends to characterize these approaches and point their opportunities and limits.

### 2.1 In-depth investigation

The first characteristic of the approach carried out with both schools is to be an in-depth investigation into the social fabric of the place with a rather limited capability to embrace large portion of the territory or to take into consideration important numbers of persons in the population.

This posture right away raised a debate with EPPS when setting up the investigation programme for the ENSCI Paris DESIS Lab: with a small number of students, the hypothesis was to choose a small portion of the territory as emblematic as possible of the issues and concerns already identified for the emerging Paris-Saclay Campus and to settle there for a week

in immersion, meeting and working with groups of researchers and employees of some institutions, *coach-surfing* at inhabitants to share and better understand there daily living.

For urban planners this hypotheses was a complete non-sense: pretending to do anything meaningful over a territory nearly as large as a region only concentrating over a short period on a small part of it means to neglect fundamental variations in terms of geography, sociology and economy of such a large territory.

In-depth but sample-limited approach is opposed here to exhaustive but superficial overview. Beyond, this opposition in terms of posture, the aims of the approaches are slightly different. The in-depth approach neither pretends to apprehend the territory nor to give the appropriate information to take a coherent action. Its aim is more to enrich and colour a large and structural planning approach with specific concerns from the different populations, to explicit local logics and sometimes to raise awareness on emerging expectations of opportunities. For instance, in both contexts the populations historically living in Saclay area and in Saint-Gilles neighbourhood appears in potential conflict with the newly arrived populations, provoking a massive invasion of the place and reason for its brutal transformation. At superficial level, only potential conflicts appear. Looking more in-depth, exchanging with the populations beyond the potential conflicts allows to identify emerging points of convergence: the institutions like schools and universities are generating a rich cultural life with conferences and events, sport equipments the Saclay population is potentially interested in sharing; the aging population of Saint-Gilles reveals to have time and to be able to provide family-like support to exchange with students in a mutual help perspective.

The in-depth micro-investigation of the territory is therefore more oriented to generate insights and creative emerging solutions in order to modulate and complete the urban planning approach.

### 2.2 (re)starting from people and usages

The second characteristic of both schools approaches is to focus on people as a starting point for the investigation of the place and of the projection of the future vision. Focusing on people is not primarily meant as an ethical issue (taking in consideration

## **“The second characteristic of both schools approaches is to focus on people as a starting point for the investigation of the place and of the projection of the future vision.”**

human values...) or as a marketing issue (tracking desires and expectations...) but as a more basic approach in term of usages of spaces and services. When first visiting the Paris-Saclay area, one of the urban planner from EPPS guiding the students said pointing at a fringe between Politechnique High school campus and agriculture area: *“in 2018 a metro station will be built here and a new city centre will pop-up...”*? The last decade of forced urban development in the outskirts of Paris demonstrated – if it still was necessary – that a top-down decision is not sufficient to fabricate urbanity and that a metro station plus shops and loggings do not necessarily makes a city centre but more likely a form of suburb that Marc Augé would certainly qualify as a ‘non-place’ (Augé, 1992).

Paris-Saclay campus and Saint-Gilles neighbourhood are both ambivalent territories for their recent or current intense transformation process: they may become ‘non-place’ but have also the potential to be become very interesting hybrid spaces.

The overall concept developed by the La Cambre team for the Saint-Gilles area build on the assets of this neighbourhood rather than on its problems: more than the provincial neighbourhood it used to be, it may be regarded as an outstanding campus, a diffused campus based on social inclusion between students and inhabitants.

The Paris-Saclay Campus completely different in terms of size, situation and perspectives is also an ambivalent place: on the one hand, this huge and accelerated transformation of *urban* area into a patchwork of universities, labs, high-tech companies and former villages is likely to conduct to another type on ‘non-place’. On the other hand, Paris-Saclay Campus has to potential to be a *living lab* of a sustainable

society building on the strong sensitivity on ecology and quality of life introduced by the first waves of scientists settling there since the early 60’s and combining this assets with the high tech companies and labs under greening pressure to find a close sustainability-oriented environment and population to beta-test their scenarios.

These two visions of a ‘campus-neighbourhood’ and an ‘advanced green city’ have clearly emerged from the exchanges between the design students and the populations they interact with. Promising practices and emerging initiatives clearly exists in the social fabric of the two territories. They are generally neither very visible nor the mainstream and they require a careful observation at people scale to detect these positive signals opposed to the major trends and to inspire new and more sustainable way of develop them.

