Shaping Social Design with communities

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This position paper presents key Social Design work being conducted in the Design-led Research Centre, ImaginationLancaster, at Lancaster University in the UK. We position our local and global research in the Social Design landscape, defining the design approaches and methods we have been utilising across projects as well as their limitations. As the Social Design Special Interest Group in ImaginationLancaster, we also clarify what Social Design encompasses in our research and its practice. These were explored through a workshop series with our team and through five case study examples from Brazil, China, India and the UK. The workshop series generated maps that clarified what characterises our research work in this area. Together the workshops' outputs and the analysis of the cases showed that our Social Design work has focused on underserved communities aiming at collective community purposes and social impact at local and global scales. However, there are still several challenges to advance the field, including designers' skills in this area, particularly around community trust-building, empowerment, and ownership besides the social impact dilemmas. We define those challenges based on the cross-case analysis, defining future directions that can contribute to advancing our Social Design research. This aims to contribute to the debates in this emerging field rather than set propositions of what Social Design is and how it should be carried out with communities.

Keywords: social design; community engagement; empowerment; ownership

1 Introduction

This position paper explores and defines the directions that are shaping the Social Design research in the ImaginationLancaster Design-Led Research Centre at Lancaster University in the UK. The work that we have been conducting mostly involves the public, community engagement, and participatory approaches to creating or enhancing the public good. Our position was grounded in the concepts, methods and practices that have been associated with the research we do that are further explored through case study examples that enabled us to identify and discuss current entangled and wicked challenges that still need to be addressed to advance this field towards better social impact. These challenges include, for instance, potentials and risks of community empowerment as well as limitations of social cohesion and organisation of community-based strategies.

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Social Design is the application of design principles and practices to promote positive social change within society (Resnick, 2019). The long tradition of Social Design spans from initial texts from Victor Papanek (1971), who emphasised the social responsibility of designers and creative professionals to improve people's lives rather than creating products and services for unwanted needs. Fifty years after the initial texts from Papanek, the term Social Design has gained momentum across different sectors aiming to create positive social impact through design. In fact, during the last decades, policymakers and public sector innovators have urged the design and creative industries to be socially responsible for addressing the problems of declining welfare states (Markussen, 2017).

Despite the numerous efforts in the literature to define Social Design, scholars still have disagreements when defining the term (Nold et al., 2022). The challenge of this definition revolves around defining "social" in Social Design. The word social can mean different things: social problems, social impact, social motivation or even the social sector (Phills et al., 2008). Koskinen and Hush (2016) distinguish three types of Social Design: utopian social design, molecular social design and sociological social design. The goal of utopian Social Design is to promote macro-structural changes. Molecular Social Design avoids such promises of massive change, starting with infinitely small and micro transformations such as small-scale production forms. On the other hand, sociological Social Design is based on sociological theories. These different approaches led to discussions regarding the actual outcomes of Social Design versus the expectations placed on Social Design initiatives (Nold et al., 2022).

However, there are also agreements or similarities between authors when defining Social Design. First, the main driver for Social Design is the positive benefit to society (Tromp & Vial, 2023). Second, scholars agree that Social Design is a participatory or collaborative endeavour towards collective or social ends (Armstrong et al. 2014; Markussen, 2017). Third, sScial Design occurs in a particular community, bounded by shared experience and place (Chen,et al., 2016; Le Dantec, 2016). Finally, Social Design relates to the involvement of material elements to promote, sustain or obstruct certain types of social life (Tonkinwise, 2019). Notwithstanding these agreements and disagreements, multiple nuances can be encountered when describing Social Design initiatives due to the situatedness of this practice.

Social Design has been developing as a field of growing importance and interest, especially considering our increasingly relevant and complex societal challenges. However, it is still a fledgeling area in Design in which designers' skills and knowledge are still 'work in progress'. On top of that, Social Design practice and research are found in a fragmented literature and there is no consensus about what the term Social Design exactly means and comprises. Therefore, this positioning paper aims to contribute to the debate rather than set definitions, and recognises Social Design as an organic and dynamic field, as society is, in which communities play a critical role. Our case study examples have work and collaboration with communities at theircore. Thus, our contribution focuses on this area.

2 Methodology

As the Social Design Special Interest Group, we have embraced the nature of the diversity the group members bring, such as backgrounds, research interests and professions. The group includes five Postgraduate Researchers, two Postgraduate Research Associates, two Lecturers, a Professor, and an Engagement and Knowledge Exchange Manager who is also a Postgraduate Researcher. Through a series of workshops, the group collectively articulated our perspective of Social Design based on our

research work, experience and background in this field. In addition to the workshops, we conducted a literature review and reviewed case studies about Social Design.

The first workshop aimed to understand and explore the diverse ways that our individual group member's work and their interests regard social design. During the workshop, each member wrote what Social Design means to them. The members described their related work with examples or cases and identified their motivations for working on Social Design projects. Each group member also chose 3 keywords and key phrases that summarised their perspective on Social Design. This was followed by a group discussion aimed at sharing our unique perspectives and aligning our vision and definition of Social Design.

