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FROM THE EDITOR

There is a growing interest in the role that design can play in catalysing, harnessing, spreading and scaling social innovation around the world.

This is expressed in two key ways:

- By a growing number of professional designers and design disciplines applying their skills to addressing social issues; and
- By the adoption of design tools, techniques and methods by a growing number of other disciplines focussed on developing social innovation.

Perhaps the most recognisable facet of this interest has been the rise of 'design thinking' not only in business, but increasingly in public service and policy fields.

Fuelled by design agencies such as IDEO in the US, non-profit bodies such as the Design Council in the UK, and education institutions such as Stanford's 'd.school', design thinking has begun to be recognised as a key ingredient underpinning innovation (whether that be social innovation or not). Indeed, according to Sir George Cox, past chairman of the Design Council, design is what bridges creativity (the generation of new ideas) and innovation (the successful implementation of new ideas). In other words, design could be described as: "the human power to conceive, plan, and realize products that serve human beings in the accomplishment of any individual or collective purpose" (Richard Buchanan, 2001).

The purpose of this overview is to introduce readers to the enormous and growing range of work that links design and social innovation - it is merely a taste tester for a much larger feast of practice and analysis that is emerging around the world.

In it I have tried to incorporate a range of different perspectives – some that are embracing of design approaches and their potential to contribute to social

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GUEST EDITOR: Dr Ingrid Burkett

GUEST CONTRIBUTORS: Joanne Hutchinson and
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innovation, and others that are more critical, urging some caution in the use of such approaches.

In traversing a range of literature I have also drawn on the assistance of two practitioners and a design critic in the review process. I invited two guest reviewers (Joanne Hutchinson from the Social Innovation Branch in DEEWR, and Jacqueline Wechsler, a user-centred design consultant) to share with readers their thoughts about a design book or article that they have applied in their work. These reviews are important in the context of this literature review as the exploration of design in social innovation is not just an academic exercise, and despite some critical insights from academics in the works reviewed here, design is practical by its very nature. Both of the guest reviewers enthusiastically explore a book that they have used in their practice and I think these reviews in particular will inspire readers to seek out further literature exploring design and social innovation.

I also sought out a contribution from a recent design graduate, Vera Sacchetti, who, in her Masters thesis from the School of Visual Arts in New York, critically explored the emerging field of 'social design' in the US. Vera has kindly allowed me to include an excerpt from her insightful thesis to highlight some of the emerging tensions amidst the possibilities of social design.

Indeed, the application of design methods and approaches to social innovation has raised a number of important questions, many of which are taken up to some extent in the articles and books reviewed here:

- Can the addition of design methods, design thinking or design techniques really enhance social innovation or help us to develop more impactful social services?
- What is it about design approaches that has the potential for significant changes in the way we approach social innovation?
- Can anyone apply design approaches to the arena of social innovation or does it require the involvement of professional designers?
- Do designers have an adequate grounding in social sciences and the history of social intervention to be able to apply their skills to addressing social issues?

I personally believe that the growing interest in the application of design methods to social innovation is very exciting – for two key reasons.

First is the potential of design to fundamentally alter the way public services and civil society engage with citizens and to bring the 'users' (aka 'clients', 'consumers', 'constituents') back into the centre of how we imagine and implement services in the social sector. Second, the methods of design start from action and then refine and learn from this action (referred to as 'prototyping' in the design field). This is exciting because for too long we have been flipping between two poles in the social policy and community services area.

One pole is defined by an unhealthy obsession with strategy and planning (exemplified in but not limited to logframe analysis) prior to any action occurring. The other is focussed on political reactionism projects can be funded because are politically expedient. Without drawing on any previous learning such projects must often be 'delivered' or at least funds expended in very short time frames that everyone knows will not lead to any significant or long-term changes.

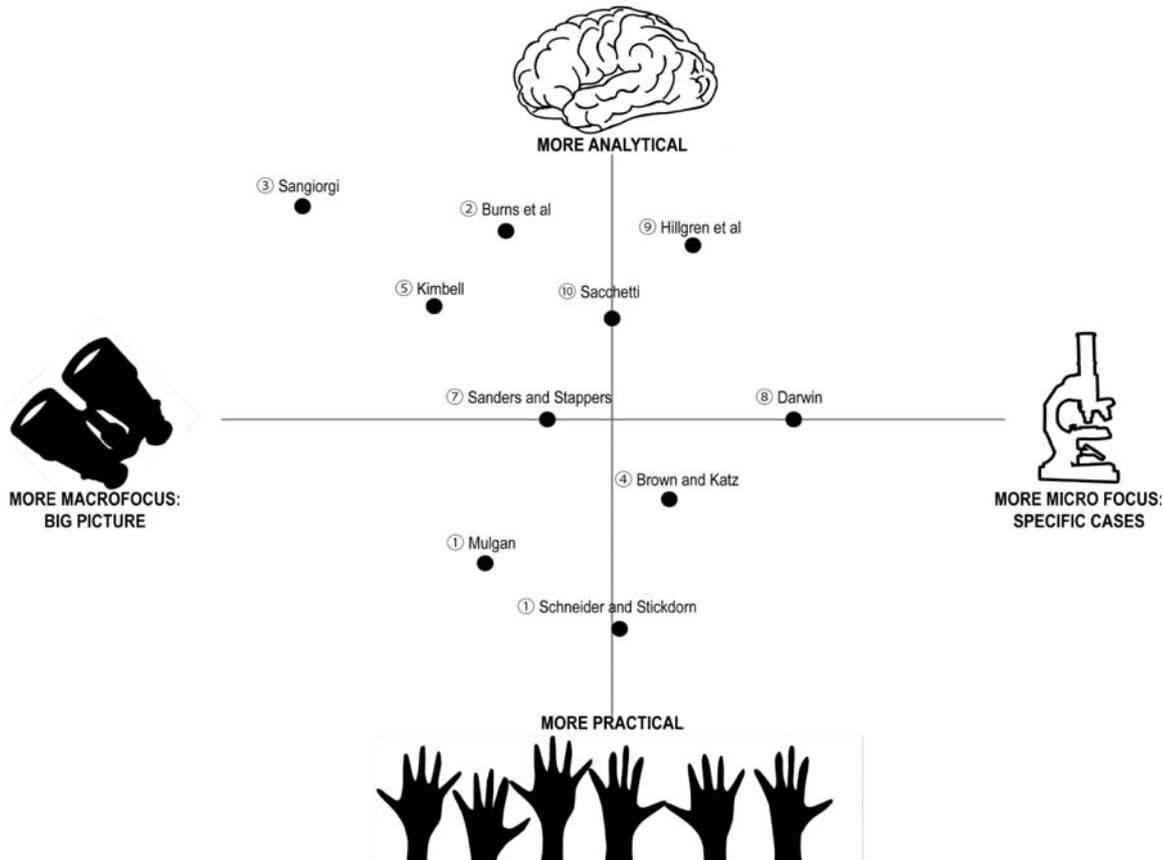
So, conversations which begin with 'users' and focus on action learning represent some of the most refreshing and innovative conversations I've heard happening in this sector for a long time. A starting point of design is also bringing into the dialogue a rich diversity of disciplines and a cross-sector flavour which opens up the possibilities for enacting real change in relation to some of our most pressing social issues. In the social sector we are no longer merely talking amongst ourselves and this has got to be a good thing!

