

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Tjahja, Cyril (2019) Reorienting and sustaining design and social innovation: Insights from Asia-Pacific practices. Doctoral thesis, Northumbria University.

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<https://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/42682/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



UniversityLibrary

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Tjahja, Cyril (2019) Reorienting and sustaining design and social innovation: Insights from Asia-Pacific practices. Doctoral thesis, Northumbria University.

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/42682/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



UniversityLibrary

**Reorienting and Sustaining
Design and Social Innovation:
Insights from Asia-Pacific Practices**

Cyril Tjahja

PhD

2019

**Reorienting and Sustaining
Design and Social Innovation:
Insights from Asia-Pacific Practices**

Cyril Tjahja

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the
Faculty of Arts, Design
& Social Sciences

April 2019

Abstract

This research study investigates what constitutes design and social innovation initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region. Field research conducted in Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur led to the construction of sixteen case studies, which revealed a broad diversity of design and social innovation practices. Activity Theory was used as a framework for data collection, allowing stakeholders involved in these initiatives to share their insights and experiences within their respective local contexts. Their insights were subsequently analysed using thematic analysis, leading to the identification of three key themes.

The first theme highlights the disparity between how design and social innovation is framed in academic discourse and how it is perceived by various groups of stakeholders and actors. The second discusses the tensions surrounding the designer's role in social innovation. The third outlines the challenges and inherent paradoxes of sustaining design and points to social innovation initiatives. These findings form the basis for recommendations to reposition design in social innovation practice, a reimagining of the role of the designer in the process and a set of pragmatic objectives that can help sustain initiatives who are operating 'in the wild'.

The contribution of knowledge of this research is that design and social innovation as a field of study is in urgent need of reorientation. Instead of solely focusing on the generation and implementation of design solutions, designers should shift their efforts towards creating and nurturing meaningful social relations while understanding their many dimensions and intricacies, as these relations will sustain initiatives in the long run. However, outcomes that are eventually produced should be tangible, to increase their usefulness for the stakeholders involved. Moreover, not only do practitioners need to create enabling ecosystems for the communities they intend to help, they should create these environments for themselves as well, by aligning themselves with the interests of other actors. Appropriate communication plays an important role in keeping the initiative's social environment stable and healthy by shaping the perceptions and expectations of stakeholders. A paradigm shift is therefore required in order to move forward, with designers working in the space of social innovation being *sociable designers*, who focus on *being* social rather than just *doing* social.

Table of contents

Abstract.....	3
Table of contents.....	4
List of figures.....	12
List of tables	14
List of publications and events.....	15
Declaration	17
Acknowledgements.....	18
Chapter 1 / Introduction.....	19
1.1 Background	19
1.2 Aims and objectives	21
1.3 Thesis outline	21
Chapter 2 / Design and social innovation	23
2.1 The role of design in the social innovation process.....	23
2.1.1 Social innovation and design	23
2.1.2 Design and social innovation	25
2.1.3 The difference between social innovation and social enterprise.....	27
2.2 Current themes in academic discourse	29
2.2.1 The framing of design and social innovation.....	29
2.2.2 The role of the designer	39
2.2.3 The sustaining of initiatives	48
2.2.4 The significance of social relations	59
2.3 Current issues in the study of design and social innovation.....	62
2.3.1 The absence of non-western perspectives	63

2.3.2 The lack of critical analysis	67
2.4 Design and social innovation in Asia-Pacific	68
Chapter 3 / Methodology	77
3.1 Theoretical background.....	77
3.2 Case study method	77
3.2.1 Case selection.....	78
3.2.2 Case study design.....	80
3.2.3 Unit of analysis	81
3.2.4 General procedure	82
3.2.5 Sampling criteria	83
3.2.6 Positionality of the researcher	84
3.2.7 Observations during data collection	87
3.2.8 Ethical considerations	88
3.3 Data collection.....	88
3.3.1 Activity Theory.....	89
3.3.1 The Activity System.....	89
3.3.2 Benefits of Activity Theory.....	90
3.3.3 Alternative approaches	91
3.3.4 Pilot study.....	92
3.3.5 Data collection using Activity Theory	93
3.4 Data analysis.....	96
3.4.1 Thematic Analysis	96
3.4.2 Benefits of thematic analysis.....	98
3.4.3 Data analysis using thematic analysis	98
3.5 Methodological map	102

Chapter 4 / Hong Kong	103
4.1 Goodseed	104
Interviewee profile	104
History and context	104
Structure.....	105
Mode of operation	106
Timespan	107
Current status and/or outcome(s)	108
4.2 DOMAT: Home Modification for Low-income Families.....	108
Interviewee profile	108
History and context	108
Structure.....	111
Mode of operation	111
Timespan	112
Current status and/or outcome(s)	112
4.3 Social Innovation Design Lab: Fine Dying.....	112
Interviewee profiles	113
History and context	113
Structure.....	114
Mode of operation	115
Timespan	117
Current status and/or outcome(s)	117
4.4 Form Society	118
Interviewee profile	118
History and context	118
Structure.....	119
Mode of operation	120

Current status and/or outcome(s)	120
4.5 Play Depot.....	121
Interviewee profile	121
History and context	121
Structure.....	122
Mode of operation	123
Timespan	124
Current status and/or outcome(s)	124
Chapter 5 / Bangkok.....	125
5.1 TCDC: Co-create Charoenkrung.....	126
Interviewee profiles	126
History and context	127
Structure.....	127
Process	128
Timeline.....	130
Current status and/or outcome(s)	130
5.2 Deschooling Games	132
Interviewee profiles	132
History and context	133
Structure.....	134
Process	135
Current status and/or outcome(s)	136
5.3 CROSSs.....	137
Interviewee profiles	137
History and context	137
Structure.....	138

Process	139
Current status and/or outcome(s)	139
5.4 Pom Mahakan	139
Interviewee profiles	140
History and context	140
Structure.....	141
Process	142
Timeline.....	144
Current status and/or outcome(s)	144
5.5 Bangkok Chinatown	145
Interviewee profile	145
History and context	145
Structure.....	147
Process	147
Timeline.....	149
Current status and/or outcome(s)	150
5.6 The Rambutan.....	150
Interviewee profiles	151
History and context	151
Structure.....	152
Process	152
Current status and/or outcome(s)	153
Chapter 6 / Kuala Lumpur.....	154
6.1 Earth Heir	154
Interviewee profile	155
History and context	155