### **2.3 Co-production of single projections**

In line with the second characteristics of user or community-based solutions developed above, a third aspect of the experience of both schools analysed here is characterised by the collaborative production of visions with the different populations in which the students have been immersed.

User-centred and even immersive ethnographic-like approaches doesn’t necessary lead to bottom-up creation of new ideas and visions. Long and in-depth user investigations tends to guaranty a more accurate understanding of population perceptions, expectations and motivations but what is inferred from these investigations relates to the subjectivity of who – in our case the design students – will interpret and transform the results of the investigations into ideas and visions.

The co-creation posture goes one step further beyond a user-centred approach: the future visions are created in part by users themselves. The design students are acting as enablers: they support the users in formulating their ideas, in articulating their scenarios, in aligning them with the strategic environment and in adjusting the qualities and feasibility of the solution envisioned. Co-creation works also as a short-cut ‘from field to solution’, often with a proper analysis of pro and contras coming after, downstream instead of up-stream.

The particular organisations of the work sessions reflect this posture of co-creation with users and stakeholders.

The little team of students and staff from ENSCI was equipped with a small van and settle each day in a different place: *REEDS research laboratory*; *Politechnique high school*; *Joncherettes neighbourhood committee*, *EPPS local development agency*, etc... More than a meeting with the stakeholder, the intention was to work at their place and co-develop scenarios with them. Each session was built in a similar way with first a collective building of ideas on sustainable and collaborative living between the high tech research campus and the local populations and second a construction in the form of short stories of future visions from the point of view of the specific stakeholder involved.

**“Scheduling strategic design work on the field rather than in the school is a strong asset to ensure that the visions shaped by the design students are done with the stakeholders or at least, through the eyes and from the posture of the stakeholders.”**

In a minor level, La Cambre students were hosted at ID Campus spin-off project of the business management HEC-ULg university of Liège. From there, they were able to visit inhabitants and students living in Saint-Gilles neighbourhood or to receive them at ID Campus place for work sessions and collective discussions.

In both cases, the immersion posture was key to move the barycentre of envisioning activities from *in vitro* to *in vivo*. Scheduling strategic design work on the field rather than in the school is a strong asset to ensure that the visions shaped by the design students are done with the stakeholders or at least, through the eyes and from the posture of the stakeholders.

#### **2.4 A mosaic vision**

Forth and last characteristics of the approaches of the schools is the production of a vision of sustainable and

inclusive living on the territory through a particular and intrinsically bottom-up process based on the aggregation of a large number of single projections.

Someone on top of a hill looking around will grasp an overview of the landscape. He or she will see the articulation of the main parts of this landscape villages, fields, forest, connecting roads, etc. Details will be seen as part of this general organization of the landscape: a house near the field is likely to be a farm; people walking along the road are likely going for shopping at the village, etc.

When building a strategic vision, one tends to assume the posture of our observer standing on a hill: *looking from far away to look far away* (Godet, 1985) as advised in forward looking activities. The main intention and advantage of this posture is to extract the signal from the noise, to capture macro-structures and main articulation assuming that only large phenomenon finally matters. This posture induces also bias: emerging phenomenon, *faits porteurs d'avenir* as things small for their current importance but large for how they may impact on future can hardly be noticed. In case they are visible and noticed, they are interpreted within the mainstream and macro-trends structure. As for our landscape observer, details are read and attributed to the big picture: farms to the fields and people to the shops.

The visioning posture adopted during the exercises carried out in two schools experimentations is radically different. Imagine the landscape observer is short-sighted and has forgotten his or her glasses. S/he can't embrace the whole landscape. Instead s/he will walk across the landscape, visit the farm, meet the people walking on the road but also feel the atmosphere of the ageing village, meet unemployed youths involved in a market gardening association and encounter part of the '*faits porteurs d'avenir*' that will determine the future of the territory s/he observes. At the end of his/her walk across the territory, s/he will also have formed an overview of the landscape but a radically different one: the overview is the sum of multiple observations of details. It privileges the micro structure. Mainstream phenomenon tends to appear less predominant and emerging trends tends to acquire more weight. Bias are opposite to the ones of the previous observer posture: the resulting vision may be uneven and sometimes distorted.



questions the way citizens' consultation and stakeholders' participation is conducted. The tools and design processes adapted from user-centred approaches tends to turn upside down both citizens engagement and territorial development processes.