Finally, I have tried to present a balanced picture of the possibilities and the critiques of applying design methods to social innovation. At times I have possibly swung too far into the critical literature. However I urge readers not to be discouraged by some of the critical thinking presented here. Indeed I believe that if design is truly to find a place and have an influence in the way we approach social innovation then we need both to enthusiastically embrace its potential and energetically critique its application.

If there's anything I've learnt over the 20 years that I've been working in the social sector, it's that we should be very wary of simplistic answers and silver

bullets. Design approaches, design thinking and design disciplines do not provide panaceas for solving social ills. What they have the potential to add to the mix, however, is something that takes us out of the dominant paradigm of strategic planning, logframes and politically-driven project agendas into a landscape that helps us think and act on ways in which real change is not only possible but can be turned into reality.

To help readers I have mapped the articles reviewed in this edition of Knowledge Connect on a matrix (illustrated here):



that gives a sense of whether they are more analytical, or more practical, and whether they are grounded in specific case studies or present a big-picture perspective on design and social innovation.

I would also recommend to readers that they explore the many agencies, organisations, practitioners and networks operating in this space, many of which are outlined in a map at the end of the review.

I should also point out that there is a broader annotated bibliography exploring design and the social sector that has been produced by Courtney Drake and William Drenttel from Yale University’s School of Management should readers be interested in exploring further literature, which is available at:

<http://changeobserver.designobserver.com/feature/design-and-the-social-sector-an-annotated-bibliography/30158/>).

Finally, for an excellent primer on social innovation that makes substantial links to the role of design, I would recommend the ‘Open Book of Social Innovation’ (published by NESTA and the Young Foundation in the UK, published in 2010 and available at: www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/Social_Innovator_020310.pdf).

Dr Ingrid Burkett

Guest Editor, Knowledge Connect

1. PUBLIC SERVICES AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

In Improving Public Services And Social Innovation The Design World Has Vital Insights To Offer, by Geoff Mulgan, CEO of NESTA; British Politics and Policy on the LSE blog: blogs.lse.ac.uk.

Geoff Mulgan, CEO of NESTA (National Endowment of Science Technology and the Arts), and Visiting Professor at a number of universities including the University of Melbourne, offers a very useful framework for assessing the contribution of design towards furthering social innovation. He argues that the enthusiasm for applying design methods to help advance social innovation has many strengths, however it should be tempered with a recognition that designers cannot offer silver bullets to complex social issues, and that there are some challenges ahead if design is to realise its potential in fostering social innovation.

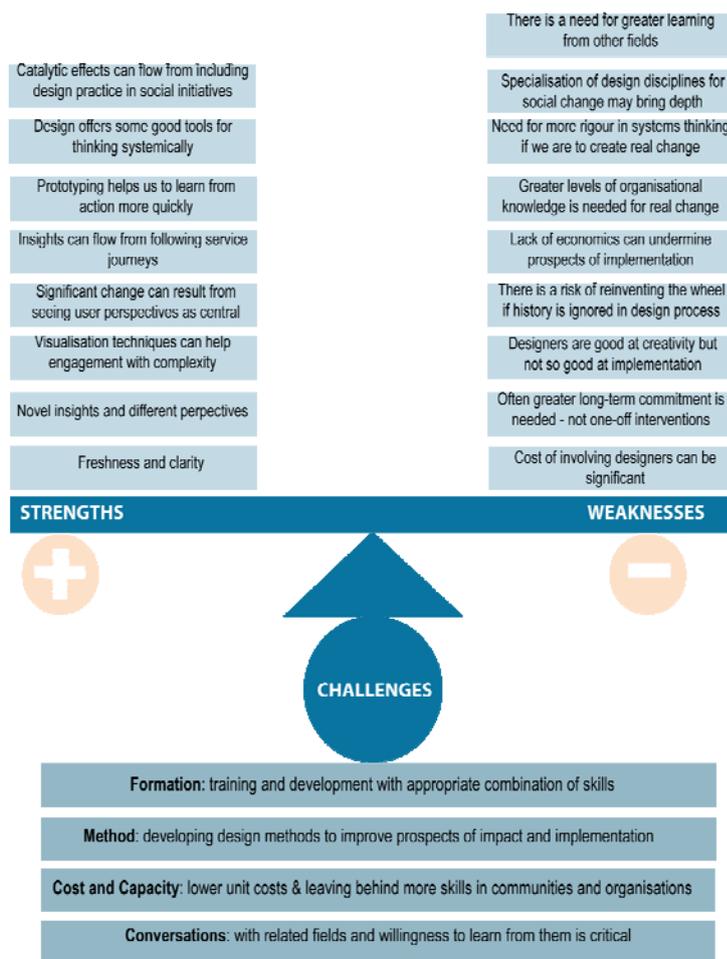
Although this is a blog posting rather than a formal article, it has sparked much debate and discussion and has been referenced in many of the articles included here. For this reason I have included a diagram below outlining Mulgan’s framework, which explores the strengths, weaknesses and challenges of involving design in social innovation as a way to help shape this review of recent literature.

What I think it helps to highlight is that we should engage and celebrate the many strengths design practice has to offer social innovation, AND we should recognise its limitations and the challenges ahead in applying design methods more broadly in the social sector. I have constructed the diagram as a see-saw - it’s easy to tip it too far in either direction (either over-enthusiasm for its strengths, or dismissing it for its weaknesses), and much rests on how we address the challenges over coming years.

2. TRANSFORMATION DESIGN

by Burns, C., Cottam, H., Vanstone, C. and Winhall, J. Design Council UK, London, 2006.

Transformation Design is an oft-cited publication that is credited with laying some foundations for linkages between design and social innovation. It is included



here for this reason – whilst not new, it has certainly been influential as design approaches are increasingly applied to social innovation.

The publication comes out of the RED project that was initiated by the Design Council, UK and operated between 2004 and 2006 to “tackle social and economic issues through design-led innovation” (this project led on to the establishment of Participle (www.participle.net/) in the UK which has taken forward many of these ideas into practice).

In this paper the authors share a call to action for the creation of a new design discipline that applies design skills to social and economic issues; that fosters interdisciplinary collaboration; proposes practical solutions; and adopts a ‘user-centred approach’. They refer to this new discipline as ‘Transformation Design’, meaning that they are interested in how design can help to create fundamental changes and social transformations rather than merely moving the pieces around on the same chessboard.