After the workshop, the definitions and cases written by the members were analysed and keywords from the descriptive texts were highlighted. Next, the keywords were mapped using Miro.Words that had been used by multiple people in their individual texts became the centre or stem words on the map, thenlinks between the keywords were identified by creating connections between synonymous or thematic terms. As a result of this extensive mapping, and in an attempt to synthesize the information from the multitude of keywords, three broad overarching themes, futures, voices and connections, were identified which represented the inherent nature and context of Social Design in our team.

In the second workshop, the group gathered and discussed multiple perspectives of Social Design. During the workshop's first session, each member identified their research focus on the comprehensive diagram by adding sticky notes with their names (Figure 1). This activity helped the members to explore the positionality of their research area in relation to Social Design and understand the connections they share with others. Based on the discussion, the group selected interesting cases to further capture a 'holistic and real-world perspective' (Yin, 2009) of Social Design, which are presented and explored in the following sections. Specifically, the cases were selected considering their diversity regarding (1) cultural and socio-economic characteristics of locations as well as (2) design approaches and methods employed. They were analysed further by identifying their commonalities and fieldwork challenges related to collaborative creativity deployment, implementation of ideas with communities and their Social Design impact.

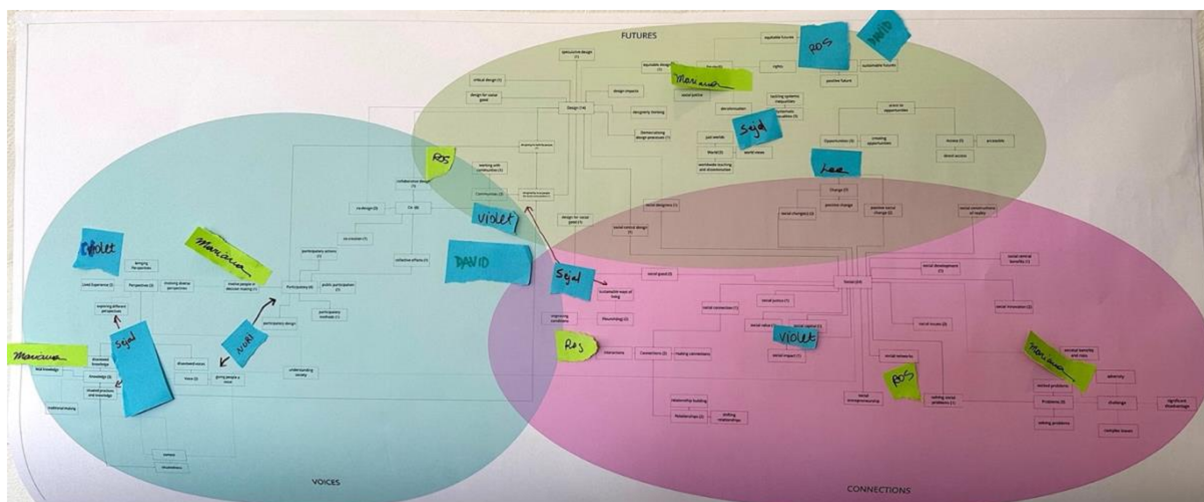

Figure 1. Map used during the second workshop.

In a further analysis, we identified and mapped the interrelations that characterise our work in Social Design (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Social Design and its interrelations to our design research work and practice.

3 Case study examples

The following section summarises the five case study examples used to explore empirically and theoretically the definition of Social Design illustrating the variety of Social Design work with communities we have been carrying out. These cases were used as discussion points to explore elements that resonated with our collective approaches to Social Design. They also were selected purposively to represent our local-global research landscape and its diversity in terms of cultural contexts, design methods and approaches utilised in the work we identified as Social Design.

3.1 COVID-19 in deprived Brazilian areas

During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil, a pilot study was conducted with communities who live in informal settlements from two Brazilian cities, Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro. This research aimed to identify communities' needs, areas of challenges as well as strategies utilised to mitigate the pandemic impacts. A vital aim of identifying and mapping these was to understand how participatory design methods and co-design capabilities can contribute to communities' resilience considering short-term (immediate effects/actions) and long-term (strategy, policy, plan, vision for the future) aspects.

Three online roundtables were run with informal-settlement community members who played a critical role in their communities. The first one involved community representatives from Belo Horizonte, the second one from Rio, and the third one was joined by community members from both cities. These participatory events enabled community members to be involved in the process of validation of the research outputs. From these activities analyses' maps were produced which synthesised the community members challenges and strategies related to information, prevention, diagnosis and treatment, and support to tackle the pandemic. In this case, design methods were utilised mostly for analysis, such as affinity and mental mapping.

3.1.1 Background

Over 11 per cent of households live in informal settlements in Belo Horizonte and over 19 percent in Rio (IBGE, 2019). Although informal settlements features vary across Brazil, they share some common characteristics. These often are a result of the historical migration from countryside areas to urban centres, for example, the emergence of favelas in the 1940s. Sanitation, water and energy grids often don't reach these territories which face water shortages and resource scarcity. They also lack public services provision, such as waste collection, sewage treatment, water and energy supply and absence of a formal address (IBGE, 2010). Furthermore, informal settlements geographies often do not favour regular and safe urbanization and lack access to the Internet. Additionally, populations are mostly composed of minority groups, especially those of Black ethnicity, with low levels of formal education, and low and informal income (Musumeci, 2016). Moreover, crowding (around 10 people in a 2-room house) and intergenerational households are common.