A series of principles for the governance of urban development emerged from both schools field experimentations. We describe here some of these principles radically different from current practices. The aim of this description is two folds: on the one hand it will help to better characterize this hypothesis of new emerging posture for territory development. On the other hand, these innovative principles will work as guidelines to implement this new posture within new projects.

### 3.1.1 User-oriented simulations

Project representation tools can be classified in 3 main categories: sketches capturing a tentative draft in progress of the project; technical drawings describing the precise specification of the project to ensure its execution; renderings suggesting in the most realistic way how the finalized project may look like.

These 3 categories can be distributed along an axis described by the two polarities *descriptive* and *suggestive*: technical drawings are mostly descriptive and they suggest very little the final result; rendering on the contrary have a very strong suggestive power but remains very fuzzy descriptions; sketches, although less finalized are in a balanced position as a suggestive evocation of the final result and a tentative description of it.

Territorial development tends to use more descriptive tools as urban planning maps, architecture drawings and plans with generally a low suggestive capacity in particular for non-professional citizens. More

suggestive scale models are expensive to produce. Virtual models are more accessible and more and more often available. At the scale of the territory both tends to require still time and money and appears hardly at sketch stage but rather as renderings. In conclusion the culture of territorial development tends to provide more descriptive representations along the project development and suggestive representations that speaks to laymen are available mostly at the end when the project is finalised.

## The mosaic scenarios showing bit-of-life is an attempt to grasp large systems of interactions in an impressionist manner.

The mosaic scenarios showing bit-of-life as produced by in the two schools experiences is an attempt to grasp large systems of interactions in an impressionist manner showing a panorama of very colourful single simulations that users are able to aggregate in a unified suggestive vision.

These user-oriented simulations of territorial development are a good balance between the two polarities of the previous axis: it is suggestive enough showing with the video bit-of-life of users in context. It is descriptive enough thanks to the accumulation of many bits-of-life covering as many dimensions and issues of the territory as possible.

### 3.1.1 Vision-based deliberation

Citizens participation to territorial development appears as a very closed approach to the users-centred of participative co-design approaches. Citizens are involved in a local territorial project development process. They tend to be involved possibly at early stages of the development to go beyond simple conciliation meetings to peace tensions within the population when faced to projects in which it was not involved before.

But even if showing many similarities, citizen participation processes and user-centred approaches



belong to different cultures of action. In participation processes, citizens are called to take part to the decisions as an alternative or complement to the representative democracy where the decision is delegated to the elected representatives. Citizens voice their points of views and are able to influence directly the decisions to be taken. They take part for that in meetings, forums and any forms of arenas where together with other stakeholders they debate in order to influence the final result. Their posture is therefore mainly the one of shared decision makers.

In user-centred approaches, citizens seem to adopt a different posture: they are voiced as users. The techniques and tools involved are based on experience of use of a current situations and experimentation of new alternative solutions. Rather than external participating decision makers, users are in the project. The rationale of user-centred approach is based on citizens' expertise of usages rather than on their legitimacy to take part to the decisions.

This difference of posture makes a great difference in terms of involvement in the territorial development. In both schools experiences, citizens and stakeholders in general are considered as competent in imagining together local developments. Helped (or better enabled) by professionals (young designers in both cases) they produce the new vision, building on their insights and experiences, exchanging within a social conversation process and envisioning it through user-oriented simulations as described above.

Their deliberation takes place on the emerged vision. On the one hand, the object of the deliberation is concrete and tangible for all the participating citizens as they see in the bits-of-life a direct projection of their own ways of living. They can compare and are not supposed to decide on speculations: they both see what they may lose but also they can envision what they may get instead. On the other hand, the vision is still open. It can be adapted and further developed. The future (their local future) is not in the hands of experts and professionals producing opaque conjectures. Citizens are in capacity to see limits and possibilities, discuss barriers and enablers and interact with the experts and professionals of territorial development to define which infrastructures would be needed and best implement their visions.

**In participation processes, citizens are called to take part to the decisions as an alternative or complement to the representative democracy where the decision is delegated to the elected representatives.**

These principles suggest active forms of organic transformation of the territory far away from the implementation of straight-forward visions. They proceed in a more iterative way by an acupuncture process of micro-projects in synergy, by iterative loops of local development process, based on trial and errors, unexpected success and also drawbacks.

This organic process may appear less satisfactory from many points of view. The rationality of building infrastructures commands for big projects and large chunks of works to benefit from economy of scale whereas more little steps, hesitations, reorientations may result in a more expensive comprehensive bill at the end. They may require also longer periods of work, longer time to achieve a complete development and they may be perceived by the population as a never-ending work-in-progress. Finally the result itself may appear less clear, more of a *bricolage* with adaptations, modifications and trade-offs.

