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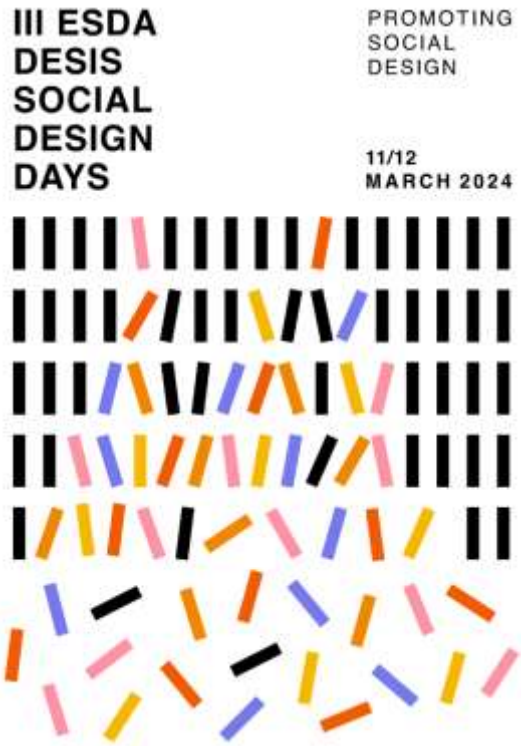


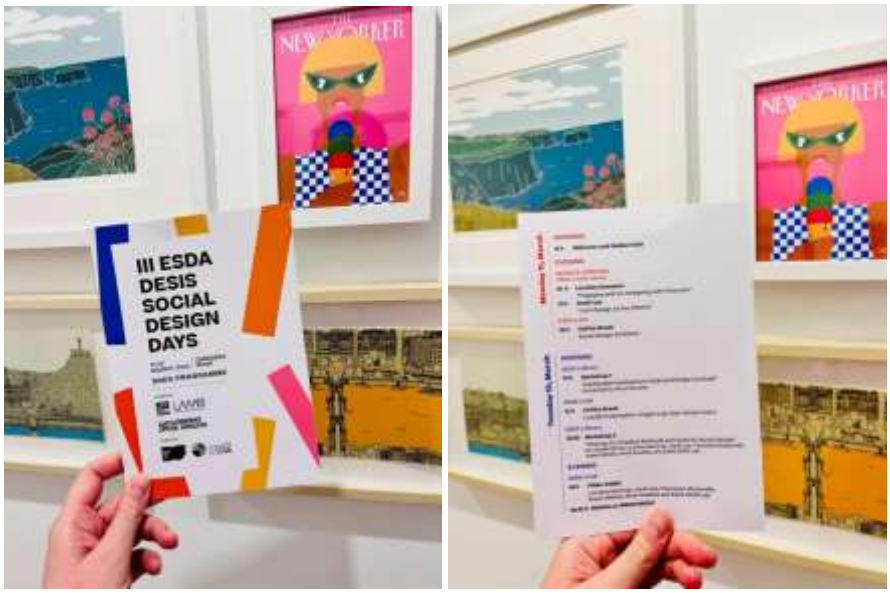
Sense and sensitivity: Reflections on social design education after III ESDA DESIS Social Design Days

Cecilia Casas-Romero

"Education is a weapon of mass construction".
Marjane Satrapi, Persepolis, 2000

The idea of compiling this supplement for DISCERN Journal arose after the celebration of the ESDA DESIS SOCIAL DESIGN Days' third edition in March 2024, attended by seven international professors who are experts in teaching social design. The Escuela Superior de Diseño de Aragón (ESDA) is a small educational institution with 300 students and 70 teachers, but with the particularity that more than half of the staff are involved in social design educational projects. In 2022, ESDA became part of DESIS and from its ESDA DESIS Lab, these projects are launched. Then, students, while learning the established curriculum, co-design with marginalized groups, such as refugees, minor offenders or homeless persons.It is a win-win situation. The intense motivation of the teachers comes from the experience of observing, on a microscopic level, how the student connects empathetically with each marginalized person with their name and surname.

However, not everything is sunshine and colour. Complexity is always present, and there are obstacles to overcome. The social designer does not intend to replace the social educator, the social worker, or the art therapist, but from his or her position to use his or her skills as a designer to generate positive social change. Here, we have a collection of reflections that emerged from these brilliant minds after this experience of the III ESDA DESIS SOCIAL DESIGN Days. They are teachers and researchers whose contributions show that through education and design, there are opportunities to mitigate the injustices of the society in which we live.



Images 1 & 2: II ESDA DESIS Social Design Days Programme. Photos and Programme by Inés Marco.

Lorraine Gamman came up with the idea for this collaborative supplement, which Susan Melsop and all the rest instantly seconded. It has also become true thanks to the generous

offer of Nicos Souleles, co-editor of DISCERN Journal. The introduction by Ezio Manzini, founder of DESIS, explains the necessary shift of design generation for social innovation from the city centres to the margins, counting on vulnerable groups, which explains and gives essential support to our work. Nicos Souleles writes about the relevance of embedding the Sustainable Development Goals in the curriculum and how to do it. Lorraine Gamman and Francesco Mazzarrela elaborate on the urgency of considering complexity, context and ethical considerations, for instance, when dealing with power dynamics. They reflect on the importance of being cautious and respectful and offer tools to overcome prejudices and bring empathy. Yanki Lee unfolds the logic of evolving from designing “for”, “with” and “by” to design “as” the others and how this leads to a more-than-human design approach by interacting with objects. Susan Melsop writes about the value of teaching social design as an act of care that can raise awareness and empathy in the students. Finally, Canan Akoglu reflects on the moment after the project ends, the importance of avoiding abandonment and teaching our students to build sustainable relationships over time. We do not forget to mention Bori Fehér, who also attended and left her mark on the event but could not contribute to this supplement for personal reasons.