3.1.2 Community-led strategies

Social cohesion and organisation were key to tackling the pandemic's impacts on communities. Most strategies were community-led and served to fulfil public policies and services failures, to timely craft policies and adapt services considering the socioeconomic determinants and conditions of informal settlements. In this context, community leadership was crucial. Community leaders are arising and

funding their own NGOs and being proactive in implementing initiatives; they serve as enablers of collaborative actions, and attract partnerships that help to support the initiatives.

Barrier types: Infrastructural; Political; Public policy and/or service; Behavioural and/or cultural; Socio-economic determinants

Theme	Barriers	Challenges	Community-led strategies
Communication	Lack of access to internet. Distrusted politicians. Lack of information technology resources.	How to access reliable information, interpret and understand it.	WhatsApp and Facebook groups.* Local community leadership. Personal network. Educational videos on prevention. Rap lyrics creation. Car with sound system circulates in the community.
Education	Public schools are closed. Absence of (infrastructure, service and staff) support from schools.	How to assure (1) access to education and (2) the safety of children and teenagers during the pandemic.	Home-schooling project. Reformulation of the school planning.
Employment and income	Lack of access to Internet. No possibility of remote work. Social Service (CRAS) closure. Overpriced food and hygiene products. Unemployment. Informal work.	How to ensure community members' subsistence and wellbeing.	Local NGOs' support to access government benefits. Local NGOs and private sector partnerships (food parcels' and hygiene products' donations). Local NGOs and wider society partnerships (e.g. solidarity of citizens beyond the community). Hand sanitizers and masks distribution to workers at dawns. Grated soap and water mixture stored in reused oil cans.*
Culture, leisure and behaviour	Children's street culture and games. Youth keep partying. Adults keep going to bars. Older adults have resistance to change/adapt their habits.	How to bring awareness about the 'invisible' threat.	Community-led communication strategies. Handwashing and hand sanitizer check points.
Public administration and politics	Lack of water and sanitation grids. Political instability, 'bad' behaviour and practices. Lack of public officials support.	How to create support and coordinate strategies and actions with communities for mitigating COVID-19 effects and impacts.	Community self-organisation and volunteering. Mutual help amongst households. Design and manufacturing of masks. Establishment of a community leadership unity. Donations of food parcels and hygiene products by citizens and socially responsible organisations. Water purchase from a water tank truck.
National Health System	Lack of protective gear for health professionals in the public sector. Lack of free COVID-19 tests. Need of health workers for access to reliable information and knowledge to provide diagnosis and treatment. Standard preventative measures are unsuitable for the community conditions. Lack of trust in the public health system's diagnosis. Distrust in medical appointments by phone. Overcrowded and intergenerational households. High-density areas.	How to assure community access to health services. How to provide communities with assertive diagnosis and treatment. How to provide communities with feasible preventative measures.	Community members raised money for diagnosis and protective gear for health workers. Traditional knowledge: ginger and saffron teas and sunbathing to strengthen vitamin D. Self-medication based on media speculation.* Prescriptions' sharing.*

*Risky strategies

Figure 3. Barriers, challenges and community-led strategies for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic (Fonseca Braga et al., 2021).

Among many challenges faced by communities, there was a lack of free COVID-19 tests, and unreliable diagnosis of COVID-19 (e.g., with no tests even in local health centres, COVID-19 was confused with other tropical diseases). On top of that, preventative and treatment measures were unfeasible for their livelihood diversity. The map below synthesises the areas of challenges and their strategies. Another important factor was the lack of politicians' presence in the communities as stated by a participant: "the State did not arrive to beat COVID-19". Politicians' and policymakers' presence in informal settlements is often directly related to poll objectives (e.g. bribing community members for votes) by community members. Disbelief in the COVID-19 virus was also influenced by political instability involving power disputes and corruption as mentioned by another participant: "is the virus an invention motivated by political interests?"

Most strategies responding to the challenges posed by COVID-19 were community-led. These were critical to mitigating the impact of the disease in these communities. However, a few strategies were risky due to the absence of proper public health services and resources in the communities, and could harm community members (e.g., sharing of prescriptions). Therefore, these initiatives would benefit further from more involvement and commitment from key stakeholders, especially from the public sector. In this context, designers can also play a meaningful role, particularly 'building bridges' and enabling meaningful communication for collaborative strategies and actions involving these key stakeholders, making communities' voice visible towards better social impact (Figure 4).