The authors trace the evolution of ‘user-centred design’, arguing that there has been a fundamental shift away from a paradigm of the ‘master designer’ to a

position where the needs and experience of the 'end-user' of the product or service are seen as central to the design process. In the twenty-first century, the nature and scope of design has altered significantly in terms of *where* design skills are applied (opening up more holistic approaches that focus not only on products but also on interaction, experience and service design), and *who* is doing the designing (so that it is no longer the designer responding to a brief and designing 'for' the user, but the users themselves taking on or actively participating in the design process).

'Users' are therefore no longer seen as merely recipients of the design process, but rather, are experts in their own right, and have both the capacity and right to participate in the design of services, experiences, products and interactions that they will ultimately consume or engage with. Indeed the twenty-first century thus far has been characterised by a 'user-revolution' whereby ordinary people with real-world experience (so called 'expert users') have taken the design of products, services and processes into their own hands, often minus the expert designers (think here of the many user-led initiatives the internet has sparked over the last decade).

This is particularly relevant in reflecting on use of design in social innovation, as what it reminds us, is that the 'users' of these innovations are critical not only at the end (i.e. as 'end-users') but as intimately engaged with the whole process.

The authors take readers through a number of case studies of how design could be applied to social issues, from 'Diabetes Agenda Cards', co-designed cards that changed the nature of interactions between medical staff and people with diabetes (see: <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/case-studies/diabetes-management/the-first-idea/>), to an examples of co-design processes in rural community transport and the design of health services.

Together the case studies provide the basis for discerning core skills of a 'user-centred approach':

- **Looking from the point of view of the user:** understanding the world of the user of products and services and seeing things from their perspective, which can help to generate insights into how things could change and it can thus form the basis of collaborative action;
- **Making things visible:** making sense of complex information through the use of visual frameworks, which can create a common platform for discussing alternatives and make sense of opportunities and resources;

- **Prototyping:** trying solutions out and getting feedback in situ and with the users to test out possibilities for creating transformative changes.

From my perspective the case studies used and the analysis of this 'user-centred approach' could have been developed further in the paper, and perhaps the engagement of users could have been more radical still.

This is where I think there is much scope for joining up design approaches with methodologies such as community development, which are focussed on the 'how' of participatory process.

The authors draw together the learnings in the case studies and suggest that they demonstrate six key characteristics:

1. **Defining and redefining the brief:** an important part of transformation design lies in defining the problem. So, rather than responding to a brief that outlines the problem to be solved by designers, such approaches start 'upstream' with problem definition, and the brief may indeed go through several iterative phases as the work uncovers the layers of complex problems;
2. **Collaborating between disciplines:** recognising that complex issues require multiple perspectives, in transformation design "the designers are not always 'designers'", and teams are often interdisciplinary;
3. **Employing participatory design techniques:** the design process is not purely 'top-down', it is equally bottom-up, inside-out and outside-in, involving front-line workers, clients and constituents in co-design processes;
4. **Building capacity, not dependency:** acknowledging that design is an ongoing process, and so transformation design involves not just a single design event, but ensures that skills and capacities are left behind so that people can keep on designing and innovating into the future;
5. **Designing beyond traditional solutions:** such approaches require systems thinking and holistic responses, that can result in "non-traditional design outputs" (outputs that are not necessarily products or services);
6. **Creating fundamental change:** transformation involves fundamental change in a situation, and therefore requires proactive design approaches that "aim high", are radical and seek to create progressive, human-centred design solutions.

The new discipline of transformation design has not necessarily taken off in the way in which the authors envisioned (at least not under this title).

Some practitioners have suggested that this is because it is “too hard to formulate into a practical discipline (for now at least)” (Joe Heapy, Engine, UK, cited in Meroni and Sangiorgi, 2011; p.232). However, some of the core characteristics outlined here have found their way into the heart of other ‘new’ design disciplines such as service design (design focussed on the “application of established design process and skills to the development of services” (Live|Work, www.livework.co.uk/).

The full paper is available for download here: <http://www.designcouncil.info/RED/publications/>

interpretation of the potentials of transformation design and transformative services.

It takes as its starting point the application of transformation design to building services that can support the emergence of collaborative, sustainable and creative societies – whether they be public or community services, or services of private companies.

Sangiorgi sees services as “engines for wider societal transformations” and enablers of “society-driven innovation”.

She is interested in the application of a transformation framework to service design, and in particular, in the potential for building:

- **Collaborative service models** (where ‘ordinary people’ come together to solve daily life problems, for example in areas of housing, food, ageing, transport and work);
- **Models of co-creation and co-production** (where users participate alongside professionals and frontline staff in designing and delivering services).

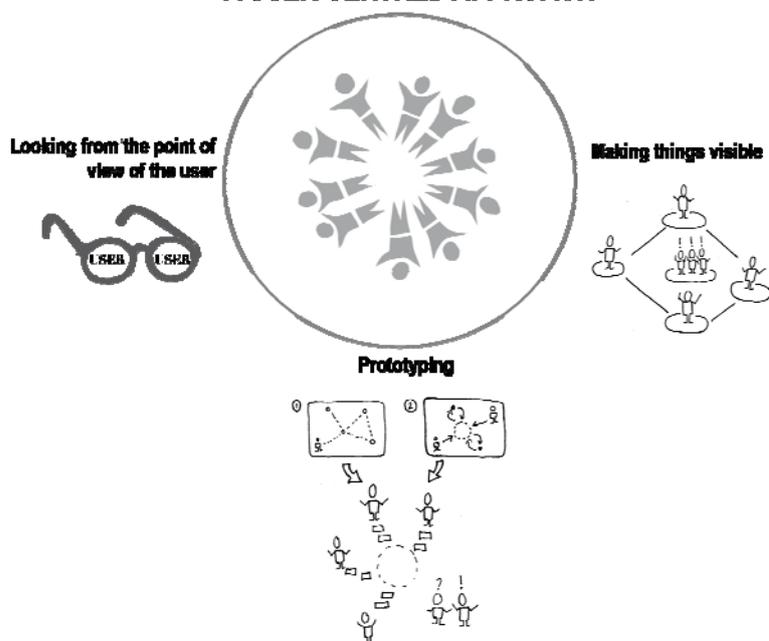
What is interesting about this article is the challenge that Sangiorgi puts out to designers seeking to enter the worlds of organisational development and social change. She argues that: “Design literature is generally characterised by a highly positive rhetoric on the role and impact of design in society, while a more critical approach is becoming increasingly necessary” (p. 37)

Sangiorgi warns against approaches that give too much sway to singular design interventions, arguing that transformation and radical change requires more fundamental shifts over time to underpin imagining and creating new systems and service models and introducing collaborative cultures.

She proposes that designers engage with, adopt and adapt principles and practices from organisational development and community action research into service design. To this end Sangiorgi introduces seven key principles that could draw together transformative practices across the disciplines of design, organisational development and community action research.