These writings navigate between reflection and the sensitivity that at the same time is required and gained when we participate in this kind of educational experience of social design with students, who, as teachers and researchers, are our raison d'être.

Biography Cecilia Casas-Romero

Cecilia Casas holds a degree in Law (UNED) and an MA in Sociology of Public and Social Policies (Unizar). She teaches Photography and Social Design at the Escuela Superior de Diseño de Aragón (ESDA). She coordinates ESDA's DESIS Lab, which develops a sui generis programme involving more than a third of ESDA’s teachers. Together with the ESDA DESIS Lab Core Team, she organises ESDA DESIS SOCIAL DESIGN Days, which bring together leading figures in social design education worldwide. Her ongoing PhD deals with defining a model for educational institutions to teach social design to create a healthy work environment. She applies the social uses of artistic photography and the photovoice methodology to her work with disadvantaged communities. ccasas@esda.es, esdadesislab@esda.es

A double shift: Design for a new kind of social innovation

Ezio Manzini

The objective of this conference was significant and timely: "*Achieving social justice and improving the lives of those who have been less fortunate*" (III ESDA DESIS Social Design Days, Program 2024) is the most critical topic to be discussed today. In this short introductory note, I would like to articulate this statement concerning design for social innovation.

1. The concept and practices of design for social innovation slowly emerged about 15–20 years ago. In that period, two independent but interrelated events occurred: Design began to be recognized as an activity applicable to physical artefacts and systems of relationships (services, communication and all kinds of interactions). And an unprecedented wave of social innovation appeared: Groups decided to break their isolation and collaborate. By doing so, they could obtain valid results for themselves, their community, society and the environment. After a while, someone in the design community recognized this phenomenon and its potential in the transition towards an ecological and just society.

This is how design for social innovation was born: Not a new design discipline but an orientation that all the design disciplines (services, communication, product, interior and environmental design) can adopt. An approach characterized by three main choices: (a) to look at people (also) as bearers of resources and capabilities; (b) to consider them (also) as nodes of collaborative social networks; (c) to recognize promising ways of thinking and acting that, in the complexity of the contemporary society, already exist. Those initiatives can be seen as concrete steps in our transition.

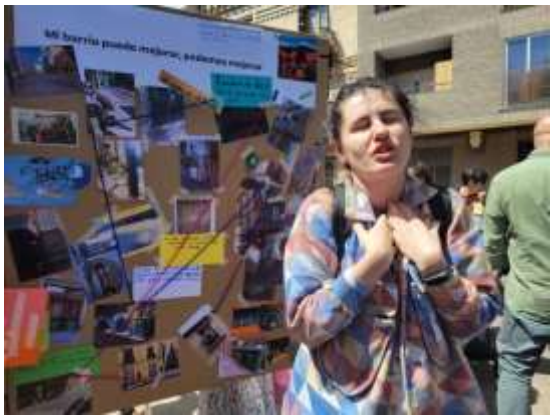
2. Today, 20 years later, this approach to design is recognized and practised everywhere in the world. In these same years, design for social innovation matured and evolved. Thus, it moved from the promotion of single promising initiatives to their systematization and convergence towards new broad common scenarios: new ideas of welfare (community welfare), new ideas of cities (the city of proximity) and a new relationship with the network of life of which we are part (social innovation and recognition of what is not human).

In these 20 years, however, the limits of this social innovation and the design that stimulated and supported it have also emerged. The first limit depends on the fact that social innovation requires time, energy and attention from those who practise it: the time, energy and attention necessary carefully (re) to build the social networks on which it is based. Experience tells us that these resources are not uniformly distributed: some are rich in them, and others are poor. The social innovation we know of was born and developed among those rich in these resources.

The second limit, connected to the first, is that the social innovation we have known so far was born and developed mainly among groups of people operating in modernized and globalized cities. That is, in what is, or instead has proclaimed itself to be, the centre of contemporary society.

3. Now, it is vital that both limits are overcome. That is, social innovation and design for social innovation need to involve those who, until now, have not had the opportunity to access these collaborative practices. And their field of action must be extended to those territories which,

up until now, have been considered the outskirts of the planetary metropolis. All this must be done not only because a large part of the planet's population lives there but also because, if we must look for new ways of doing and thinking, it is often from the periphery rather than from the centre that they can emerge.

Images 1 & 2: Workshop "Define your Quarter" in the main square of the deprived area of San Pablo in Zaragoza. Photos by Lucía Rodriguez (left) and Abril Oliva (right).

This double shift of the centre of our action (from those rich in time, energy and resources to those who are poor in these and from the centre to the peripheries) should characterize our future action.

This is what was discussed at this conference. And I hope this discussion will help prepare the ground for a new wave of social innovations: a social innovation capable this time of reaching everyone, everywhere.