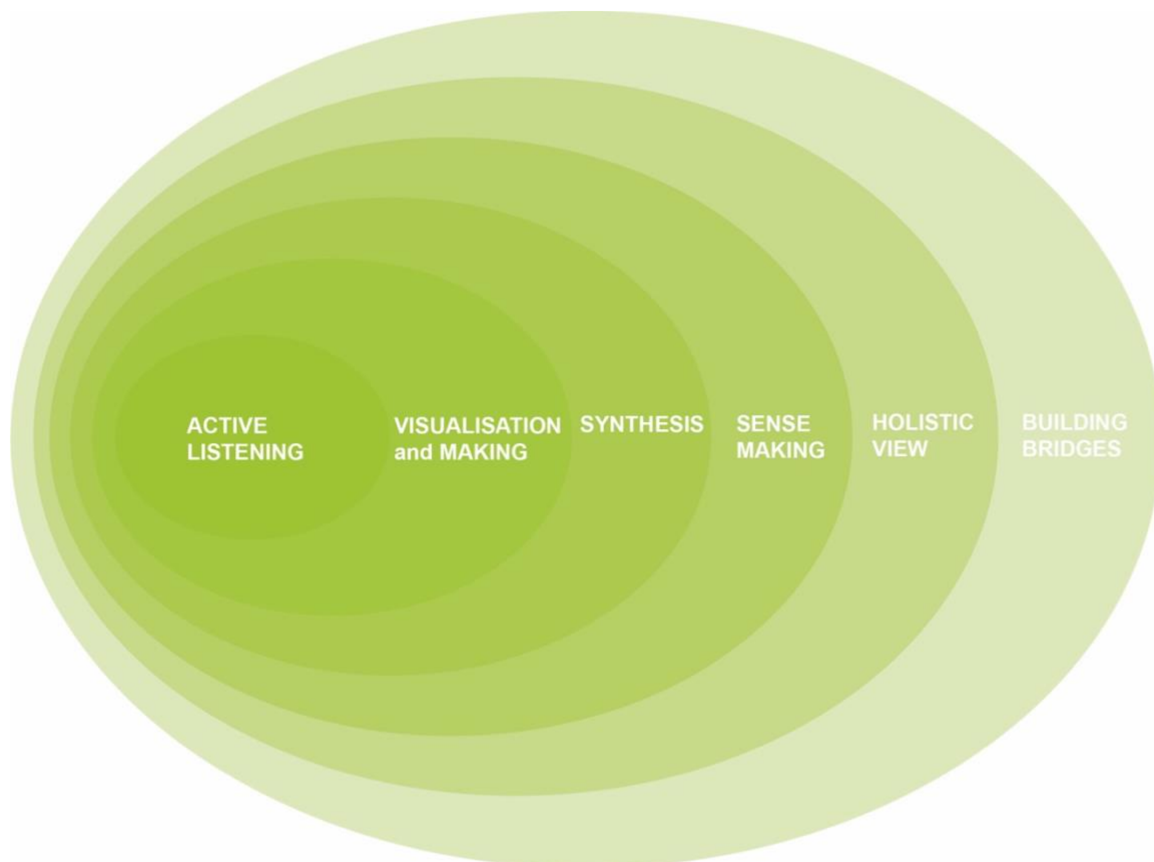

Figure 4. Design capabilities for community resilience: towards dialogic practices and policies (Fonseca Braga & Tsekleves, 2022).

3.2 St Giles Trust

Arguably, the best examples of Social Design are not initiated by designers, they are rooted in communities, they are natural occurrences responding to systemic societal issues and inequalities. There are many people in society that have faced and continue to face significant disadvantage in their lives, such as poverty, homelessness, exploitation, abuse, addiction, poor mental healthor involvement in the criminal justice system, which consequently has prevented them from accessing things we would consider basic human rights such as housing and education, which can also affect their ability to enter into gainful employment. This often means these groups are left leading a poorer quality of life. Society also often lacks the structures and systems to support these people and can unintentionally impede them from accessing support, such as locking them in unbreakable cycles (i.e., to get a job you need a bank account, to get a bank account you need an address, to get a home you need money which means you need a job or a loan etc).

St Giles Trust is a charitable organisation that works with people who have experienced significant disadvantage in life and have been let down by central systems of support. They do a variety of work with individuals and communities such as providing support for children that have a parent in prison, helping those facing homelessness to find homes, supporting individuals in gaining the skills they need to find employment, preventative work with people who are at risk of criminal exploitation, working with prison leavers to negotiate their re-entry into society, amongst many other initiatives. The majority of their work led by St Giles is conducted by people with lived experiences, for example their Peer Advisors Programme. There are many benefits using of using peers for this type of work. The peers often have had similar experiences to the clients they work with. This benefits them with insider knowledge for how overcome barriers such as access to services, that many disadvantaged people face. They often have knowledge of which services would be best to use and who to speak to, and the largely hidden processes that one can only understand through experiencing them. Knowledge of who, how and in what order to access support often presents as a barrier as these systems often work in silos (which is often arbitrarily segmented by things such as funding allocation) and how these systems connect (or have the potential to connect) is not always obvious. The topics that St Giles deals with are often very sensitive and it can be difficult for the individuals to trust those in positions of power, indeed they are often in a disadvantaged position as a result of systemic power inequalities imposed upon them. Employing people who have had similar experiences can help to create a more equitable environment, which can help to alleviate tensions that exist. A person with lived experience can also serve as a physical, tangible example to clients of how things can change for the better, particularly as many of the employees of St Giles Trust are ex-clients.