1. **Active Citizens:** transforming services requires the active participation of citizen users, who become designers and producers working in partnership with professionals;
2. **Intervention at Community Scale:** using community centred approaches and community-based solutions, so that communities become the

A USER-CENTRED APPROACH



3. TRANSFORMATIVE SERVICES AND DESIGN

by Sangiorgi, D. (2011), vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 29-40

Fast-forward from the RED paper to a more recent article written by Daniela Sangiorgi, a lecturer in Service Design and Service Innovation from Imagination Lancaster (see www.imagination.lancs.ac.uk).

This is a more academic view of transformation design, but in many ways it is also more radical in its

site for interventions if the focus is large-scale, transformative change;

3. **Building Capacities and Project Partnerships:** recognising that for transformation to be sustainable requires the building of trust, on-going dialogues and the creation of a culture of participation. This requires involving people as partners in the change process and continuous reciprocal learning cycles;
4. **Redistributing Power:** understanding that participation in a design process requires a redistribution of power in relation to decisions, directions and production;
5. **Building Infrastructure and Enabling Platforms:** recognising that participation doesn't just happen automatically because we want it to! Both the design process and the outcomes need to consider how participation can be enabled – what the structures and the platforms are that will support participation and help to maintain and develop it over time.
6. **Enhancing Imagination and Hope:** enhancing a capacity to imagine possibilities, building new shared visions and designing ways to work towards these visions is fundamental to transformation design;
7. **Evaluating Success and Impact:** measuring the long-term impact and legacy of design processes and interventions.

Though this is a 'big picture' article, with few grounded practice examples, it provides a foundation for making links between design and other methodologies and disciplines that are concerned with social change, innovation and ultimately with transformation. This is helpful both for designers seeking to engage with social innovation, but also for those starting from inside public services or community organisations who are looking to design disciplines such as service design for inspiration.

Daniela Sangiorgi also recently co-edited a book with Anna Meroni entitled '**Design for Services**' (Gower Publishing, 2011) that includes 17 case studies illustrating a human-centred design approach. For those interested in exploring her framework further and seeing how it is built out of and into practice, this book is also recommended.

4. CHANGE BY DESIGN

Brown, T. and Katz, B. (2009) Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organisations and Inspires Innovation, Harper Business, New York

Guest Reviewer: Joanne Hutchinson

If you are attracted to design thinking, and wondering where to start, then let me introduce you to one of my favourite books in this area: *Change by Design – How design thinking transforms organisations and inspires innovation*.

This book is a pleasure to read – practical, coherent and replete with interesting stories that bring the joys and challenges of design thinking to life. It is one that I keep close to hand in my office for guidance and inspiration. It is a great starting point into the broader design thinking literature and practice.

Tim Brown is the Chief Executive Officer and President at IDEO, a global design firm in the United States that designs products, services and experiences across public and private sectors tackling challenges as diverse as re-imagining the school day, re-designing the banking experience and re-engineering transport systems for clean water in India and Africa.

Change by Design reflects Brown's professional evolution as a designer and his search for an interdisciplinary, human-centred design approach. If you are the sort of person who is open to new schools of thought, isn't precious about professional boundaries, likes to make links between ideas and people and has a good feel for how people actually think and behave in real life, then design thinking may be for you.

At the heart of Brown's design approach is 'putting people first'. While this of itself is hardly a revolutionary concept, it is the way Brown and his team think about how to understand the needs of others that is so encouraging. For instance, in order to better understand the patient experience in a hospital one of his team acted as a patient and discretely recorded the admission and treatment process with a video camera hidden in his gown. While the hospital saw the patient experience in terms of '*insurance verification, medical prioritisation and bed allocation*' the video recording revealed that the actual experience was a lot more tedious and stressful for patients than previously understood, with blank walls and featureless ceilings dominating the recording.

This insight resulted in a new co-design process with the hospital to improve dimensions of the patient experience that had been previously little understood, and therefore, overlooked.

My favourite chapter in the book, and one I recommend for those days when you feel a little mental tune-up is needed, is chapter six – *A mental matrix, or these people have no process!* This chapter takes you through the various intellectual and creative steps that occur when thinking like a human-centred designer. Brown argues that ‘*to experience design thinking is to engage in a dance among four mental states*’.

These are divergent and convergent thinking; and analysis and synthesis. It is the rhythmic exchange between the different phases that is the hallmark of the design thinker.

Finally, visualisation and visual communication is a large part of the fun and power of the design thinking process. Brown delivers on this for the reader by including an attention-grabbing illustration on the inside cover which shows, in both words and pictures, the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of design thinking.

Even if you read no further than the inside cover you will have a handy road map to guide your thoughts and actions. But I recommend you dive in between the covers, it is well worth it.

Joanne Hutchinson runs Social Innovation Branch in the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Her interest in design thinking stems from her work, early in her career, in using universal design principles to promote access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

5. RETHINKING DESIGN THINKING

Kimbell, L. (2011) *Rethinking Design Thinking: Part I, Design and Culture*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 285-306

This article takes a critical look at the rise and rise of design thinking in the world of business and social innovation.

Written by Lucy Kimbell, a Fellow at the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford, and a designer herself, it focusses particularly on the limitations of design thinking as it has been portrayed by Tim Brown and the US design consultancy IDEO. Kimbell situates

design thinking in a wider social, economic and cultural landscape and suggests that there is a need to explore both what it actually is and why it has struck such a chord particularly in business and policy.

Although there are some direct criticisms of the IDEO framework, the work is much deeper and broader than this.

The article draws out the long and interdisciplinary tail of what has been termed ‘design thinking’ and it makes a cogent argument for a more robust examination of the place of design practices in business and policy, and for that matter, in social innovation.

Kimbell’s argument centres on three key points:

1. Much design thinking literature is dualistic, focusses too much on the ‘thinking’ part of design and misses the action and practice dimensions; whilst also separating design and designers from the contexts in which they operate, meaning that the process can be de-politicised;
2. Design thinking takes a broad view of what ‘design’ is, suggesting that there are shared characteristics across all design disciplines and not acknowledging how these different disciplines have emerged and are embedded in historical and institutional settings;
3. Despite advocating ‘user-centred’ and ‘human-centred’ approaches, paradoxically, in much design thinking literature the designer is still emphasised as the key agent of the design process.

In the end Kimbell decides that the practices of design (whether by designers or other stakeholders practising in the broad space of design) do indeed have something to offer in business contexts and in relation to social innovation. However, she argues that perhaps ‘design thinking’ may not be the best descriptor for the role of design in these contexts.

Kimbell suggests that design needs to be situated within both a wider research base and linked to broader theoretical and practical disciplines in order for its potential contribution to be realised. She concludes by suggesting that the “critical rethinking of design thinking has only just begun” (p.301).

Lucy Kimbell’s blog about her MBA elective on Designing Better Futures (see www.designingbetterfutures.wordpress.com/about/about-this-blog/) and her other writings on design thinking and practice are certainly worth following as the arena of design thinking develops.

The Part II of her article, where I hope her vision of an alternative approach is further outlined, is worth seeking out when it is released later this year.