But these conclusions come when comparing our hypothesis of a development based on organic micro-projects to a successful rational large territorial development. And this is without counting with the



many failures of large top-down developments that generates more often than acknowledged, non working infrastructures underused because the population nether engaged in it: suburbs and neighbourhoods built from scratch with scarce quality of life and the many *non-places* characteristic of recent territorial and urban developments that are generating high social and environmental indirect costs to the society.

### 3.2 Bottom-up visioning and open governance

Scenarios based on a mosaic of micro-visions starting from the users points of view generate a collective projection on the territory radically different from the programmatic approach that usually starts with generating urban infrastructures to prompt new ways of living. Beyond this oppositions and possible forms of complementarity between them, the new approach questions the posture of public authorities and the way public development programs are conducted.

In the hypothesis of development by micro-projects observed through the experimentation carried out with the two schools, the role of public authorities evolve from top-down initiator of urban development to an *open governance* posture. This expression of *open governance* refers to the notions of *open government* where citizens have access to data and proceedings on public authorities actions, or of *open-source governance* where policy-making is open to citizens' involvement towards an improved democratic process. Beyond the transparency of governance and its accessibility

to public participation that bottom-up development by micro-projects induces, the *open governance* refers to a governance as an open and continuous action-research where core idea is less focused on decision making and more on the animation of the stakeholders participation process. It also changes the roles and posture of public authorities introducing

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two different notions: the role of shifting meaning and giving visibility to bottom-up initiatives on the one hand and on the other and the posture of back-up of the micro-projects initiatives.



One of the scenarios produced by the students focused the EPPS structure itself and suggested how design and urban planning could integrate in more user centered local development.

### 3.2.1 *Shifting meanings and giving visibility to bottom-up initiatives*

In both experimentations students of the two design schools starts with searching for local potentialities. They map social initiatives and bottom-up innovations. They bring into the light small size phenomenons that are otherwise regarded as endogenous developments or niches to social mainstream. This action of bringing into the light is two fold. First it consists in giving voice and publicity to actions that otherwise for their sizes and eccentric nature would not attract attention. Second and more important, they change the meaning of these actions and play a role of interpreters (Jégou & all, 2006) showing them not only in the light but also under a different light: difficulties are turned into solutions, antagonisms into partnerships but also localized ideas assume the value of general opportunities and initiatives triggered by various motivations may appear promising in terms of sustainable and inclusive ways of living. The concepts of *Diffused campus* in Saint-Gilles and in a certain measure the concept of *Paris-Saclay campus* as a region-wide living lab are examples of these actions of shifting light on the current situation (i.e. a potential conflict between local population and respectively incoming students or researchers) and show it under a different and more positive perspective (i.e. respectively an intergenerational dynamic campus and a experimental neighbourhood of the future). Each of the single initiatives on which the micro-projects are based are also tentative changes of meanings, mixes and hybridations: collaborative services between inhabitants and students; schools and campus infrastructures hosting neighbourhood life; quasi-adoptions between local families and incoming students, etc.

In a similar way to what the two groups of students have done, public authorities roles in the context of the development by micro-projects is to explore existing assets of the territory showing weak signals under the light of *faits porteurs d'avenirs*.

### 3.2.2 *Back-up posture of micro-projects*

Public authorities traditionally (for sure in France and Belgium) think their role an initiator of local development and territorial transformation. Citizens are beneficiaries (often passive beneficiaries) of the resulting public service. More recently citizen participation is modulating the top-down government into forms of participative governance.

The two experimentations conducted by the schools are showing one step further of an intrinsically bottom-up construction of the territory by an assembling of meaningful micro-projects in synergies. The development of the territory is a resulting process of this assembling and the governance is necessarily in an enabling or backup posture nearly opposite to the traditional role of initiator of public authorities described before.