There are many learnings, that as designers, we can take away from this example, that have the potential to improve Social Design practice. St Giles has addressed a need that is not being fulfilled by existing systems and structures, and there are clearly people that are suffering due to this deficiency. They model the efficacy of problem solving when it is initiated by indigenous communities (those from that place or context). The impact they generate and the success of the programmes they've led so far is due to their staff members who have lived experience of those problems, giving it deeply grounded roots within the communities it serves.

3.3 Leapfrog

Leapfrog was a 1.3 million project funded by the AHRC research council to transform public consultation by design. This project involved working in collaboration with public sector practitioners and community partners in Lancashire and Scotland to co-design flexible tools for creative engagement, where each region had its own engagement challenges. In Lancashire, there was a range of communities that were hard to engage due to, for example, low rates of English literacy, whilst challenges in the Scottish communities in the highlands and islands included their geographic dispersion, isolation, and issues with communication and access. The co-designed tools supported engagement practitioners to improve their consultation practices by using tools that enabled them to creatively engage with members of their local communities such as patients, young people, children in care and young people experiencing food poverty. These flexible tools have been used beyond Lancashire and Scottish regions, reaching over 130 countries.

The research team used a Social Design approach, where genuine collaboration with engagement practitioners who worked with their local communities on their everyday work (e.g. city and county councils, NHS trusts, youth service) enabled them to be more effective in helping their communities to have their voices heard in public decision-making processes through co-design and use of flexible tools. This involved inviting engagement practitioners to plan, design, and reflect on their own social challenges and develop tools that could address and support their engagement practices within their fields (e.g. health and social care, youth engagement, or public engagement in libraries).

The results of this genuine collaboration enabled participants to take ownership of their co-designed tools and to promote the use of tools across their networks. Leapfrog produced over 80 tools and toolkits freely available for download (https://imagination.lancaster.ac.uk/leapfrog-tools/). These flexible tools encourage practitioners to be more creative in getting their communities involved in public decisions by adapting the tools to fit their contexts and creating new creative engagement processes instead of adapting tools or methods created and used by trained designers.

3.3.1 There is something wrong in co-design paradise: a critique about co-design

Co-design projects are now ubiquitous in the UK. This method of engagement has gained momentum incrementally since the 1970’s. There are some outstanding projects that have exemplified the emerging research and practice concerned with equitable participation and agency for those whose voices might be less often heard, Leapfrog (Lancaster University, 2018) and Empowering Design Practices (Open University, 2021) are two such projects. There are many more projects that have not delivered their full potential, and co-design’s reputation has suffered due to these many, unfulfilled and under-delivered projects.

The methods used in co-design and the principles used to scaffold participation are in the public realm and available to use if participants are willing to negotiate the complex and unwieldy landscape from which to piece together a workable process for doing co-design.

Interpreting the principles, processes and methods employed in co-design by people whose lived experiences are not in design specialisms is tricky. Obviously but seemingly easily overlooked, co-design has the word design in it and is about doing design.

Co-design is not a way of engaging people, it is about designing, it just happens to be with other people, often in the context of social issues. When non designers adopt and adapt co-design to engage

communities, public sector workers and other groups, something gets lost in translation. It can be difficult to recognise what it is that has been lost. Ironically exemplar co-design projects have encouraged the 'adopt and adapt' approach to encourage independent agency, sustainability and equality. These projects have become a diluted, light version of co-design. Light versions of co-design often place emphasis on process over outcomes, which provides participants with a lovely experience but does not provide impact either by the lack of outcome or an outcome that is not the best it can be. These projects are adding to the scepticism surrounding co-design. This is an observation that is not intended as a criticism of those who have placed their confidence and belief in co-design, who have not been able to deliver the best process and best outcomes. This observation is the driver for supporting others to have a secure base and knowledge on not just what to do but how to do it.

Returning to the previous point of non-designers autonomously enacting co-design projects, the issue of 'design' is key. There are multiple frameworks that designers and non-designers are encouraged to use to help them through the tricky process of doing design, the double diamond for example. This framework suggests ways of working with prompts to remind you when to reflect, for example. It does not crucially, provide you with information on how to reflect. There are prompts that suggest, 'this is the time to design' and we have definitions of what design is but crucially not how to think in a designerly way or how to be imaginative or creative, these words are generic. It is expected that we all understand the meaning of these words however, these words mean many things to different people. Designers spend years understanding the process of designing, often by 'doing', by 'practice' and they do not easily explain the tacit knowledge that they have. The language of designer's is crucial and the meta nature of understanding the tacit knowledge accrued by designers is essential if co-design is to have a future. Understanding the designer's mindset or disposition when doing design is critical.

3.4 Building social connection with an unfamiliar community in Social Design

This case, Bivou|X, occurred in Boduoluo, Lijiang, China, a remote minority community of barely over 100 residents. The community struggled with social development due to its high-altitude position in the mountains, facing many disadvantages including extreme poverty, limited education, and insufficient infrastructure. Despite these disadvantages, the area is attractive to outdoor enthusiasts due to its natural beauty and abundant agricultural, forest, and pasture resources. In 2017, the community residents proposed ecotourism as an approach to community development. The initiative received support from the local lodge developer, non-profit organizations, anthropologists, and others, resulting in a collaboration to build an eco-friendly tented hotel.