6. SERVICE DESIGN

Schneider, J. and Stickdorn, M. (2011) This is Service Design Thinking: Basics, Tools, Cases, John Wiley and Sons, New Jersey

Guest Reviewer: Jacqueline Wechsler

“Design is not the narrow application of formal skills, it is a way of thinking.” – Chris Pullman.

This is Service Design Thinking presents an interdisciplinary approach to service innovation. Where the distinction between product and services is disappearing, and where the services sector within Australia accounts for approximately 70% of the GDP (*Entrepreneurship in Australia the Missing Links (2011)*, Wood, F., p.4), designing for services is fast becoming an important capability across every sector.

The book has an interesting format, whereby the authors utilised service design thinking to inform the design of their book. They sourced information and opinions from practitioners and academics within this field through the use of contextual interviews, forums, group discussions, blogs, and practitioner and social media portals to inform its development.

They even uploaded images of a ‘prototype’ book to the social photography site Flickr to get feedback about its design.

The book’s primary content came from 23 practitioners from all over the world, yielding not only thorough background material on service design but also easy to follow tools and methods illustrated by real-world case-studies. For example, find out how the Scottish agency Snook designed a service for the UK police force, or follow the design approach of the Carnegie Mellon Design School when re-designing a health service for a hospital.

Whilst many would argue that service design is not new, as a consequence of this crowd-sourced approach this book articulates very well the thoughts, opinions, practices and reflections of contemporary service design practitioners about their work.

Part one of the book entitled ‘Basics’ discusses the history of service design, its interdisciplinary nature and

its different associated disciplines, as well as the five principles of service design thinking;

1. **User-centered:** services should be designed from the perspective of the customer
2. **Co-creative:** services should be designed by all stakeholders
3. **Sequencing:** services should be considered as a series of interdependent actions
4. **Evidencing:** intangible services should be visualised in terms of tangible artefacts
5. **Holistic:** the entire context of a service should be considered.

The second part of the book discusses service design tools and the iterative process of service design and its non-linear phases i.e. *exploration, creation, reflection, implementation*. The 25 service design tools and methods outlined are easy to understand, flexible and varied. They felt more to me like a pantry of varied ingredients than a packet cake mixture, as the book states “this is a toolbox - not a manual”.

The tools are linked to the four different stages of the service design process and explain what the tool is, how it is made and when it is used along, with an example. Some tools discussed include; *the business model canvas, customer life-cycle maps, storyboards, service role-playing* etc. For me, the linking of tools and methods with case studies is an important characteristic of this book as it helps the reader understand the tools in the context of their usage as well as get some insight into some of the domains of service design.

I would recommend this book to anyone wanting to gain an understanding of the emergent field of service design and understand the type of work that service designers do. This is the first textbook on the subject and provides an excellent resource for students, educators, design practitioners or anyone interested in designing or improving a new product or service through collaborative design methods.

Jacqueline Wechsler is a user centered design consultant and teacher at UTS and the UNSW College of Fine Arts. She is passionate about the use of service design methods for the design of products and services that have positive social outcomes.

7. CO-CREATION AND PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

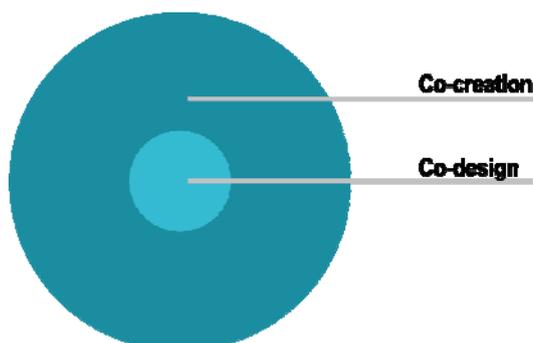
Sanders, E. and Stappers, P. (2008) Co-creation and the New Landscapes of Design, CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts, Taylor and Francis, vol. 4, no. 1, pp.5-18.

Liz Sanders, one of the co-authors of this article, is a 'legend' in the human-centred design field, having practised, researched and written in and around this area for over two decades.

The founder of the consultancy and co-creation agency 'Make Tools' (www.maketools.com) Liz Sanders has practised and researched the development of human-centred design for many years.

All her writings are well worth reading, but here I have chosen one that explores the area of co-creation and co-design because these principles are central to the application of design to social innovation. The article offers a satisfying blend of analysis and practice, and leaves the reader with quite a bit to think about in terms of the growing influence so called 'users' have in the design process and where this may lead in terms of what we now think of as 'design' and the role of 'designers'.

The article begins with some definitional clarifications. The authors argue that a distinction should be made between the concepts of 'co-creation' and 'co-design', which are frequently used interchangeably. According to Sanders and Stappers, co-creation is a very broad term, referring to "any act of collective creativity" (p.16). On the other hand they suggest that the term 'co-design' is a much narrower term (and is actually a sub-set of co-creation), referring specifically to "collective creativity as it is applied across the whole span of a design process" (p.16).



Sanders and Stappers then take the reader on a brief historical tour exploring the origins of co-creation and co-design, which lie as much in business and marketing as they do in design disciplines (not to mention the long history of collective engagement and creativity in many social sector disciplines). It seems there is a longer history to these concepts than much of the recent literature admits.

An obvious question then is why has it taken so long for the power of collective creative to be recognised as a key part of the design process, particularly when such processes are focussed on social innovation or organisational change? This article identifies some interesting reasons:

- **The Expert Mindset:** embracing co-creativity requires a belief that all people are creative and co-design requires that 'professional' and 'trained' designers relinquish some control and power to 'users', which can be difficult for those captured by personal or organisational addictions to an expert status;
- **Consumerism:** participatory approaches challenge consumerism because they move away from thinking of design as related to product development for consumption, to thinking of design as opening up explorations of a whole array of non-tangible arrangements that may not be consumable, indeed that could be 'sharable'!
- **User-research has been seen as too radical or not practical enough:** until the relatively recent 'user revolution' it was seen as irrelevant to engage users in the design process who were seen as having a role only at the end of the process – they were 'end-users' after all!

The authors argue that there has been a fundamental shift in the nature and purpose of design so that people and their needs have moved to the centre of design. For designers this changes "what we design, how we design, and who designs" (p.16). The figure below outlines this shift.

This in turn changes the roles of players in the design process. The 'user' needs to be recognised as a key player in the creation process, and sometime across the whole design process. The hierarchies and roles in traditional design processes are broken down, and new tools and methods for engaging a broader range of people are needed.