Public authorities should therefore aim at providing an *enabling framework* (Jégou, Manzini, 2008) or the appropriated conditions and ambience to enable the proper development of social innovations. In

## **The two experimentations conducted by the schools are showing one step further of an intrinsically bottom-up construction of the territory by an assembling of meaningful micro-project synergies.**

the same way as for social innovation, the micro-projects designed by the two schools students are intrinsically based on people dynamics and initiatives: collaborative services, mutual help and synergies between local institutions and inhabitants; successful shift of the identity of a territory into an open campus or an experimental living lab, etc, can hardly be prompted by public authorities. On the contrary, public authorities can explore, watch and gently support and orient these emerging initiatives. In other words, the different scenarios built within the collaboration between local stakeholders and design students may grow from such co-creation processes if they meet favourable environments. First and certainly more critical is the administrative and legislative flexibility. The proposed scenarios are different from current practices. They slightly change established rules. They push boundaries and goes countertrend. Public services and policy-making should therefore carefully watch the needs of the promising micro-projects,

anticipate with them possible blockers and play a role of barrier remover. Second dimension of the public enabling framework is to provide the conditions to facilitate the development and consolidation of the social dynamics. Here comes requirement for measured forms of subsidies, technical help of experts and professionals (including urban planners and designers that may play key roles as enablers, interpreters and amplifiers) and support for permanent assessment and reorientation of this open governance.

#### 4. DEVELOPMENT AGENCY LABS

The first experimentation between Paris-Saclay and ENSCI Paris DESIS Lab will further develop to investigate and experiment how user-centred design approach may transform territorial planning organizing an immersion session of students from different disciplines at the EPPS development agency. The aim is to work with urban planners and co-develop new integrated methods based on the previous experiences. One of the scenarios developed by the students proposes a vision for an urban and economic development agency as a *public innovation place* switching from consultation to co-creation through the generation of DEVELOPMENT AGENCYlabs putting the social architecture first and channelling then the appropriate urban infrastructure.

This scenario is reproduced here as it applies the ideas developed before and proposes a conclusion in form of a vision before drawing design and policy implications. *From the launch of Paris-Saclay Cluster Campus, major issues were clearly to kick-off the social dimensions of the project and generate a high quality of life between the mix of populations living there.*

*The Paris-Saclay Development Agency in charge of coordination of urban planning for the whole Campus decided to challenge its own work and innovation processes to better meet the social side of the project.*

*The willingness to pass from consultation to co-creation made them generate the first DEVELOPMENT AGENCYlabs: these new sub-structures worked as temporary project groups bringing together generally 3 to 5 different stakeholders to coproduce an experimentation. For instance the first Learning Center around Politechnique metro station trigger appetite for more of such experimental third places: 'La Villette-Saclay' was the first initiated by the Sciences and Industry Museum, Nanolnnov and Ile-de-France Region Direction of Education. Another started in partnership with Minatech Arts & Science Atelier, CEA and Cartier Foundation. Each of these DEVELOPMENT AGENCYlabs real scale experimentations were scheduled for 6 months after which an assessment of the results is made by the partners and the experimentation is transformed into a real project or stopped.*

*Other third places were generated around logging: Accord Hotel, Booking.com and Gites de France explored the concept of diffused hotels rooms at people's home; Steelcase Strafor, the Hub and Cafés Costes implement the very French 'Bistr'offices,' etc. With DEVELOPMENT AGENCYlabs, the Development Agency turned planning upside down putting the social architecture first and channelling then the appropriate infrastructure.*



## IMPLICATIONS FOR:

### DESIGN PRACTICE

The experiences conducted by design approaches to urban planning revealed some promising directions of development:

- Intensification of in-depth and long immersions into the territorial social fabric beyond classical user-centred approaches and tools;
- Co-creation as enabling and supporting innovation by the population and stakeholders beyond limited involvement of creating with them;
- Forward looking activities based on bottom-up generation of macro-visions from the aggregation of multiple single micro-projects;
- Support the deliberation and public participation with explicit representations of the future visions to be debated.

### DESIGN EDUCATION

The experiences conducted pointed a series of open questions for design schools:

- The value of the design approaches and tools for territorial development and the innovation in local policy making;
- The richness of considering more interdisciplinary experiences (here between design, urban planning and policy making) as a way to question and explore the potential developments of design education;
- The field work and immersive approaches that question the schools as physical places in vitro compared to education in vivo;

### DESIGN POLICY

Both experiences of collaborative constructions of future visions for territorial development outline the perspective of an open governance calling for new roles and attitudes for policy making supported by design approaches:

- Giving visibility to local potentials mapping micro informal promising initiatives embedded or emerging from the territory;
- Ensuring these potentials are developed in tangible visions meaningful for the population and that their future implications is expressed in an explicit way for all stakeholders;
- Making sure that these visions are considered in the stakeholder debate for their innovation capabilities within future challenges;
- Developing public authorities capability to backup local bottom-up initiatives and provide the appropriate environment for self-territorial development.

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