Structure.....	156
Process	157
Current status and/or outcome(s)	157
6.2 POW Ideas: Pocket Park.....	158
Interviewee profile	158
History and context	158
Structure.....	159
Process	159
Current status and/or outcome(s)	161
6.3 3nity Design.....	161
Interviewee profile	161
History and context	161
Process	162
6.4 Heartware: Water Warriors & Mukim Pasangan	163
Interviewee profiles	163
History and context	164
Structure.....	165
Process	166
Current status and/or outcome(s)	168
6.5 Think City: Lorong Bandar 13.....	168
Interviewee profiles	168
History and context	168
Structure.....	169
Process	170
Current status and/or outcome(s)	171

Chapter 7 / Context-specific themes	172
7.1 Context-specific themes: Hong Kong	172
7.1.1 The lack of physical space	172
7.1.2 Urban poverty.....	175
7.2 Context-specific themes: Bangkok	176
7.2.1 The military government.....	176
7.2.2 Social hierarchy.....	178
7.3 Context-specific themes: Kuala Lumpur.....	184
7.3.1 Institutional racism	184
7.3.2 Censorship	186
7.3.3 Limitations of western models	187
 Chapter 8 /	 188
Perceptions of Design and Social Innovation	188
8.1 How design and social innovation is perceived.....	188
8.1.1 The ‘non-design’ practitioner’s perception of design social innovation	189
8.1.2 The government’s perception of design and social innovation	192
8.1.3 The (larger) community’s perception of design and social innovation	197
8.1.4 The design industry’s perception of design and social innovation	208
8.2 Design and social innovation’s image problem	210
8.2.1 The negative perception of design(ers).....	210
8.2.2 Resistance to design and social innovation initiatives	211
8.2.3 The role of power relations and politics.....	212
8.3 Repositioning design and social innovation	214

Chapter 9 /	223
The Designer's Identity Crisis	223
9.1 Perceptions on the role of the designer	223
9.2 The designer's position under threat	234
9.3 The <i>sociable designer</i>	235
 Chapter 10 /	 238
Sustaining design and social innovation initiatives	238
10.1 The reality of sustaining initiatives in the field	238
10.1.1 Issues with upscaling and replicating	239
10.1.2 Difficulty finding a suitable business model	242
10.1.3 The lack of public space	246
10.2 Pragmatic objectives for design and social innovation	250
 Chapter 11 / Conclusion	 263
11.1 Revisiting the aims and objectives	264
11.2 Summary of findings	266
11.3 Contribution to knowledge	270
11.4 Limitations of the study	272
11.5 Recommendations for further research	272
11.6 Personal reflection on the research process	272
 List of references	 275
Appendix A / Example of coded transcript	292
Appendix B / Thematic Maps	293
Appendix C / DMA2017 Conference paper	297
Appendix D / DRS2018 Conference paper	314

List of figures

Figure 2-A Visualisation of the role of design and social relations in the social innovation process	59
Figure 3-A Case study design of the research study	80
Figure 3-B The Activity System	90
Figure 3-C Innovation networks as networks of activity systems	91
Figure 3-D Example of a handout used by the student teams to analyse their projects using Activity Theory	93
Figure 3-E The Activity System – highlighting the <i>rules</i> , <i>tools</i> and <i>object</i> categories. .	95
Figure 3-F Diagram outlining the grouping of themes into key themes.....	101
Figure 3-G Methodological map of the research	102
Figure 4-A The Goodseed programme in a wider context	105
Figure 4-B The organisational structure of the Goodseed programme.....	106
Figure 4-C The Goodseed promotional brochure.....	107
Figure 4-D A subdivided home in Hong Kong	109
Figure 4-E DOMAT's furniture spatial concept.....	110
Figure 4-F DOMAT's Home Modification process.....	110
Figure 4-G Structure of the Home Modification project	111
Figure 4-H DOMAT's furniture inside a family's apartment	112
Figure 4-I Fine Dying Information flyer	113
Figure 4-J Structure of the SI.DLab programme.	115
Figure 4-K Visit to the Body Donation Centre (Chinese University of Hong Kong). ...	116
Figure 4-L Structure of the Fine Dying project	117
Figure 4-M The Form Society art and culture space	119
Figure 4-N Structure of Form Society.....	119
Figure 4-O Structure of Play Depot.	123
Figure 4-P Left: MUDworks Right: Wheel Things Maker.....	123
Figure 5-A Structure of the Co-create Charoenkrung project.....	128
Figure 5-B The five 1:1 prototype projects of Co-create Charoenkrung.....	130
Figure 5-C Excerpt of the Co-create Model (Source: TCDC).....	131
Figure 5-D Interior of a design store in Warehouse 30	132
Figure 5-E Deschooling Games' educational model	133
Figure 5-F Structure of Deschooling Games in 2017	134

Figure 5-G Students from the Royal University of Sisaket participating in a Deschooling Games workshop.....	135
Figure 5-H The CROSSs logo.....	137
Figure 5-I Two examples of projects by CROSSs.....	138
Figure 5-J The village of Pom Mahakan.....	140
Figure 5-K A map of the Pom Mahakan living museum, situated in the village	141
Figure 5-L Structure of the last team involved with Pom Mahakan.	142
Figure 5-M Village meeting with members from the Mahakan team and CROSSs ...	143
Figure 5-N The clearing of the village by the BMA.....	145
Figure 5-O The 18th century So Heng Tai mansion in Talat Noi.	146
Figure 5-P Structure of the Bangkok Chinatown initiative.	147
Figure 5-Q Map of the Talat Noi area developed by Bangkok Chinatown	149
Figure 5-R The Rambutan book, featuring students' work from the workshops	150
Figure 5-S The Bangkok Art Book Fair at Bangkok Citycity Gallery	152
Figure 6-A Sample of products by Earth Heir.....	156
Figure 6-B Earth Heir's signature <i>Nelly</i> bag	157
Figure 6-C The APW creative space.....	158
Figure 6-D The structure of the Pocket Park project.....	159
Figure 6-E The Pocket Park at APW.....	160
Figure 6-F The <i>God Loves Gay</i> book and an artwork from one of the <i>Man and God</i> exhibitions	162
Figure 6-G The S.I.T. approach by 3nity Design.....	162
Figure 6-H A workshop with the Young Rangers (Kelab Alami KAWA) from Mukim Pasangan.....	165
Figure 6-I Structure of the Water Warriors Living Lab.....	166
Figure 6-J Structure of the Mukim Pasangan initiative.....	166
Figure 6-K Images of the University of Malaya's Varsity Lake	167
Figure 6-L Different ends of Lorong Bandar 13.....	169
Figure 6-M The structure of the Lorong Bandar 13 project.	170
Figure 6-N Recreational area in the middle of the alley	171
Figure 11-A Diagram of the relation of the recommendations to the contribution to knowledge.	264
Figure 11-B The Activity System	265