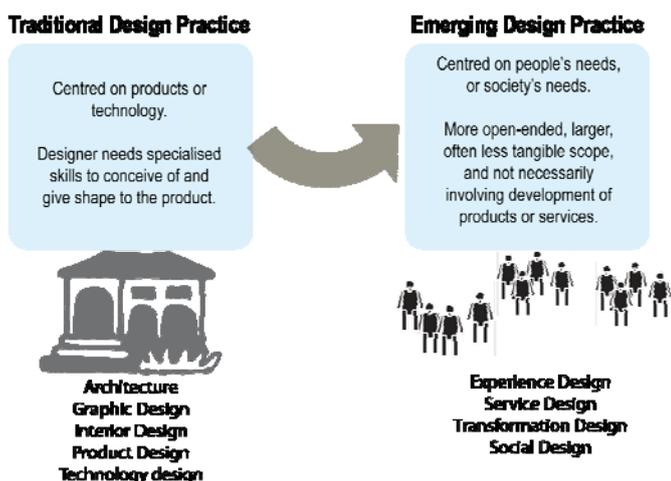
It is interesting to think about this in the context of social innovation. Co-created social innovation means inviting the 'clients', 'consumers', 'beneficiaries' and 'constituents' of public services and community

organisations into the process, in addition to front-line staff and people from across organisations.

This is not new for many in the social sector (in fact many community organisations were started through self-help or mutual aid processes), but it has sometimes become tokenistic and superficial in the push for greater levels of so-called professionalism. And, if we're honest, the way many of our services have been designed (for they have all been designed, even if this did not consciously involve a design process), means that users (or clients) are 'serviced' rather than being active co-creators, let alone co-designers, in the process.

The application of co-creation and co-design in many public services, social welfare organisations and community organisations would certainly create all the challenges that Sanders and Stappers identify as having held back a wholesale adoption of co-creation in the business world, and possibly more!

The article finishes with some big questions for what the rise of co-creation and co-design mean for the future – whether this way of working will become the norm in design education, whether social science education will also embrace co-creation and co-design practices and whether indeed design practice will eventually become the norm for everyone as we all continue to try to design better and more sustainable ways of “living, learning and working” (p.17).



8. FROM THE TOWN HALL INTO THE STUDIO

Darwin, T. (2010) *From the Townhall to into the Studio: Design, Democracy and Community Resilience*, The Journal of Design Strategies, vol. 4, no. 1, Spring, pp. 29-33

This is a short article, but it is full of practical wisdom and insights for those prepared to dig deeper than a cursory reading. This is one piece of writing that could have benefited from the addition of some visual design as there are so many levels, lists and layers embedded in the article! Written by Thomas Darwin, Director of Community Partnerships at the University of Texas, the article takes a closer look at the potential for design to be a tool for community change.

Darwin sees design as both a capability and a mindset. He argues that if they are to be useful in helping communities to build resilience and embark on change processes, then design methods and practices need to be shared widely so that community members develop the capacity to design their own solutions rather than relying or being dependent on expert designers to do it for them.

Darwin suggests that designers can be catalysts for community change in the three basic ways tabulated on page 12. Though the first two can be important, Darwin basically argues that the last of these is the one that contributes most effectively to a democratisation of design, and has the greatest capacity for building community resilience.

This is important because Darwin believes that many of the challenges faced by communities are actually 'wicked' problems, meaning that they defy linear approaches to problem solving and require communities to develop collective resilience in order to engage with change. He advocates for processes that can leverage design for community change and resilience so that people are able to respond to such wicked problems in context and over time.

Darwin describes an example of this – the development of a 'Community Studio' in Austin, Texas, a different space for building community leadership focussed on helping leaders develop a 'designerly mind' so that they can think and act on community problems as designers.

The Community Studio aimed to introduce: new effective approaches to addressing community

problems; new modes of collaboration; and new skills and an innovative mindset so that leaders could break out of traditional problem-solving patterns.

In effect, rather than focussing on singular interventions in problem situations, the Community Studio was cultivating “a process, a set of capabilities, and perhaps most importantly, a way of engaging the world” (p.33) that led to participants developing different ways of engaging with community challenges (no matter what shape they took) into the future.

Darwin finishes the article by reflecting on what he things such a ‘designerly mind’ brings to the process of community change. He suggests that at the centre of a ‘designerly mind’ is a “kind of disciplined openness” which has two main aspects:

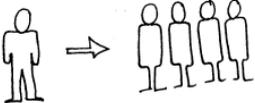
1. **“A willingness to intelligently prototype”**: being open to trying new things, learn in the process of doing, and reflect in action. The challenge of this lies in the fact that so much social change work has become bogged down in ‘planning’ methodologies, so that action doesn’t happen until we have a complete strategic plan, a log-frame or we have all the information we feel we need in order to act. This aspect of openness is what makes design approaches so fresh and exciting to many working in and around social change. It enables another perspective and cuts the chains that have bound us to linear, strategic models of action for too long;
2. **“Receptivity to that which situations make available”**: being open to the many resources, assets and possibilities that are inherent in any situation and in all communities. Darwin argues that strategic mindsets can close us off to both the

concrete limitations of real-life, but also the many opportunities that are present before us. A ‘designerly mind’ helps us to cultivate an alive receptivity to these opportunities and harness the potential of systematic, participative, emergent and positive elements in the communities in which we work.

I think Darwin captures much of that which attracts people to ‘design’ approaches. He doesn’t just see design as a set of tools and skills, he sees it as a mindset – one in which it is still possible to believe that things can change, that is “positive and forward-looking”. The power of this in a world that is increasingly hamstrung by doubt and complexity should not be underestimated. He finishes by summarising the power of this mindset: “We do not take on the challenge of design unless we really believe that there is something to be done about a situation, a better way to serve a group of people, a way to close the gap between how things are and how we hope they could be” (p.33).

In addition to this article, it is worth taking a look at the range of articles in this collection, which includes an excellent article by Ezio Manzini, coordinator of DESIS, an international network on Design and Social Innovation and Sustainability (see www.desis-network.org/), and a whole array of practitioners and academics reflecting on the role of design in change processes.

The full collection is available at: www.sds.parsons.edu/blog/category/sds-publications/journal-of-design-strategies/

	<p>Designing products and services FOR communities. Designers are the professionals, who define problems and design solutions on behalf of community members. There are instances when this may be catalytic, but it can also reduce resilience by building in dependence</p>
	<p>Designing products and services WITH communities. Designers work with community members and the design process is participatory, even if designers still take the lead.</p>
	<p>Making design tools and processes available so that solutions to community issues can be designed BY community members. Teaching design skills and developing new capabilities in communities so that community members develop a ‘designer’s mind’ and thus have the know-how to create their own solutions to their own problems beyond the life of a single project.</p>

9. PROTOTYPING

Hillgren, P., Seravalli, A., Emilson, A. (2011) *Prototyping and infrastructuring in design for social innovation, Co-Design, vol. 7, no. 3-4, September-December, pp.169-183*