Biography Ezio Manzini

For over three decades, he has been working in the field of design for sustainability. Most recently, his interests have focused on social innovation, a significant driver of sustainable change. From this perspective, he started DESIS, an international network of design schools active in the design field for social innovation and sustainability. He is President of the DESIS Network and Honorary Professor at the Politecnico di Milano. He has been a guest professor in several design schools worldwide (in the past decade): Elisava-Design School and Engineering (Barcelona), Tongji University (Shanghai), Jiangnan University (Wuxi), University of the Arts (London), CPUT (Cape Town) and Parsons -The New School for Design (NYC) http://www.desisnetwork.org, ezio.manzini@gmail.com

Workshop: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and design curricula

Nicos Souleles

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 global goals established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals address various challenges, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Each goal focuses on a different area, for example, ending poverty, ensuring clean water and sanitation, promoting gender equality, combating climate change and fostering economic growth and innovation. The SDGs are interconnected and require collective action to achieve a more sustainable and prosperous future.

The prevailing rhetoric in the related literature is that higher education (HE) has a unique and critical role in delivering the SDGs through several strategies, including education for sustainable development (ESD), employment for implementing the SDGs, capacity building and mobilising young learners, research on the SDGs, technological innovations, as well as through contributions to civic, societal and community-level initiatives. For many universities, the SDGs are essential to their stated missions.

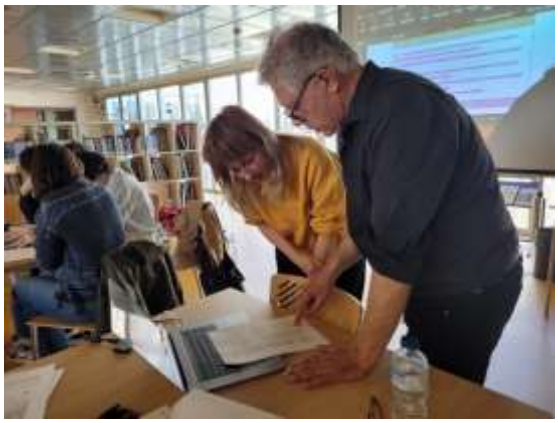
However, several studies have identified challenges in embedding SDGs in the multifaceted operations of universities. For example, there is often a lack of support from management, indifference among academics, no environmental committee to promote SDGs and no appropriate opportunities for personal and professional development for faculty members. In addition, few studies have examined pedagogical approaches that embed SDGs into education. From these limited studies, one can identify widespread and ongoing debates about the cross-curricular approach versus the development of stand-alone courses dealing with SDGs.

Specifically for design education, a recent report (*Design Economy – The Green Design Skills Gap*) by the Design Council (designcouncil.org.uk), based on feedback from a sample of 1,068 UK designers working across design disciplines in the United Kingdom, concluded that only 46% of designers are proficient or experts in 'design for planet skills'. In addition, fewer than 50% feel that their education has enabled them to design for environmental impact.

One way to address this skills gap among design educators is to acknowledge that the curricula of these disciplines can be updated, and this entails complementary training that reinforces the role of individuals in the face of social, economic, and environmental issues that advocate sustainable development. To this end, training faculty is a fundamental initiative to bring about this change in mentality and offer a process of training learners and developing the appropriate mindset and agency among them.

With all the above in mind, the opportunity to offer a workshop for design academics under the title 'Sustainable Development Goals and Design Curricula' during the III ESDA DESIS Social Design Days was a welcome invitation. Another contributing factor in accepting the invitation was the overall approach towards social design at ESDA (Escuela Superior de Diseño de Aragón), which is bottom-up and not top-down. Thus, design academics have

a sense of ownership towards social design initiatives, and the management has the foresight to allow these initiatives to flourish.

Images 1 & 2: Workshop for teachers on 'Sustainable Development Goals and Design Curricula' at ESDA´s library. Photos by Andrés Jarabo.

For this workshop to have some educational value, it was approached pragmatically and not through abstract declarations of the significance of incorporating SDGs in design curricula. The participants workshopped their study guides and project descriptions in small groups, and when appropriate, they introduced awareness of the SDGs and the instructional strategies that promote them. The workshop was an enriching exercise because, once again, the participants demonstrated their willingness to create a culture of shared responsibility for social design in their remarkable design institution. Lifelong learning is an attitude.

Biography Nicos Souleles
Dr Nicos Souleles has held educational and administrative positions at universities in Australia, England, the United Arab Emirates and Cyprus. He has expertise in learning design, curriculum development, technology-enhanced learning, quality assurance, accreditation processes and integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into higher education curricula. His research interests encompass educational research, technology-enhanced learning in design, design education, learning design and design for social change. He coordinates the research lab Art + Design: learning lab - Design for social change. The lab has undertaken funded European projects in digital upskilling and multiliteracies, curriculum development for the Third Sector, cultural and arts entrepreneurship for marginalized women and sustainable assessments. He is co-editor-in-chief of DISCERN, the International Journal of Design for Social Change, Sustainable Innovation and Entrepreneurship.
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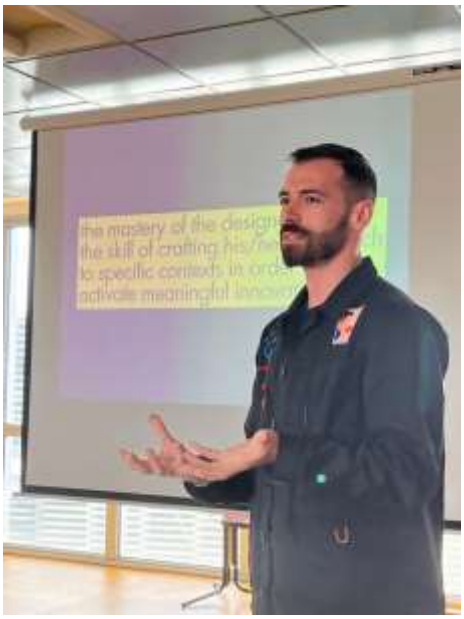
Co-designing Social Change – Reviewing some methods and tools