List of tables

Table 2.1 The NextD complexity ladder	26
Table 2.2 Summary of an analysis of research literature on social innovation, social entrepreneurship and social design	28
Table 2.3 Classification of design thinking discourses	33
Table 2.4 Typology of design participation	41
Table 2.5 Different interpretations of the role of the designer in social innovation.....	45
Table 2.6 The role positioning and motivators of key stakeholders	58
Table 3.1 Overview of when to apply which research method	78
Table 3.2 Overview of types of initiatives and respondents.	84
Table 3.3 Summary of evaluation criteria for rigor in cross-cultural nursing research.	85
Table 3.4 Reoccurring themes per city.....	100

List of publications and events

The following is a list of publications and events in which findings from this research were presented.

Peer-reviewed conference papers

- Tjahja, C. & Yee, J. (2018). Social hierarchy in design and social innovation: Perspectives from Thailand. In C. Storni et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of DRS 2018 International Conference: Catalyst* (Vol. 2, pp. 704–716). London: Design Research Society. doi: 10.21606/dma.2018.420
- Tjahja, C., Yee, J. & Aftab, M. (2017). Object of Design: Activity Theory as an analytical framework for Design and Social Innovation. In E. Bohemia, C. de Bont, & L. S. Holm (Eds.), *Conference Proceedings of the Design Management Academy* (Vol. 3, pp. 931–947). London: Design Management Academy. doi: 10.21606/dma.2017.120

Presentations

2018

- *Social hierarchy in design and social innovation: Perspectives from Thailand*
Paper presentation at DRS2018 conference
University of Limerick, Limerick (Ireland)

2017

- *Redefining 'impact' in design and social innovation*
Presentation at DESIAP Symposium 2017
Malaysian Design Council, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)
- *Design and social innovation in Asia Pacific*
Presentation at First City University Research Day
First City University, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)

- *Object of design: Activity Theory as an analytical framework for design and social innovation*

Paper presentation at DMA2017 conference

Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Hong Kong)

- *Design and social innovation in Asia Pacific*

Presentation at Postgraduate Research Conference

Northumbria University, Newcastle (UK)

2016

- *Introduction to design and social innovation in Asia-Pacific*

Introduction speech at DESIAP Symposium 2016

Thailand Design and Creativity Centre, Bangkok (Thailand)

- *Introduction to Activity Theory*

Pilot study consisting of two workshops

Northumbria University, Newcastle (UK)

Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the University Ethics Committee on 19 April 2016.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 81,030 words.

Cyril Tjahja

1 April 2019

Acknowledgements

There are many people to whom I am grateful for their help, advice and support during the time that I was working towards this thesis.

First of all, I would like to thank my principal supervisor Dr Joyce Yee and my secondary supervisor Dr Mersha Aftab, from whom I have learned so much and who have helped and inspired me in countless ways. I would also like to thank Professor Robert Young and Professor Jayne Wallace for their wisdom and advice during the internal reviews.

A big thank you to Dr Yoko Akama, Dr Joon Saeng Baek and Dr Rachel Clarke for their help and feedback during the final stage of writing. Many thanks to Dr Nick Spencer, for helping me out with the pilot study, Dr Manos Chatzakis, for explaining me everything about Activity Theory, Professor Paul Rodgers and Steve Gibson for being on my annual progression panel.

I would especially like to thank all the respondents from Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur for their time and generosity. It might be a cliché, but without you this would not have been possible. Also, many thanks to all of you who have helped me out during the field study: Lio Yeung, Hinz Pak, Dr Vincie Lee, Fern, Viria, Jett, Prut, Fy, rAiN, Mint, Massimo Ingegno, Henry Tan, Noll, Bow and Dr Debbie Gan.

Thank you Dr Javier Gimeno-Martinez and Professor Grace Lees-Maffei, for inspiring me to pursue a PhD and supporting my application. I would also like to thank my friends in Newcastle for their friendship and support along the way: Marloes Jansen, John Hemy, Michael Guarneri, Jin Wang, John Gribbin, Eleni Janko, Champ, Sam Nemeth, Thomas Ijere, Kingsley Ugwuanyi and Sarah Lin.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their encouragement and support, and last but not least, my wife Shanna for her love and patience.

The field study in Bangkok was partially supported by the Design Research Society.

Chapter 1 / Introduction

On an ordinary Thursday morning in Hong Kong, a student grins sheepishly before lying down in a coffin made out of cardboard. In a small library in Bangkok, a group of around thirty youths shout enthusiastically while pretending to be farmers. A tray of homemade coconut desserts is passed around during a gathering of people seated around a large map of a village. What do these three seemingly unrelated experiences have in common? In Hong Kong and Bangkok, and in many other places around the world, a multitude of people, with different motivations, perspectives and objectives, are involved in initiatives of varying compositions, sizes and orientations, that are all seeking to change their environment for the better. Those who practice these experiences, often do not have a name for it. In academia, the phenomenon is described using a variety of names that signify nuances in interpretation (see also p.23). In the context of this study, however, it will be referred to as *design and social innovation*. The situations sketched at the beginning of the paragraph are all real-life experiences of encounters with design and social innovation initiatives¹ during the field research conducted for this thesis.

1.1 Background

There are many types of initiatives that could be characterised as design and social innovation, ranging from small-scale grassroots community projects to large-scale government urban renewal programmes, and anything in between. They address a wide range of different topics and issues, such as housing (Jégou & Manzini, 2008), work (Meroni, 2007), health care (Valentine et al., 2017), food production (Manzini, 2013), marginalised citizens (Hillgren, Seravalli, & Agger Eriksen, 2016), crime prevention (Camacho Duarte, Lulham, & Kaldor, 2011), social enterprise (Selloni & Corubolo, 2017a; 2017b), development (Kang, 2016; Yang & Sung, 2016) and ageing (Lee, 2012).