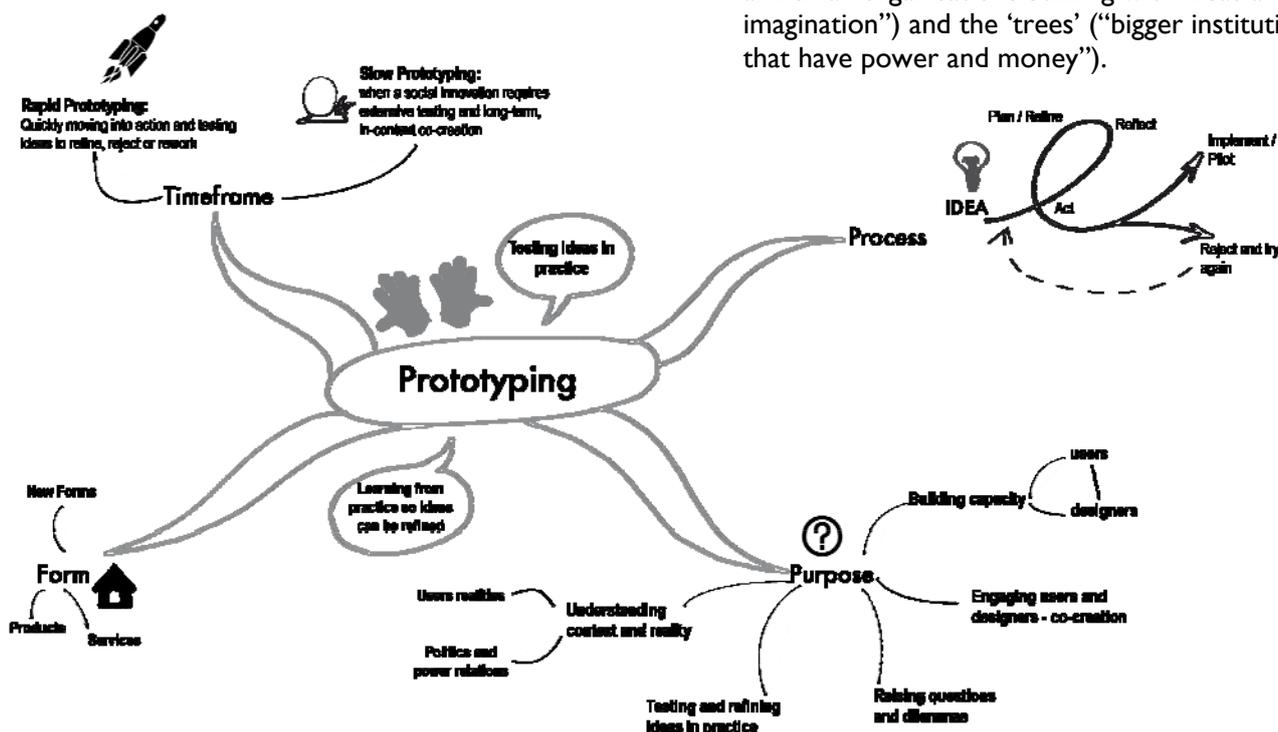
This article is written by three members of the Medea Living Labs, an innovation lab at Malmö in Sweden. It draws connections between the predominantly Northern European and Scandinavian tradition of 'participatory design' and design for social innovation.

The authors begin with an excellent synthesis of the contexts and histories of linking design and social innovation which, they point out, has evolved out of numbers of local, national and regional practices and explorations to begin to have an international presence over the last five years or so. I have added some of the many practices and thought traditions they canvas to the 'map' on page 18.

They recognise both the potential and the challenges of applying design to social innovation and with this in mind they reflect on a core technique within design approaches, that of 'Prototyping', which could be defined as "the design of a working model of a product or service that can be used to test out the reactions of potential clients and providers" (Mulgan et al, 2010; p.50).

They use a case study of work Medea was involved in (with a Swedish NGO founded by a group of migrant women) to reflect on the use of prototyping in the context of social innovation. I have made a mind-map of the issues they raise in relation to prototyping to provide a sense of their reflections (see figure below). Their conclusions centre around three key ideas:

- 1. Prototyping can be revealing:** Using prototyping in social innovation does not always evolve into concrete products or services, but it can be very important in revealing questions, dilemmas, controversies and opportunities in the design process. The challenge then, lies in learning from these revelations and incorporating them into further evolutions of the design process.
- 2. Prototyping may require 'infrastructuring':** Social innovation prototyping may be limited in a defined and time-limited 'project' frames and may require what the authors refer to as 'infrastructuring', that is, building a design structure that is more open-ended over a longer period of time, enabling the building of a network of relationships and resources around the process.
- 3. Prototyping needs to link the 'bees' and 'trees':** Prototyping social innovations often requires an interplay between bottom-up and top-down processes, and a conscious connection between different actors in different parts of the social ecosystem so that small organisations and individuals are linked with larger institutions and businesses. Murray et al (2010, p.125) have referred to this as linking the 'bees' (individuals and small organisations buzzing with ideas and imagination) and the 'trees' ("bigger institutions that have power and money").



This is an interesting article for two reasons. First, it opens up the links between social innovation and design approaches (such as participatory design) that have been evolving in Northern Europe since at least the 1970s. The contribution (actual and potential) of these approaches is not always adequately acknowledged in literature which frames the link between design and social innovation as having a much more recent history or that links the evolution of social design to North American traditions of ‘user-centred design’ (stemming more from technology and product design disciplines).

Second, this article is interesting in terms of the way the authors have engaged with the critiques focussed on the use of design in social innovation. They have certainly demonstrated that these critiques are being taken seriously, and could indeed lead to some even more exciting conversations in the future! It does, however, leave the reader with some real and practical questions, questions which plague the social innovation field more generally, such as who may pay for the long-term involvement of designers in social sector organisations, and how design could be built into interdisciplinary teams around the social sector more effectively so that designers do not have to reinvent the wheel in addressing complex social issues.

A pre-print version of this article is available at: <http://medea.mah.se/2011/12/prototyping-and-infrastructuring-in-design-for-social-innovation/>

10. A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON SOCIAL DESIGN

Sacchetti, V. Design Crusades: A Critical Reflection on Social Design, Unpublished MFA Thesis, School for Visual Arts, New York.

I’d like to conclude this edition of Knowledge Connect with some excerpts from a design writer and critic, Vera Sacchetti, who has recently completed an MFA in Design Criticism at the School for Visual Arts in New York (www.schoolofvisualarts.edu), writing a thesis entitled “Design Crusades: A Critical Reflection on Social Design”. Though the thesis is not yet in the public domain Vera has kindly given permission for some excerpts to be included in this review.

In the thesis Sacchetti explores the burgeoning area of ‘social design’ in the United States, with this being the

title given to what has also been termed ‘humanitarian’ design, that is, design focussed particularly on products and services that would help to improve the circumstances of the poorest members of society.

In the US design work is principally directed at projects in the Global South, in contexts of sometimes extreme economic poverty. There have been a number of high-profile examples of late, including the ‘Design for the Other 90%’ exhibition series at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York, and the launch of IDEO’s non-profit arm, IDEO.org.

One of the key strengths of Sacchetti’s thesis lies in her analysis of how much of the work undertaken under the banner of ‘social design’ positions designers as ‘saviours’ who come in with what are framed as brilliant and hitherto unthought of ideas that they believe will change lives and circumstances.