Lorraine Gamman & Francesco Mazzarella

Introduction

This short paper came about when engaging with Cecilia Casas, who asked us and Dr Yanki Lee to share co-design methods and tools at the ESDA (Escuela Superior de Diseño de Aragón) DESIS Social Design Days III (Zaragoza, March 2024) (Images 1 and 2). We were asked to discuss the involvement of participants in equitable co-creation and reflect on how best to manage the relationship between what Manzini (2015) calls 'expert designers' (those who are design trained) and what he calls 'diffuse designers' (those who are not trained in design yet play a crucial role in delivering democratic design solutions).

Manzini (2015) suggests designers should be 'facilitators', 'mediators' and 'catalysts' in the context of design for social innovation, but his work also recognizes that 'context is everything'. Drawing on our experience of social innovation projects with prisoners (Gamman & Caulfield, 2023) and refugees (Morgado and Mazzarella, 2024), we were aware that not all approaches to co-design can be automatically transferable to different political and geographic landscapes. We found it tricky to translate our UK-based approach for a workshop in a Spanish context, but a helpful dialogue developed with colleagues from ESDA, as follows.



Images 1 & 2: Lorraine Gamman and Francesco Mazzarella while introducing the workshop "Sharing Co-Creation Methods and Tools for Social Design". Photos by Lucía Rodríguez.

The designer's role

Design for social innovation is based on a paradigm shift, from designing *for* users towards designing *with* "experts by experience". Co-design refers to the creativity of designers and people not trained in design, working together in a social innovation or design development process, and has been going on since the 1970s (Ehn, 2017). Some contexts work well for co-design, but not all situations easily benefit or lend themselves to a collaborative design

process. Hence, the first discussion item was about how best to understand the context of engagement and decide whether to engage and question how to do so.

Von Bush and Palmas (2023) point out how the ideals of participation, empowerment and collaboration that underpin co-design intentions for democratic engagement can be corrupted by power, politics and market forces. Thus, the integrity of collaborative engagement and what it can deliver needs careful design. They argue that power relations are always around the participation table, some hidden and some in plain sight. Power can negatively impact the relationships between all collaborators involved in co-design if roles, values, and goals are not adequately clarified beyond lip service. So, when co-designing, all participants must carefully review how equitable and respectful engagement can work. We also need to inform ourselves about how to avoid hidden agendas that seek to manipulate participants, preventing participation from becoming tokenized rather than genuine.

Design framework

Francesco presented the 'Crafting Situated Services' methodological framework (Mazzarella et al., 2021), which equips the designer with cultural sensitivity when entering communities, making sense of sustainable futures, facilitating co-creation processes, and activating legacies towards community resilience and social innovation. This framework presents diverse roles (i.e. cultural insider, storyteller, sense maker, facilitator and activist) that a designer might play throughout a social innovation journey. The framework also presents a range of methods and tools that can be adopted/adapted to co-design meaningful social innovation with communities.

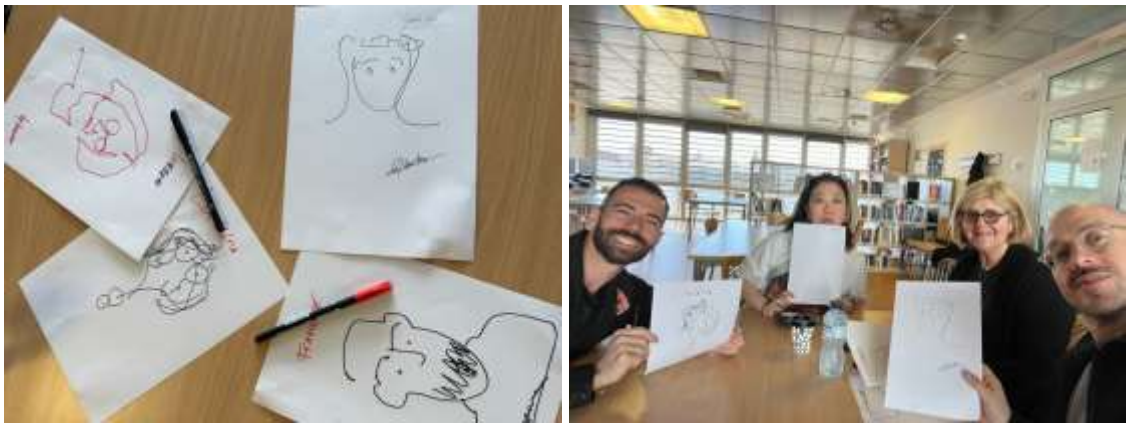
The workshop shared and discussed many tools: design ethnography, story-listening and storytelling, contextual interview cards, sensemaking, "what if?" approaches, future trend cards, stakeholder maps, storyboards, social business model canvas, action plans and more. The presentation inspired some ESDA colleagues to share additional techniques. For example, one workshop participant shared her experience of a project bringing together students and young/minor offenders, in which the students wrote a letter to their collaborator before engaging with them and received responses to inform the co-design process. Another participant discussed photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) as a method used in ethnographic research, consisting of giving cameras to people for them to capture the world through their own eyes. Our discussion raised many ethical issues and themes about techniques and "best practice".