Shanzhai City, a key co-creator for this case, is the first social impact design and innovation company in mainland China. They aimed to bring economic benefits whilst also generating non-commercial social values and impacts, working in collaboration with other stakeholders. However, they encountered considerable obstacles in establishing effective communication and fostering collaborative relationships within the community. Social Design practice often faces such issues when working within unfamiliar communities, particularly in cases where the local language and knowledge are substantially unfamiliar. Those obstacles were primarily surmounted by:

- Identifying suitable agents – a village teacher and the only university graduate who could act as effective bridges for language communication and were trusted and respected by the community (Figure 5). These agents demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility for

community development and collective solidarity, which enables them to build trust and common goals (Figure 6).

- Gaining the local knowledge about community's history, family genealogy, cultural customs, and social norms. This was achieved through engagement with experienced local anthropologists and NGOs, which fostered socio-cultural comprehension (Figure 7).
- Being present in the community for an extended period. This enhances the opportunities to interact with its members (Figure 8). Particularly, participating in group activities, such as celebrations and festivals, is an effective way to expand social networks and gain valuable insights into community cultures (Figure 9).

Despite being time-consuming, fostering social connections through these strategies effectively reduced cultural conflicts and social exclusion in socio-culturally unfamiliar communities. This resulted in enhanced community collaboration and participation, enabling not only the hotel's completion, but also the establishment of a robust social impact evaluation system to assess the effects of subsequent design and development initiatives within the community.

While this particular case strengthens the confidence of Chen and his colleagues (2016) in the potential of designers working with small-scale communities, it does not imply that designers possess the necessary skills to establish trustworthy community relationships. Instead, design practitioners need to acknowledge that the realm of Social Design transcends their conventional professional practices and should prioritize enhancing social communication and connectivity to establish a robust groundwork for future community engagement and design collaboration, as highlighted by Tjahja's and Yee's (2022) recent initiative to promote sociability among social designers. In essence, community members and local agents tend to trust and support designers who demonstrate sincerity in fostering positive relationships and contributing to community development, rather than solely showcasing their professional expertise.

Figure 5. Building trust through extensive communication with local agents. Source: Shanzhai City.

Figure 6. Agent explains the project aim to the community's members. Source: Shanzhai City.

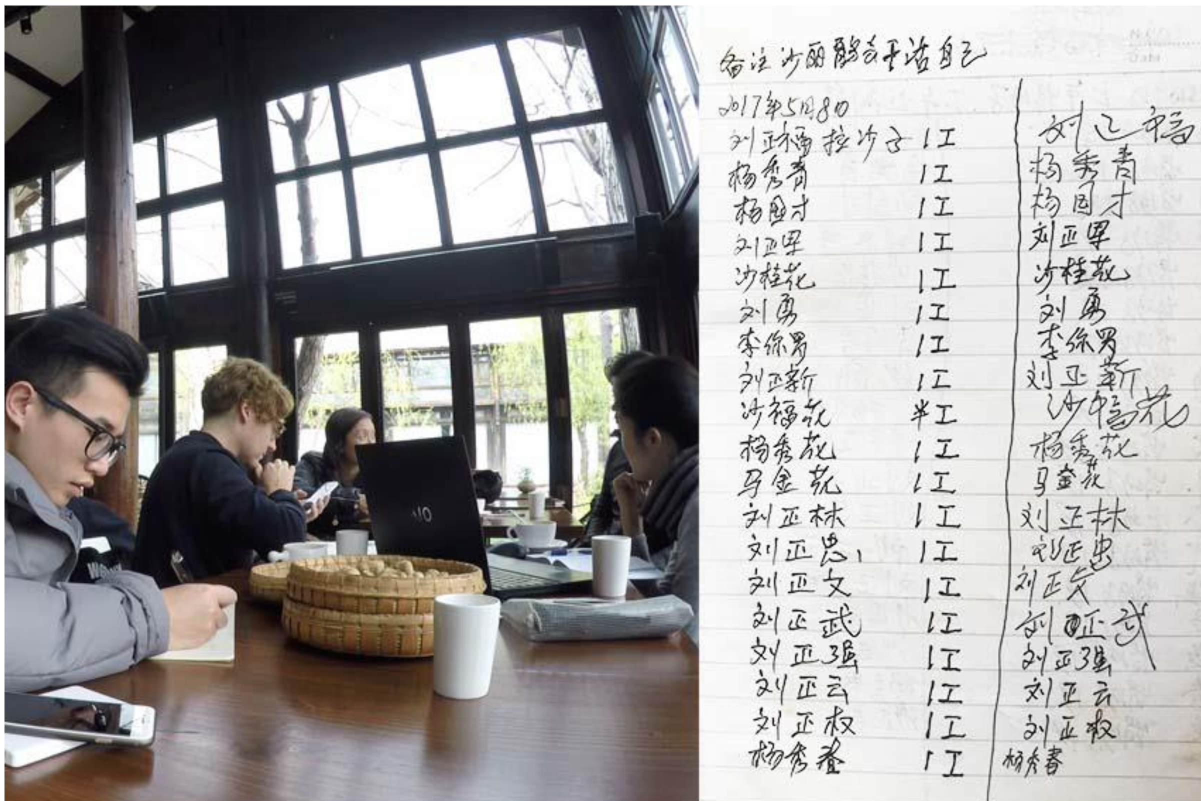

Figure 7. Learn about the history of the community and family tree from long-standing local experts. Source: Shanzhai City.