However, most published accounts of design and social innovation, including those listed above, are rooted in academic endeavours and unfortunately do not tell the

¹ The initiatives are *Fine Dying* (see section 4.3), *Deschooling Games* (see section 5.2) and *Pom Mahakan* (see section 5.4)

entire story; relatively little is known about the large majority of initiatives that are operating 'in the wild', aside from the information found on their websites or social media, which tends to be descriptive in nature, rather than providing insight into their daily operations, issues and challenges. In many cases, initiatives are transient, only appearing for a limited time period and dissipating whenever the financial and/or social resources of the stakeholders are depleted. Furthermore, many practitioners operate under the radar, independent from academic, institutional and government frameworks.

An equally important issue within the academic discipline of design and social innovation, but also to a certain extent in its practice, is that there appears to be a focus on perspectives, approaches, methods and mind sets originating from the west (Akama & Yee, 2016). This tendency becomes a concern when it is adopted in a context in which these (implicit) predispositions do not apply or are inappropriate. Designers can then find themselves in a situation where they are considered to be outsiders, which in some cases can lead to a hierarchical relationship with their co-designers from the local community (Janzer & Weinstein, 2014) or a lack of understanding of the local context (Wang, Bryan-Kinns & Ji, 2016; Erözçelik & Taşdizen, 2017), undermining the intention and objectives of the initiative.

Approaches originating outside of the dominant perspective, often focusing on local contexts, receive significantly less attention in academic discourse, which is unfortunate, as they are often better suited to address local issues (Kang, 2016). The fact that western models can fall short in non-western contexts is also evidenced in some of the case studies described in this thesis. For example, one respondent mentioned that the western framework used to evaluate their initiative did not include one of the most essential indicators (see p. 247). Another respondent noted that her western academic training was not beneficial in the context of her home country, leading to unsuccessful replication of the initiative (see p.187).

Current approaches to design and social innovation can be characterised as limited, largely reflecting the (academic) standpoints of the dominant west. It is therefore imperative that the knowledge that is gained and challenges that are encountered by practitioners that work in non-western contexts is documented and shared with the wider design and social innovation community, as they can contribute valuable information that can not only improve the ways we address social issues, but also the ways we practise design. The focus on Asia-Pacific practices is purposeful, mainly due to the growing adoption of design in the various countries in the region,

making it a fertile ground for investigation. The diverse range of contexts, from a cultural, historical and political point of view also enables the research to uncover rich pluralistic approaches to design.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of this research is to establish what constitutes design and social innovation in the Asia-Pacific region by learning from practitioners, academics, entrepreneurs, community members and other actors who initiate and participate in local initiatives. Their insights are crucial to gain a broader and deeper understanding of a phenomenon that is currently only partially and poorly understood.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. establish the inner workings of initiatives;
2. identify the challenges and limitations that practitioners face;
3. examine the power relations within initiatives;
4. investigate what role design plays in the social innovation process;
5. determine how value is perceived by the stakeholders involved.

1.3 Thesis outline

In Chapter 2, the emergence of design and social innovation as a field of study will be viewed through the lens of two disciplines: social innovation studies and design studies, respectively. Current themes in academic discourse are discussed next: the framing of design and social innovation, the role of the designer and how initiatives are sustained. Two major issues, the lack of non-western perspectives and the lack of critical analysis, are discussed, followed by examples and research conducted centring on the Asia-Pacific region.

Chapter 3 describes the theoretical and methodological framework of the study: its basis in social constructionism, the usage of the case study method, Activity Theory as a method of data collection and thematic analysis as a means to analyse the data.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 provide rich descriptions of the sixteen case studies in Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, respectively, elaborating on their history and context, structure, respondents, mode of operation, timeline/timespan and outcome.

Chapter 7 discusses context-specific themes, which were particular to the contexts of either Hong Kong, Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur.

Chapter 8, the first of the key theme chapters, opens with a discussion of how design and social innovation is perceived by the various groups of actors and stakeholders and sets it against how it is framed in academic literature. It concludes with four recommendations for the repositioning of design in social innovation practice.

In chapter 9, the typical role of the designer in social innovation as discussed in chapter 2 is contrasted with insights from the field study, leading to the construction of three characteristics for a new designer persona, who will be more in tune with the new interpretation of design and social innovation as proposed in the previous chapter.

Chapter 10 builds on the insights gained from the respondents as well as the previous chapters and proposes a set of pragmatic objectives that aim to improve the sustainability of initiatives.

Chapter 11 is the conclusion of the thesis and will provide a summary of the insights, the contribution to knowledge, discuss the study's limitations and suggest areas for further research.

Chapter 2 / Design and social innovation

Design and social innovation is a field of both study and practice that appears to be gaining momentum throughout the world. The broad variety of names under which it is known, such as *integrated design* (Papanek, 1971; 1985), *social design* (Margolin & Margolin, 2002), *transformation design* (Burns et al., 2006), *design for social innovation* (Jégou & Manzini, 2008; Manzini, 2015), *design thinking for social innovation* (Brown & Wyatt, 2010) and *socially responsible design* (Melles, De Vere, & Misic, 2011), indicate variations in definition, perspective and scope, both in a theoretical and practical senses. The use of design methods to facilitate or benefit social innovation practice, however, appears to be a common denominator. The beginning of this chapter will discuss the history of design and social innovation studies and provide a brief overview of the differences between social innovation and social enterprise. This will be followed by an overview of the relevant academic discourse on design and social innovation, identifying (re)current themes in literature and highlighting the issues that prompted the research objectives of this thesis.

2.1 The role of design in the social innovation process

In this section, the evolution of design and social innovation as a field of study is traced through its evolution in two separate disciplines: *social innovation* on one hand and *design* on the other, eventually converging into the academic discipline as it is known today.

2.1.1 Social innovation and design

The practice of what is now referred to as *social innovation* has arguably existed as long as mankind (Simms, 2006); concepts such as money, universal suffrage and the modern state have all been social innovations at the time of their invention (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). More recent social innovations include fair-trade, microloans and Wikipedia (Mulgan, 2006). Distinguishing social innovation from 'normal' business innovation is the notion that the former begins from a social perspective, benefitting the community and society in general, whereas the latter is based upon commerce and competition (Dawson & Daniel, 2010). A further distinction can be made from the

notion of social change by the intentional nature of social innovation (Franz, Hochgerner, & Howaldt, 2012).