Ice-breaking to foster co-creation

Breaking the ice of unfamiliarity or social discomfort helps people feel more relaxed when engaging with each other, but the process needs to be carefully designed and facilitated. How to foster dialogue or playful interaction between people, especially when working with marginalised and vulnerable groups, also needs thoughtful design facilitation.

We discussed our experience of routinely using ice-breaking exercises that can relieve some of the tensions in the room and overcome social barriers through activities such as games or light conversations. These tactics foster communication, build relationships and set a friendly and open tone for engagement. We use various ice-breaking techniques, including "body storming", "drawing without looking down" and many others.

To start the workshop discussed here, we used the drawing exercise. We gave each participant a blank sheet of paper and a pen and asked them to choose a partner and spend 1–2 minutes drawing each other. As facilitators, we instructed everyone to place the paper in front of them and prepare to draw their partner; however, they could not look at their paper while drawing but simply look at the person in front of them. The drawings that emerged from our session (see Images 3 and 4) showed that everyone can make marks and laugh. Unexpected results served as a wonderful way to spark conversations, break down barriers and enable us to start the workshop with a light-hearted tone. Each partner also wrote the person's name on their drawing and taped it to the wall to help us remember each other's names.



Images 3 & 4: Results of the drawing exercise used as an icebreaker.
Photos by Lucía Rodriguez.

Ethical engagement

Co-design projects often bring together students and diverse communities, including vulnerable people. Universities develop ethical protocols to prompt staff to consider potential risks for researchers and participants. Clear information about ethical processes and the rights of all participants must be addressed before co-design commences, including issues already raised and many others about consent, data use and withdrawal of participants from a project, etc.

The roles of facilitators and students in the process need clear and respectful discussion and agreement before projects commence. Our workshop highlighted the need to develop and adopt a framework of "ethics of care" (Gilligan, 1982) to collaborate with trauma-informed professionals who can deal with complex issues and promote engagement with professional counselling services both for participants and design researchers. The workshop highlighted the importance of acknowledging the positionality of all involved in such processes and the need to challenge one's privilege and prejudice.

We agreed on the importance of involving representative stakeholders in early dialogue and doing our best to ensure that those from marginalized groups can take part and access information. This might mean translating materials using plain language or providing assistive or visual technologies. Such projects also require "credible messengers" (Weber, 2022), i.e., people who have lived experience of different issues (for example, criminal justice

or immigration issues) in the design/research team, to bridge connections between people. Credible messengers offer an extra built-in reminder to acknowledge intersectionality, diversity and differences and creatively build trust among groups.

The case for empathy and active listening

In co-design projects aimed at social change, empathy is essential in understanding and sharing another person's feelings. Putting oneself in someone else's shoes (Krznaric, 2007) can make a difference. Recognizing and appreciating another person's emotions, experiences and perspectives often provokes a desire to help or support them (Gamman & Thorpe, 2015). However, market-led designers for over a century have used empathy to sell us things, so what we mean by empathy and how it correlates with inclusionary experiences of co-design needs definition.

Our discussion highlighted that empathy could feel patronizing if implicit feelings of perceived superiority, oversimplification or insincerity inform the process. Moreover, while understanding another person's world is essential, how that understanding is gained and facilitated needs thoughtful planning to design patronage and build equity of contact between all participants.

Active listening is crucial in such co-design processes because total concentration regarding what the speaker is saying enables the listener to grasp the content and emotional impact better. Rogers and Farson (1957) offer a process to ensure that active listening happens, pointing out that "seeking first to understand, then to be understood", reduces misunderstandings. When people feel fully heard and understood, trust and empathy develop between them. In our view, active listening and working directly with people in a context where equitable dialogue/respectful terms and conditions have been established is the best way to foster empathy and trust.

Conclusion

This short paper reflects on creative tools and methods to support co-designing for social change and democratizing design for social innovation. Overall, co-design has much in common with participatory action research (PAR), the dialogical processes of Paulo Freire (1970) and other design theorists. For over 50 years, PAR and co-design have sought to humanize research by challenging subject/object relations. We and our colleagues believe it can drive change and social justice by including those with lived experience/experiential knowledge of systems in transforming them.

Biography Lorraine Gamman

Dr Lorraine Gamman is Professor of Design at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London and Director of the Design Against Crime (DAC) Research Lab, founded in 1999 and supported by many stakeholders, including the UK's Design Council and Home Office. Gamman has delivered numerous research projects funded by the AHRC, EPSRC and the EU, among other funders, and works with artists, designers, policymakers, crime prevention practitioners, communities and prisons to deliver design education and research. She serves on several charities, including the Empathy Museum and UK's National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance (NCJAA), and is the author of many books, journal articles and reports.