Figure 8. Get to know more community members quickly through agents. Source: Shanzhai City.

Figure 9. Participate in village farming harvest activities. Source: Shanzhai City.

3.5 Industree Foundation: a social enterprise developing the creative manufacturing ecosystem and global partnership for sustainable impact

India is a country of rich culture, history and traditions; this cultural richness is also home to 40 million rural artisans of various forms of utilitarian and creative crafts. Handicraft industry is the backbone of the rural economy of India - it's the second largest rural income provider after agriculture (Banik, 2017). These artisans are spread across the country working in different crafts forms with textile, clay, metal, wood, stone, ceramic, gems etc. producing decorative, ceremonial, utilitarian and lifestyle accessory products. As a result of economic reforms after independence, much of India's rural population has migrated to cities in search of work, sadly trading rural unemployment for urban displacement and poverty (United Nations, 2018).

One Indian organization, Industree Foundation, is addressing this gap between rural unemployment, traditional artisan craft, and India's growing consumer market. Industree Foundation is a hybrid social enterprise consisting of two entities: a for-profit and a non-profit, based in Bangalore, India. Product designers Neelam Chhiber, Poonam Bir Kasturi, and social investor Gita Ram established Industree Foundation in 2000; their vision was to leverage on urban markets to create demand for Indian crafts and reshape them in a new contemporary fashion. In 2011 the project was reorganised by introducing four different entities with four distinct functions: Mother Earth for Retail; Industree Crafts Pvt. Ltd. for manufacturing expertise, design and support; Industree Transform Pvt. Ltd. for supply chain; and the Industree Crafts Foundation, the non-profit that worked with the government and provided training to the artisans. These four collaborated to make Industree commercially viable, self-sustainable and market oriented to ensure it holistically tackles the root causes of poverty by creating an ownership based, organised, creative manufacturing ecosystem for micro-entrepreneurs.

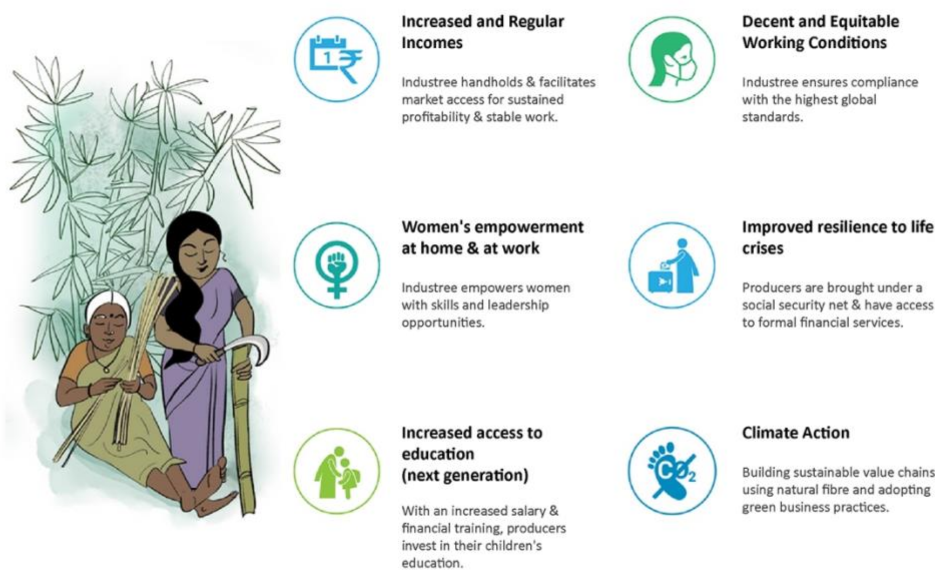

Figure 10. Industree's six core impact areas. Source: Industree Website.

Focusing on sustainable natural fibre and regenerative agricultural value chains, such as banana, bamboo, and non-timber forest produce, Industree upskills women to adopt green business practices

and connects them with markets for natural and biodegradable products. This is done by enabling them to equitably engage with global and local markets through producer-owned enterprises, thus becoming wealth creators for themselves, creating resilience to life crises and helping society meet its sustainable development goals. Industree's ecosystem supports entrepreneurs with upskilling, capital, digital tools, and making them a part of mainstream value chains with customers such as IKEA, H&M Home, Fabindia, and the Future Group (Industree, 2019). This has resulted in success of their social mission of supporting local community, traditional crafts, cottage industries, empowerment of women, establishing cooperative societies and fair trade, addressing gender equality and supporting climate action. The ownership of net positive, creative production value chains give these micro entrepreneur artisans added confidence as societal agents of change.

Figure 11. Industree Model. Source: Industree Website.