Social innovation has become particularly attractive to governments and policy-makers, such as the European Commission and the World Economic Forum, because of the difficulties traditional welfare systems face in meeting the growing and diverse needs of society (Borzaga & Bodini, 2012). Furthermore, social innovation is able to challenge traditional models by blurring the conventional polarities of public vs. private, global vs. local, producer vs. consumer and need vs. wish. In this sense, social innovation disrupts the way of 'normally' doing things. This discontinuity is, however, heavily dependent on context; what is new in one context, culture of locality, might not be in another. Radical innovations do not only provide answers to questions, they have the ability to change the questions themselves, delivering solutions to problems for far less money than mainstream solutions (Manzini, 2015).

There are also several not-for-profit organisations that actively support and promote social innovation initiatives, albeit differing in their respective approaches, aims and emphases. Based in the UK, NESTA and the Young Foundation are institutes that stimulate social innovation theory and practice by conducting research and supporting projects, operating both on national and international levels through a network of partners. NESTA emphasises innovation as the driver of social change, whereas the Young Foundation focuses on combating inequality (NESTA, 2019; The Young Foundation, 2019). Ashoka is a global network of social entrepreneurs that stimulates and supports entrepreneurial solutions to social challenges by providing a platform which equips people with the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve social change in their own environment (Ashoka, 2019). BRAC, the world's largest development organisation is aimed at reducing poverty and operates social enterprises in various sectors that are strategically connected to their development programmes (BRAC, 2019).

However, it is only since the mid-2000s that social innovation as a concept made its appearance in the discourses of the various social science disciplines (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). Grimm et al. (2013) provide an overview of the most significant variations in meaning, contexts and emphasise that the concept of social innovation can have different meanings, depending on the context. In organisational studies, for example, social innovation can refer to social capital, such as creativity, learning and capacity building, and is used in the research of management structures and new types of client relations (Bakhshi & Throsby, 2010; Denning & Dunham, 2010). Social

innovation in the workplace is characterised as the participatory process of shaping the organisation of work and working life in which human, organisational and technological dimensions are combined to improve the quality of working life (Oeij, Klein Hesselink, & Dhondt, 2010). The concept of social innovation in environmental studies emphasises the complex nature of global ecological problems, where top-down technological innovations arguably fail to deliver long-term sustainable development and prevent climate change (Renings, 2000; Diedricha et al., 2011). Instead, bottom-up initiatives that are aimed at local contexts and interests are deemed to be more effective (Seyfang & Smith, 2007). In entrepreneurial studies, social innovation has been combined into the concept of social entrepreneurship (Bull, 2008; Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011), where entrepreneurs often engage in co-creation with their stakeholders (Sarasvathy & Venkataraman, 2011). Social innovation in social policy oftentimes refers to new forms of governance and hierarchies, such as public consultation and participation in decision-making, involving co-production of services (Needham, 2007).

In the past decade, methods common to design practice, such as visualisation, prototyping and co-creation, have been reported as being useful in the social innovation process (Murray, Caulier-Grice, & Mulgan, 2010). The popularity of design has been growing in social innovation, along with the promotion of its methods and practices through public bodies (Mindlab, Design Council), networks (DESI, DESIAP) and organisations offering their own proprietary models (IDEO, frogdesign) going hand-in-hand with the increasing interest in social innovation itself (Mulgan, 2014).

2.1.2 Design and social innovation

From the perspective of design studies, the origin of design and social innovation as an academic discipline is commonly attributed to the writings of Papanek (1971; 1985), whose appeal emphasised the importance of designers' social and moral responsibility towards their audience, addressing people's needs rather than their (artificially created) wants. His proposed approach, *integrated design*, views man, tools, environment, and ways of thinking and planning as a non-linear, simultaneous, integrated, comprehensive whole. Furthermore, he argues that the problem is to be placed in its social perspective, considering its history as well as the social groups, classes and societies involved. Design should aim to be ecologically responsible and socially responsive.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Margolin and Margolin (2002) ascertained that although there are those who design for social need, *social design* still lacks the

necessary structures, methods and objectives. In addition, the issues regarding how it might be commissioned, supported, and implemented have not been sufficiently addressed. Attributing these shortfalls to the lack of research of what design can do, they pick up where Papanek left off by proposing a broad agenda that explores the role and public perception of the socially responsible designer. Their work evaluates the current situation as well as future possibilities, increases funders' awareness regarding social design and considers the products that fulfil people's needs. Research methods such as surveys, interviews, participant observation and content analysis could examine these issues and the evaluation of design solutions in their actual environment is needed to test their effectiveness (Ibid.).

The complexity ladder was launched in 2005 by NextD, an experimental community sensemaking initiative founded by GK VanPatter and Elizabeth Pastor. Consisting of Design 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0, it distinguishes four design paradigms, ranging from traditional design to social transformation design (see table 2.1).

	Design 1.0 (D1)	Design 2.0 (D2)	Design 3.0 (D3)	Design 4.0 (D4)
Description	Traditional design	Product/service design	Organisational transformation design	Social transformation design
Stakeholders	Few	—————→	—————→	Many
Process	Partial process	—————→	—————→	Complete process
Scale	Small scale	—————→	—————→	Large scale
Complexity	Low complexity	—————→	—————→	High complexity
Fuzziness	Defined challenges	—————→	—————→	Undefined challenges

Table 2.1 The NextD complexity ladder. Adapted from VanPatter (2009).

The table shows that in the *traditional design* paradigm (Design 1.0), there are few stakeholders, designers are only involved in part of the process, operating on a small scale with low complexity and challenges that are clearly defined (often through a design brief). On the opposite side of the table is the *social transformation design* paradigm (Design 4.0), which has many groups of stakeholders with designers involved in the entire process, operating on a large scale with high complexity and where the challenges are uncertain and ill-defined. Although the terminology might differ, this design paradigm describes conditions that are similar to those that are found in many design and social innovation initiatives, including the cases in this study.

Product/service design (Design 2.0) and organisational transformation design (Design 3.0) are located somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. VanPatter stresses that although the four design paradigms did not originate at the same time, they do not necessarily replace one another and can exist simultaneously (Jones & VanPatter, 2009).