Biography Francesco Mazzarella

Dr Francesco Mazzarella is a design researcher, educator and activist, striving to plant seeds

of hope and change, especially working with marginalized communities. He is Reader in Design for Social Change at the London College of Fashion, UAL. Francesco's research spans the fields of design activism, decolonizing fashion, textile craftsmanship, design for sustainability, social innovation and place-making. Francesco is a member of the Design Council Expert Network, a Fellow of Advance HE and Co-founder of the DESIS Cluster on 'Design from the Margins' and the Cumulus Working Group on 'Design Education for Social Change'.

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“Let’s Design AS the Others!” Exploring new social design practice for our inclusive future

Yanki Lee

If you are new to the field and you googled the term “social design”, Victor Papanek and Victor Margolin are two significant figures in the history of this field, promoting human-centred production (“Social Design”, 2024). Thus, in 1999, the Design Academy Eindhoven was transformed from a Dutch industrial design school into an international interdisciplinary design academy and began offering the first MA programme in Social Design. According to the Wikipedia entry on Social Design (2024), Boelen and Kaethler (2020) reflected this new definition as “[a] [new] materialist reading of social design, on one hand, complexifies the design process and on the other offers insight into meaningful forms of engagement” (p. 15).

The positionality of social design practice

Aligned with the New Materialist Model of social design, which seeks to break down any distinction between design society and argues that all designs are social, design researchers such as Sanders and Stappers (2014) referred to three types of relationship between designers and people, which they also mapped with the following timeline:

1984 – Design for people
2014 – Design with people
2044 – Design by people

This timeline also reflected my journey from an architectural designer to a design researcher: inclusive/universal design to participatory design to design research. My journey started in London in 2000, where I was a research fellow on Inclusive Design at the Royal College of Art (RCA). There, I ran an education programme to research and teach students how to design for people. This work focused on marginalized end users, those excluded by design at that time in the UK, i.e. older and disabled people. Along with my doctoral research, I was active within participatory design communities in the Scandinavian countries. Here, a solid political agenda favours design, with people working with citizens to fight for social justice and equality. In 2012, after a decade working in design and ageing/disability, I spent a year as a post-doctoral scholar at Tsinghua University, Beijing, where I worked with a naturally occurring retirement community (NORC). During this time, I collaborated with retired scientific professors in this group; they confirmed my questions on design practices for and with people and reinforced my ambition to advance and advocate the practice of design by people. I titled the study the “Ingenuity of Ageing” and used it to share insights into how we can enable ingenious older people to design by themselves for their ageing communities. Through this, we can be inspired by their ingenious solutions for our future ageing.

As an educator, I articulated and shared my experience with my students, providing a framework for them to reflect on their position. The aim was to enable them to become socially responsive designers. Instead of linear development, I encouraged my students or new practitioners to develop a broader understanding of different social design practices and critically apply them to different situations.

Design AS the others

In our rapidly changing world, I believe all practices should be situational and evolving, responding to needs. I started to explore new design practices, as I did with others when

I investigated how to evolve my practice from human-centred to more-than-human-centred design. This immersive practice also helps me rethink my human position and explore the otherness in design. As it was defined, “Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group (“Us,” the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“Them,” Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination” (Staszak, 2009, p. 2).


Images 1 & 2: Workshop for teachers in which Yanki Lee explains and displays tools to design AS others. Photos by Andrés Jarabo (left) and Cecilia Casas (right).

We applied this practice to our latest experiment, ‘Objects’ Talk: Empathic Ecologies Education Project’, a two-year funded project for us to work with 500+ youths exploring ways to work with non-human (living or non-living objects) and a way to immerse ourselves in those objects’ world (Lee, 2024). Alongside this work, since 2015, we have designed empathic tools enabling citizens to immerse themselves in the dementia world. This is essential to understand the disease and co-create new cultures where people can accept people with dementia and support their caregivers.

Biography Yanki Lee

Professor Yanki Lee is a global citizen who researches and teaches between Hong Kong, London, Växjö and Kolding. As a design activist with an architectural design background and the founder of Enable Foundation, a social design collective and education charity, Yanki co-designs things and exhibitions as co-creative tools that unlock wicked social problems through empathic design practice. Since her doctoral design research on inclusive and participatory design practice (2003-2007), she started self-reflective discussions about human-centred design practice, and now the discussion is extended from human to non-human and expanded to “design for/with people” or even “design as the others”.
www.yankilee.com, www.enable.org.hk

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Reflections on teaching and learning for social design

Susan Melsop

On the afternoon of March 11, 2024, the spacious lobby of ESDA (Escuela Superior de Diseño de Aragón) was transformed into an exhibition hall as students, faculty, administrators, staff and guests filled the space for the III ESDA DESIS Social Design Days. On display in the atrium were posters, short videos, visual stories and design objects created by ESDA design students; these described their experiential learning with and in communities. Excitement about social design was palpable as design students presented their projects and described the communities in which they worked in mutually reciprocal ways. As an international visitor, a scholar of community-engaged design and a participant in the Social Design Days, The students demonstrated an educational foundation of social design praxis that emphasizes people, place and *potential* –rather than problems.