Sacchetti is a design critic and with her critical eye and insightful analysis she takes readers on a (sometimes painful) journey exploring the evolution of this new design arena and highlighting its failures and pitfalls. However, despite the many pitfalls she uncovers, Sacchetti never entirely gives up on the potential of social design.

Like a growing number of critics, Sacchetti believes that if social design is to realise this potential then designers need to move away from ‘hero’ status and toward immersing themselves in the reality and history of social change in all its complexity and messiness.

You may like to follow Vera Sacchetti’s blog, where she continues to write about social design and broader design issues - you can find it at: <http://verasacchetti.net/>. Vera Sacchetti is currently working at Domus, in Milan.

To further explore the growing interest and critique of social design readers may also wish to read Paula Antonelli’s recent article about Social Design in Domus (available for viewing at: <http://www.domusweb.it/en/design/states-of-design-10-social-design/>).

What follows is an extract from Vera Sacchetti's MFA thesis entitled, 'Design Crusades: A Critical Reflection on Social Design', used with permission from the author:

"It is always more complex than what it seems", offers Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, referring to the major lesson he has learned from working for the social sector. "And therefore a willingness to dig into complexity, a willingness to embrace it and understand it, and then somehow cut through it and do something tangible on the other side, is a skill you need as a designer in the social sector. If what you want is somebody to come and give you a simple brief that you can then go away with and create a wonderful design from and hand it back at the end, then you'll be disappointed working in the social sector, because it won't work out that way."

The transition of the design industry towards the social sector will be painful and long. Although the first social design projects in the early 2000s kept encountering the same barriers, practitioners working abroad today have made strides, constantly testing new models in a variety of places and scales, and making the most of a field where everything is still negotiable. It is clear now that success is hard, and never certain.

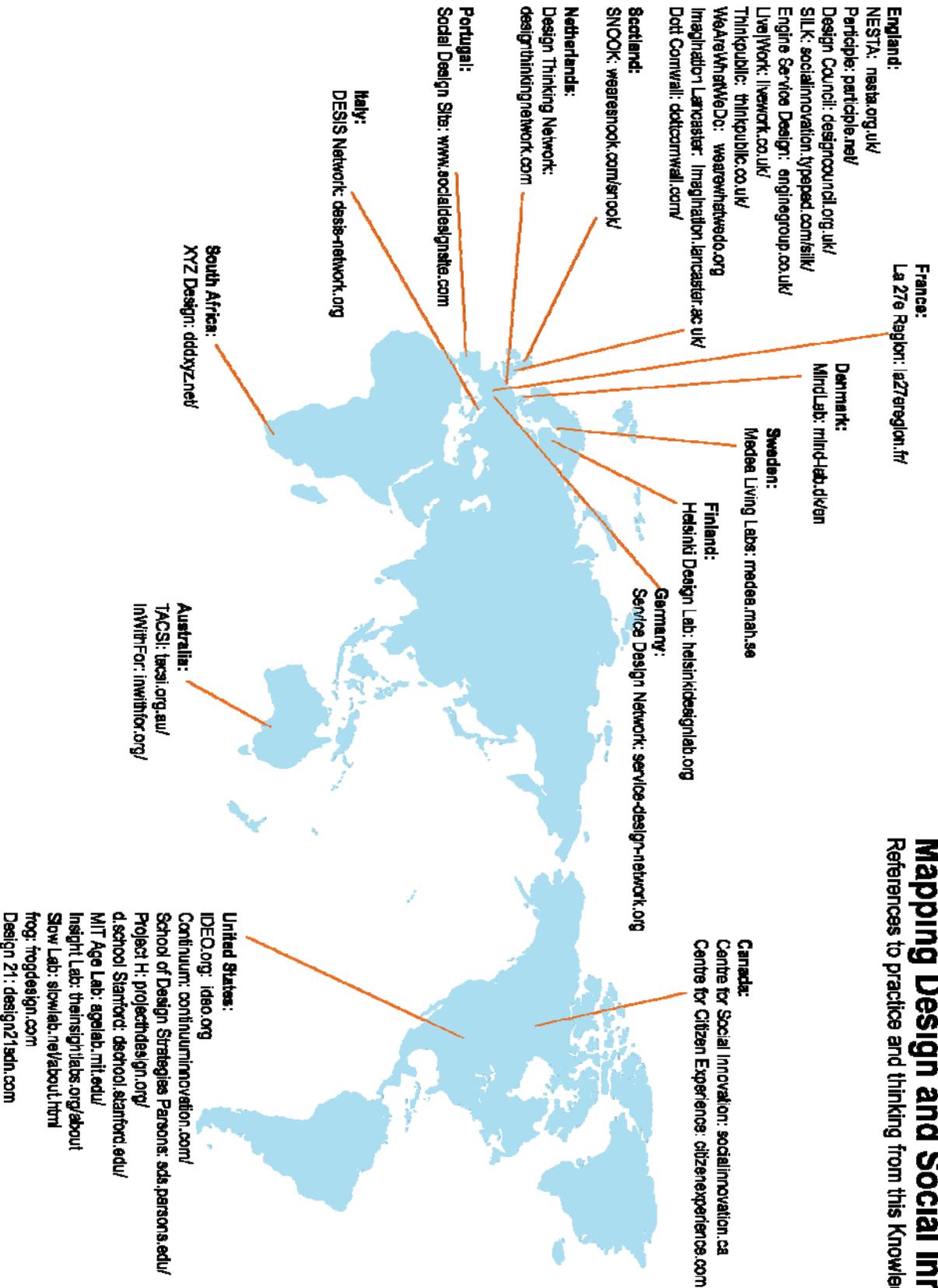
However, good first steps include leaving your cultural bias behind you, working with the target community from the inception of the project, building on the expertise of local partners and starting small. If designers really wish to embark on social design projects abroad, they must go beyond the enthusiasm and feel-good of their initial ideas: they must learn about development initiatives and business planning, about the context they'll be working in, and must

be willing to change and adapt their concepts, facing constraints that will inevitably exist.

It is wiser to start in your community than abroad. Designers will naturally adapt to a context they already know; however, working locally doesn't always translate to good results. It also seems wrong to engage in a charity-like, pro-bono model. I'm a firm believer in an exchange process, empowering and conveying ownership of ideas to the users designers work with, in the US or abroad. If social design wants to become a sustainable, profitable field, then it must start with exchanges: of objects, ideas, money, to create interest and demand in the social sector. Both the ideas of co-creation and of a holistic approach are beautiful to hear, but elusive and extremely difficult to implement.



Mapping Design and Social Innovation: References to practice and thinking from this Knowledge Connect



This map is not meant to represent EVERYTHING that is happening in the design and social innovation space...it is just a representation of contributors and interesting sites I have referenced in writing this review. If you have others to add please be in touch so the map can jump off the page and come alive!