More recently, Manzini (2015) notes a gradual shift from the 20th century perspective of design, based on the industrial model in which design was considered an expert activity, to a more refined view that involves new actors in the design process, with a change in emphasis from products to services to organisations, and from close-ended to open-ended processes. Subsequently, he states that design is an inherent human capability that everyone can cultivate, but for some – the *design experts* – is a professional activity, whose role is to trigger and support open-ended co-design processes. Design *for* social innovation, as Manzini defines the activity, therefore is the expert design contribution to a co-design process aimed at social change. He argues that it is not a new kind of design, but it is one of the ways in which design already functions, or ought to be. Moreover, design for social innovation initiatives should exist in a favourable ecosystem supported by products, services and communication activities and should have the ability to be scaled-up and/or replicated.

2.1.3 The difference between social innovation and social enterprise

Both ‘social innovation’ and ‘social enterprise’ are used to designate initiatives that are driven by social rather than economic motives. However, to what extent the two terms differ from one another is not always clear. Leadbeater (2007) defines social innovation as a ‘cumulative, collaborative activity in which ideas are shared, tested, refined, developed and applied [...] to social issues’, whereas social enterprise is a business activity driven by a social purpose. As he argues that social enterprise policy should be included in a broader social innovation policy, it implies that a social enterprise is a form in which social innovation can manifest itself. Similarly, Phillips et al. (2015) suggest that social enterprises and social entrepreneurs are part of a *social innovation system*: a community consisting of both institutions and practitioners who address social issues together, thereby giving form to society and innovation in the process.

Markussen (2017), however, distinguishes ‘social innovation’, ‘social entrepreneurship’ and ‘social design’ by their aim, modus operandi, notion of social value, locus of innovation and effects (see table 2.2).²

	Social innovation	Social entrepreneurship	Social design
Aim	To remedy system errors	To remedy market errors	To improve life conditions for a disadvantaged group
Modus operandi	Participatory processes based on a cross-sectorial systemic approach	Participatory processes based on a business approach	Co-design processes and material aesthetic practices in the form of infrastructuring contradictory interests and resources
Locus of innovation	The innovation is created out of interactive processes shaped by the collective sharing of knowledge between a wide range of organisations, sectors and civic society	The innovation is created by either ‘the lone visionary’ entrepreneur or the social enterprise	Social design is created out of a collaborative design process where designers involve a specific group of citizens, public and private partners to achieve social change
Effect	Large-scale transformations that lead to a new social equilibrium and that allow others to copy ideas and transfer the innovation	Large-scale transformations that lead to a new social equilibrium and that allow others to copy ideas and transfer the innovation	Micro-scale effects that may reach a meso-level, but these effects rarely ‘break out of their limited frame’

Table 2.2 Summary of an analysis conducted by Markussen (2017) of research literature on social innovation, social entrepreneurship and social design. Adapted from Markussen (2017).

The table shows that although social innovation and social entrepreneurship are similar in terms of effect, their aim, modus operandi and locus of innovation are perceived to be different from one another; social entrepreneurship adopts a market-based approach, whereas social innovation is system-based. In addition, innovation in a social enterprise occurs in relative solitude, while in a social innovation initiative it often involves multitude of actors.

Sinclair et al. (2018) recognise that social entrepreneurship and social innovation are often conflated and that there is a need to distinguish between the two, as not all social enterprises are social innovations (and vice versa). However, they note that the

² The social design component was included here as it was part of the original table. It will not be discussed in this section as Markussen’s view on social design is largely congruent with other scholars (discussed in section 2.2).

vagueness surrounding the concepts and therefore their flexibility is also the reason why they are appealing in both political and international spheres.

Following Leadbeater (2007) and Phillips et al. (2015), this thesis views social entrepreneurship as one of the manifestations of social innovation, rather than the more discrete differentiation made by Markussen (2017). The case studies discussed in chapters 4-6 show that in terms of the aim, *modus operandi* and locus of innovation, the boundaries between social innovation and social entrepreneurship often remain blurry or in some cases tend to overlap, making a strict distinction difficult. Therefore, characterising all cases in this thesis as social innovation initiatives, with some being social enterprises as well, would be more helpful. Furthermore, as the focus of the thesis lies on the role of *design* in social innovation; whether or not an initiative has a systemic or business approach is deemed to be less relevant.

2.2 Current themes in academic discourse

Some of the concepts envisioned by Papanek more than 45 years ago have come to pass. Design and social innovation, which could be considered as the current iteration of his notion of integrated design, is recognised as a valid field of practice and study, although it is considered as still maturing (Irwin, 2015). Furthermore, design in the 21st century has diversified to encompass both commercial and social design. Some of the issues that Margolin & Margolin (2002) highlighted were addressed in the past decade and are now part of the on-going discourse, which is mostly dominated by academics, non-profits, governments, and to a lesser extent, practitioners with or without a design background. The next sections provide an overview of the prevalent themes in the study of design and social innovation: how it is framed, what the role of the designer is, the various ways it could be sustained and the significance of social relations.

2.2.1 The framing of design and social innovation

The most common interpretation of the concept of design and social innovation is that the application of design methods can advance or strengthen social innovation, thereby providing creative solutions that reach beyond traditional structures and methods (Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Mulgan, 2014).

Exploratory studies illustrating how a design approach could benefit social innovation practice include the comprehensive publications by Emerging User

Demands for Sustainable Solutions (EMUDE), a project funded by the European Commission (EMUDE, 2019). Through its network, consisting of teams of researchers and students from eight European design schools, the two EMUDE books edited by Meroni (2007) and Jégou & Manzini (2008), identify a total of 80 promising cases to which design could provide a positive contribution. Examples include *Neighbourhood Shares*, where residents take over certain maintenance tasks from the local government, *Collective Rooms*, where certain apartment spaces are designated as collective spaces where residents can interact, and *Washing Restaurant*, which combines the activities of eating out and doing the laundry into one.

Binding the case studies are the underlying *creative communities*, characterised as groups of creative and entrepreneurial people who reorganise existing local resources into new ways of social exchange. Connected to networks of similar initiatives taking place elsewhere in the world, they exchange information, aligning individual goals to broader social and environmental goals (Meroni, 2007).

In some cases, these creative communities can develop into *collaborative organisations*, aimed at producing both specific results and social quality. In contrast to the idea of a 'traditional' social enterprise, centred around one individual creating social value by him or herself, in a diffused social enterprise, all stakeholders are directly and actively involved in the social innovation process. Examples of collaborative organisations are *collaborative services* and *collaborative enterprises*, in which users and/or consumers are actively involved as co-designers and co-producers, and *participative institutions*, where certain sections of institutions operate locally on defined projects with the participation of local stakeholders (Jégou & Manzini, 2008; Manzini, 2015).

Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan (2010) go one step further by highlighting specific design disciplines and methods that are deemed useful during various stages of the social innovation process. Design disciplines considered helpful include service design (personalised support services), product design (visualisation techniques), web design (web-based solutions) and urban design (participatory planning). Design methods and tools include visualisation by design (idea generation), co-design (user engagement), design for extreme conditions (as inspiration for 'normal' users), design thinking (fostering creativity), prototyping (testing products and services) and design labs (as a strategic tool).

Two characteristics of design are emphasised in particular in academic discourse: design as a creative force, primarily through the design thinking approach, and design as a democratisation tool, through the co-creation approach inspired by the field of participatory design.

2.2.1.1 Design framed as a creative force

The creative and/or disruptive qualities of design are often put forward as valuable assets in the social innovation process. Freire, Borba & Diebold (2011) view the main benefit of design in social innovation as the use of *design culture*, a consolidated process which organises individuals' creativity with the aim of finding new solutions, including the configuration of the problem itself. Manzini (2014) characterises the design process, in which various actors participate at different times and in different ways, as dynamic and unpredictable. He suggests that by using design, with or without the aid of designers, groups of citizens can experience new ways of being and doing and come up with new solutions or new opportunities. Calvo & De Rosa (2017) state that the act of designing can influence people's perceptions and assumptions about reality as well as affect their behaviour. IDEO.org employs *human-centred design* to improve the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable communities, claiming that even complex problems such as poverty, gender equality, and clean water can be solved using this approach (IDEO.org, 2015).

The design approach that is frequently foregrounded by both academics and practitioners in this context is design thinking, which makes use of capacities that are neglected in traditional problem-solving approaches, but are present in everyone, such as intuitiveness, pattern recognition, the generation of ideas with both emotional and functional meaning and alternative ways of self-expression (Brown & Wyatt, 2010). Although there are many variations in its application, design thinking typically entails a phase in which a problem is identified and the users' needs and experiences are investigated, followed by an idea generation phase, often by a multidisciplinary group of professionals or stakeholders. Next, the most viable ideas are selected for prototyping after which the team will either return to one of the previous phases or move on to implement the product or service, sometimes supplemented by a (visual) communication strategy. The phases are not necessarily fixed in this order, can include additional steps and can re-occur or be revisited during the process.

Increasingly moving towards practical application, Meroni, Fassi & Simeone (2013), discuss how design and social innovation can be practiced in action research using the implementation of two projects from Polimi DESIS as examples. *Coltivando*, a co-creation community garden project located at the Politecnico di Milano was developed by postgraduate students and was co-designed by local residents. *Nutrire Milano* (Feeding Milan) examines how design and social innovation can connect local food producers with its consumers using a network of services. Both projects were implemented using the *Social Innovation Journey*, an action research framework that systematises recurring activities in research projects in order to understand the current stage of social innovation as well as the potential of future stages. In eight steps, from raising awareness, through the identification of experts and topics for action, generating and co-creating ideas towards a solution, to prototyping and incubation, the model guides designers in terms of what action should be taken at which stage.

Authors have also explored various fields in which a design thinking approach could be applied. In their study of how design thinking could be implemented in the context of social enterprises in Italy, Selloni & Corubolo (2017) found that such an approach could have an essential role in supporting, accelerating and democratising social innovation. Co-design activities with users and other actors (discussed in 2.2.1.2) were considered as a possible solution to some of the problems currently present in the social enterprise and public sector, granting an opportunity for the organisation to refocus on organisational change and reconnect with its users. For social enterprises, this is of particular significance as it serves a reminder that their attention should be directed towards individuals and bottom-up practices, rather than public institutions and top-down rules.

Valentine et al. (2017) explored how a design thinking and social innovation culture could be cultivated in a health and social care environment. In five design sprints held in the city of Dundee in Scotland, large interdisciplinary groups, each consisting of 75 participants, were encouraged to utilise design methods and techniques that use a user-centred perspective. Each design sprint took place over a period of five days, with each individual day dedicated to one of the phases of problem identification and problem solving: understanding, diverging, converging, refining and communicating. By undergoing the five phases in the design sprint, participants gained experience into the theory and practice of design thinking, prototyping, agile management, research techniques, critical thinking, and developed empathy and

resilience. The authors found design thinking to be a suitable to consider alternative models of teamwork in the context of health care and offered the opportunity for those unfamiliar with design or design thinking to get acquainted with design as a strategy to achieve change.

The added value of design in the process of social innovation is also described as a certain mind-set, by proposing solutions either through design skills or “a designerly way of knowing and doing” (Cipolla & Moura, 2012), possessing “designerly thinking as an attitude” (Cairns, 2017) or introducing “a new culture” (Selloni & Corubolo, 2017a). Kimbell (2011) classifies design thinking discourses by distinguishing the concept to be interpreted as either a cognitive style, a general theory of design or an organisational resource (see table 2.3).

Design thinking...	as a cognitive style	as a general theory of design	as an organisational resource
Design's purpose	Problem solving	Taming wicked problems	Innovation
Key concepts	Design ability as a form of intelligence; reflection-inaction, abductive thinking	Design has no special subject matter of its own	Visualization, prototyping, empathy, integrative thinking, abductive thinking
Nature of design problems	Design problems are ill-structured, problem and solution co-evolve	Design problems are wicked problems	Organizational problems are design problems

Table 2.3 Classification of design thinking discourses. Adapted from Kimbell (2011).

The design thinking approach is also popular with the initiatives studied in this research; in all three cities visited during the field research there was at least one initiative that utilised it. In some instances explicitly, such as in the Goodseed initiative, where it is mentioned as one of the skills that is taught during the programme. Other initiatives, such as Fine Dying (SI.DLab), Co-create Charoenkrung (TCDC), CROSSs, Pom Mahakan and Think City, do not specifically mention the term ‘design thinking’, but use an approach which could be characterised as design thinking, or a variant thereof.³

The definition posited by Manzini (2015) could perhaps be considered as the most ambitious. Referring to it as design *for* social innovation, it entails the contribution

³ The case studies will be described in detail in chapters 4-6.

of design experts to a co-design process that is aimed at creating social change, noting that it is not a new kind of design, rather a way in which design already functions. In addition, he makes a clear distinction between social design and design for social innovation. The former is aimed at solving social problems, whereas the latter is geared at creating meaningful social innovations, which are not necessarily aimed at a disadvantaged group, such as the poor. Furthermore, the term 'social design' implies that it is a 'special' sort of design, a charitable activity, and therefore a complementary activity, existing next to 'normal' commercial design. Design for social innovation however, has an alternate business model altogether and is (or should be) design itself and not a separate form of design.