The ESDA students articulated social challenges, their processes for engagement and the impact of their – often collaborative – design work. This type of experiential coursework can create transformative learning experiences for aspiring designers. It can unite learners in collective, creative efforts toward critical causes and perhaps lead to an activist mindset. What students learn, the knowledge they glean, the skillsets they acquire and the curiosity and care they develop will affect and impact our collective capacities to empathize, adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world. In this regard, the role and responsibilities of an educator are paramount in driving this type of growth, transformation and adaptation. Educators can foster an evolution in consciousness and create opportunities for students to develop an ontology of care (Escobar, 2018) and a mindset toward radical relatedness (Gablik, 1992).

Images 1 & 2: Susan Melsop and Bori Fehér during the students' exhibition of their last term's works on social design. Photos by Lucía Rodriguez (left) and Pablo Calvo (right).

Indeed, what I witnessed from this exuberant display of students reflecting on their creative responses to community-based issues is foundational for the praxis of social design. This education can raise critical consciousness, ignite compassion for others and elevate collective creativity toward social justice. Paulo Freire reminds us, "…love is an act of courage, not fear, love is a commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, love is a commitment to their cause–the cause of liberation" (Freire, 2000). In this context, the focus on how students learn resonates with the principle that education should impart knowledge and cultivate awareness and empathy. By emphasizing the development of curiosity and care, educators can guide students toward a deeper understanding of their role as citizen designers,

integral to transformative experiences in social design. This approach aligns with Escobar's notion of an ontology of care, as it encourages students to engage thoughtfully with communities, considering the implications of their design choices. Similarly, Gablik's concept of radical relatedness highlights the importance of interconnectedness, urging students to recognize their responsibilities within a broader social context.

Thus, educators can play a pivotal role in nurturing these transformative experiences, encouraging students to reflect on the development of their consciousness and embrace a mindset that prioritizes collaboration and social impact. This holistic approach prepares students to adapt and thrive and empowers them to contribute meaningfully to their communities in an ever-changing world.

Biography Susan Melsop

Susan Melsop is Associate Professor of Design at Ohio State University. Her body of research weaves place-based design–build pedagogy with eco-social justice issues. She is Co-Director of the DESIS Lab, Design for Social Innovation & Sustainability and recently served as a Faculty Fellow for Arts & Design Engagement at OSU. Her recent work, "Design Matters in Brazil", addresses human rights issues through design–build activities with the PopRua (National Movement for the Street Situation) as community partners. Her postgraduate studies in East Asian philosophies and Buddhism inform her approaches to engaged scholarship, contemplative pedagogy, and collaborative creative place-making.

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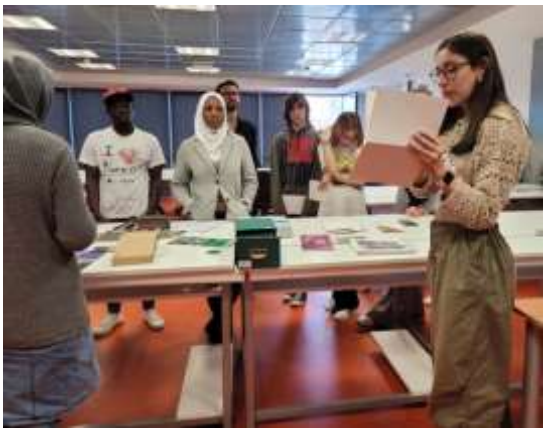
Teaching how to finish a project process in social design

Canan Akoglu

In design education, especially when addressing social issues, students work closely with communities facing vulnerability, such as loneliness, illness or forced migration. These projects are not just academic exercises; they involve real human connections and emotional investments. One of the most crucial aspects of social design education is teaching students to consider what happens to the relationships they build with citizens once the project ends. How do they prepare for their departure in a way that ensures that citizens are not left feeling abandoned? How do they ensure that the solutions developed can be sustained without their ongoing involvement?

As design educators, we must teach our students how to build meaningful, empathetic relationships, thoughtfully finish their project processes and manage their exit. By integrating strategies for long-term sustainability and relationship continuity into their learning, students can become responsible designers, leaving behind more than just completed projects—they will leave communities with more robust agency.

The first step in teaching students to manage these relationships is helping them understand the emotional and psychological dimensions of social design. Vulnerable topics such as loneliness, illness and forced migration touch deeply personal aspects of people's experiences. Citizens in these contexts often carry emotional wounds, and their interaction with the designer can be a source of hope or support. For students, entering this space requires great empathy and cultural sensitivity.



Images 1 & 2: On the left, a fashion design student from ESDA teaches a refugee from Venezuela how to use a sewing machine. On the right, a graphic design student shows her work to some refugees and classmates. Photos by Cecilia Casas.

We must encourage students to reflect on their roles as problem-solvers and as temporary participants in the lives of those they work with. By fostering this awareness, students will begin to see the long-term impact their departure can have on vulnerable citizens.

One of the most important lessons to teach students is the ethics of finishing a project process and leaving the context. As students complete their projects and prepare to move on, we must

teach them that their exit should be part of a thoughtful transition that ensures continuity and support for the citizens they have worked with.

This might be taught by embedding an exit strategy into every student project. We should ask the students to consider the following as part of their design proposals:

- Who will take over the project?
  Encouraging students to identify local leaders, community groups or partner organizations who can continue the work helps prevent projects from ending by only designing a good outcome. This could involve handing off responsibilities to local citizens who have been part of the design process or establishing partnerships with NGOs or government entities.

- How will the community sustain the solution?
  We need to teach our students to design solutions that the community can sustain after they leave. Whether providing resources, training or developing systems that empower citizens, students must ensure that their projects can be maintained long-term without their direct involvement.