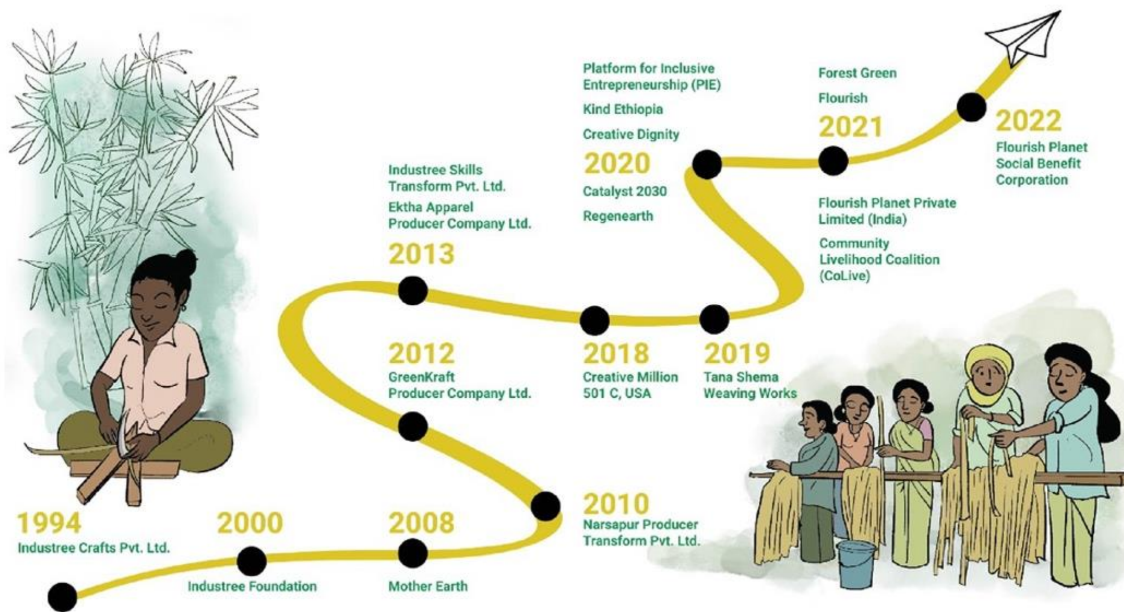

Figure 12. Industree Timeline. Source: Industree Website.

4 Towards Social Design with communities

Social Design in our research work has focused on underserved communities, serving collective community purposes, enhancing public good and generating social impact at local and global scales.

The design work, and the approaches and methods we have been utilising within Social Design vary considerably. In this context, design methods have been deployed as ways of analysing and

envisioning the future of design skills (Brazilian informal settlement case), ways of engaging citizens in decision-making to co-design the public good (Leapfrog), ways of enabling social inclusion by creating and improving design capacity locally (Industree Foundation, India) and fostering new community-led business model and implementation (Bivou|X, China). They bring several reflections that also clarify the challenges in this work as follows.

Design has not evolved enough to harness and track social impact. We need to go beyond conventional design skills and knowledge if we want to advance the field. Bivou|X case (China) showed us that community engagement is still a challenge. It demonstrated strategies that designers can learn in order to effectively engage communities and emphasised trust-building as an essential element to work and collaborate effectively with communities. Designers should learn ways of working towards trustworthy relationships with communities. This includes a medium- to a long-term commitment to dedicating to these relationships. This poses challenges regarding one-shot projects and resources that do not enable follow-ups with communities. So alternatives are still to be created yet.

Leapfrog brings the reflection that even if co-design approaches and methods come with the 'collaborative' label, aiming to engage and give voice to a diverse range of stakeholders, the preparation required to harness non-designers' creativity deployment through co-design process still presents challenges, particularly regarding the social impact or effectiveness of co-design processes' outputs. On the other hand, these processes are also a way of reinforcing participation principles of democracy (see for instance Sanoff, 2007; Sen, 1999). Thus, the expectations about the implementation of co-design processes may go beyond the expert designer 'making' public work (i.e., Dong, 2008) in the public sphere.

The project with Brazilian communities during COVID-19 also identified and defined the areas of skills that designers still need to develop further in those social challenges to contribute to generating and potentializing social impact. This project and the St Giles Trust case highlight the importance of learning from communities of practice as well as from community organisation and cohesion strategies and collaborative actions.

We have been also rethinking community empowerment and ownership. Our Social Design work often touches on or involves as an ultimate aim community empowerment and ownership so that communities can have better control over and have a voice in decision-making processes that affect their lives. However, there is the need to be attentive to those processes in order to responsibly create or improve empowerment or ownership. For example, under the 'community-led' strategies and initiatives in precarious and disadvantaged contexts, risky community-led ideas may emerge and be implemented in the absence of, for instance, access to education, reliable information and basic public services. Therefore, it is critical that designers can ethically and responsibly work on these collaborative processes towards empowerment and ownership in a way that protects communities, recognising when they need further capacity and resources to solve their challenges.

Finally, our major concern is about tracking and ensuring positive social impact. This is still a challenging area in which we have been crafting bespoke approaches according to each project context.

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