- What emotional support structures are in place?
  When working on issues such as loneliness or illness, students should be mindful of the emotional impact of their departure. Teaching them to create support networks—such as peer groups, community-based services or connections to counsellors—ensures that citizens feel supported after the project ends.

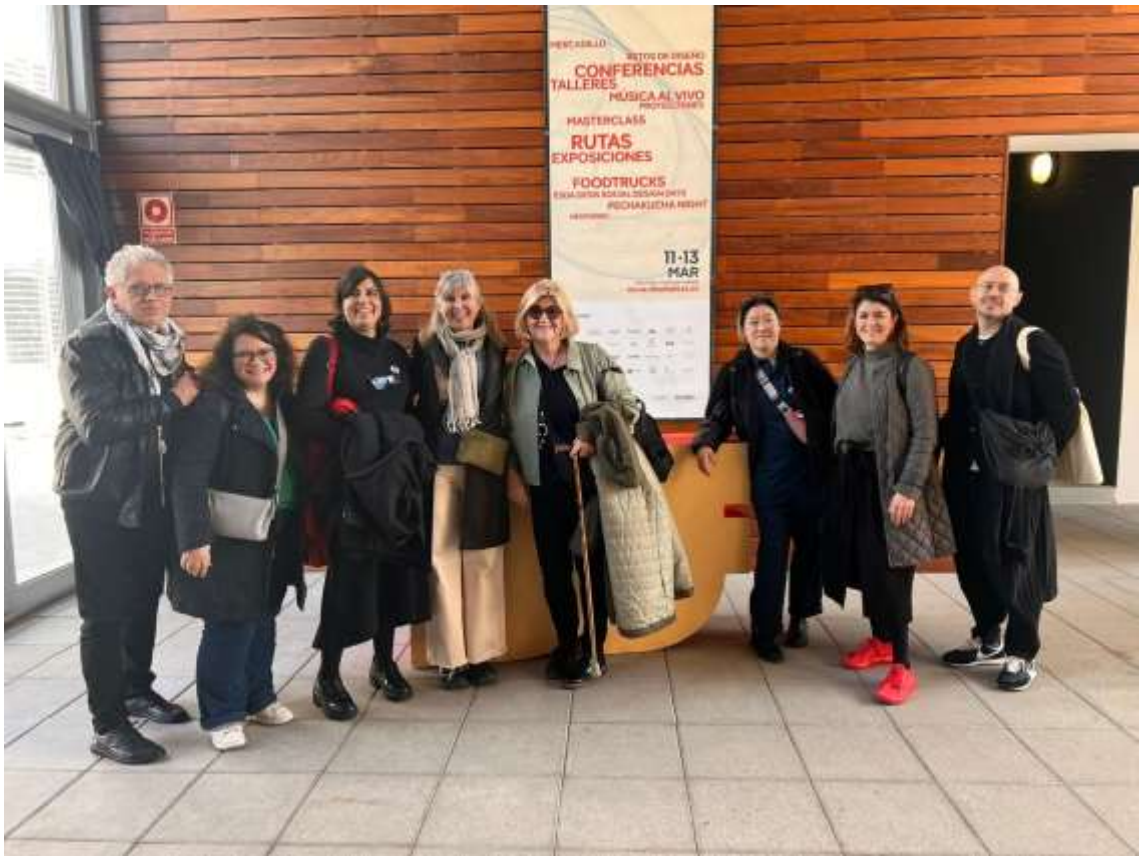
Reflection is a powerful tool in design education. We can encourage students to reflect on the relationships they build with citizens during social design projects. How did their presence impact the people they worked with? What challenges did they face in building trust? Most importantly, what will happen once they are no longer present?

By encouraging students to write reflective journals, engage in peer discussions or present case studies of their projects, we can help them critically engage with the dynamics of entering and leaving vulnerable contexts. Reflection helps students develop emotional intelligence and ethical responsibility, which are both essential in social design.

Social design is not only about solving problems but about creating sustainable change. This involves training students to consider the future trajectory of their projects and the well-being of the people they have worked with. Teaching students to manage relationships in social design, mainly when working on sensitive issues such as loneliness, illness or forced migration, requires a holistic approach. It is about building empathy, teaching ethical exit strategies, encouraging reflection and emphasizing sustainability. By equipping students with these skills, we can prepare them to become designers who create meaningful solutions and leave behind communities with more robust agency, capable of continuing the work long after the designer leaves the context.

Biography Canan Akoglu
Canan Akoglu is Associate Professor and Head of the Design for People Master's Programme

at Design School Kolding in Denmark. She also has a shared research leadership role in the Lab for Social Design at the same institution. Akoglu has a background in architecture and a PhD in industrial design from Istanbul Technical University. Her main research interests include stakeholder engagement, co-design, service design and social design in health, social care and well-being. Before her current position, Akoglu was co-founder of the Department of Industrial Design at Ozyegin University in Istanbul.



From left to right, Nicos Souleles, Canan Akoglu, Cecilia Casas-Romero, Susan Melsop, Lorraine Gamman, Yan Ki Lee, Bori Fehér and Alberto Franco. Francesco Mazzarella, the seventh participant, was not present when this photo was taken. Photo by Lucía Rodríguez. (11-12 March 2024)