2.2.1.2 Design framed as a democratisation tool

Along with the focus on the creative aspects of design, the activity of co-creation or co-designing with end users or stakeholders is emphasised as one of the beneficial contributions of design in social innovation practice.

Transformation design was the British Design Council's RED unit's approach to address social and economic issues through design-led innovation and was characterised by using participatory design to involve the stakeholders from the beginning of the process. In addition, the designers should provide the actors with the tools, skills and organizational capacity to continue and sustain the change initiated (Burns et al., 2006). The Design Council has continued this approach, with social innovation now constituting one of its five key areas of work, stating that design can provide valuable and tangible contributions that could help solve various complex social challenges (Design Council, 2019).

Sanders & Stappers (2008) distinguish between the concepts of co-creation and co-design: whereas co-design (or participatory design) refers to the creativity of designers and non-designers collaborating in the design process, co-creation is a much broader term that can refer to any kind of collective act of creativity. Co-design therefore is a specific type of co-creation. Furthermore, they suggest that co-creation which is implemented at the beginning of the design process can achieve long-term positive impact. The authors further argue that applying participatory design at key decision moments throughout the entire design process when dealing with problems on a large scale can change both design and the world itself.

DiSalvo et al. (2011) consider design and social innovation to be more related to co-design and participatory design rather than 'traditional' design and innovation, which retains the stance of the designer as the main agent or author. As neither design or designers are given a special position in the design and social innovation process compared to other forms of knowing or acting, they propose that the collective articulation of issues as a service might be the value that design adds in the social innovation process. Through providing this service, design can reveal factors, relations and consequences of an issue, which can then be used as a foundation for social innovation.

Björgvinsson, Ehn & Hillgren (2012) note that the design thinking approach shares many similarities with participatory design, which begins from the idea that the people who are affected by design should be part of the design process, particularly stakeholders that are weak in resources. Moreover, they perceive participatory design as a modern version of *Things*, Nordic and Germanic assemblies, rituals and places where ancient societies gathered to discuss a variety of issues. Moving from designing *things* (objects) to designing *Things* (socio-material assemblies) is perceived by the authors as a fundamental challenge for contemporary design and designers.

Similarly, Cairns (2017) proposed notion of *designerly thinking*⁴, which he defines as the generation of meaningful possibilities, is not limited to professional designers and requires the involvement of the affected stakeholders throughout the entire design process. Even though stakeholders individually might have arguments that appear to be emotional or irrational, these need to be appreciated in the design process as he considers them the true owners of the issue that is being addressed. In order to achieve this goal, he recommends that stakeholders must be involved in the design process as equals from the beginning, through *collaborative realization*. In this approach, stakeholders actively participate and are engaged and embedded in the entire process, instead of just being invited at specific key moments (Cairns & Matthews, 2015).

2.2.1.3 Challenging the dominant perspective on the role of design

The promise that design can introduce creativity and democracy into the social innovation process is an important part of the dominant narrative on design and social

⁴ Unrelated to the *designerly ways of knowing* proposed by Cross (1982).

innovation. However, this perspective tends to be overly optimistic and relatively uncritical, reiterating the strengths of design, with significantly less emphasis given to its weaknesses.

Publications by the non-profit organisations NESTA and The Young Foundation are frequently presented as support for the use of design in social innovation. For example, the use of visualisation techniques, the user-centred approach, ideation, prototyping and systems thinking are mentioned as some of the strengths of design (Murray et al., 2010; Mulgan, 2014). However, Mulgan (2014) also notes a lack of evidence and formal evaluation of design methods. Moreover, designers often have insufficient implementation skills, do not have sufficient knowledge of organisational issues and cultures and are unwilling to learn from others.

In their review of higher education institutions in the UK, Armstrong et al. (2014) point out several issues in social design research. Some of their most important findings include that design research lacks criticality, is not aimed at building knowledge but mainly service-oriented, fragmented and dominated by problem solving type of projects. The agenda for research is dominated by non-academic organisations, which have their own interests. Moreover, the political motivations of social design itself are often unclear. Design practitioners experience difficulties in dealing with the challenges that are posed to them and their understanding of macro-economic, social and policy drivers is minimal.

Kiem (2011) recognises that design should be considered in any kind of social innovation approach, as designed artefacts are a prerequisite when dealing with the social, but also points out that research on the role of power and politics in the process is lacking. Moreover, he questions whether the popularity that social innovation has been experiencing can be attributed due to its actual success or rather its usefulness to the existing political structures. Therefore, social innovation's strength of initiating change will be severely limited if design and social innovation studies remain reluctant to take the political dimension into account.

In their critical review, Janzer & Weinstein (2014) assert that social design mainly employs two methods: design thinking and human-centred design. They problematise this by asserting that its theory is still based on traditional human-centred priorities, which tend to be object-centric, rather than shifting to situation-centred priorities, which are social-centric. Akama, Hagen & Whaanga-Schollum (2019) observe that outside of academia, design methods are often used as substitutes for design outcomes,

disregarding ethics or safety. Von Busch & Palmås (2016) find it curious that even though traditional design has the tendency to judge on outcomes, design and social innovation instead emphasises “the value of the design process for collective aims”, therefore implying that social outcomes that are beneficial are somehow expected. The authors warn that this practice might disguise the fact that these processes in some cases fail to deliver.

In addition, several authors have also questioned design and social innovation’s effectivity and underlined the ambiguity of the design thinking and co-creation approaches, the two ‘pillars’ that support both its study and practice. In their review of 26 European design and social innovation studies, Komatsu et al. (2016) found that the implementation of design in social innovation initiatives was not significant on either strategic nor operational level (see also section 2.3.2). Kimbell (2011) notes that neither the general public, nor those who claim to practice design thinking, appear to have a good understanding of the concept. In her extensive review, in which she traces the history of the concept through four decades, she identifies three main issues. First, in accounts of design thinking a dualism often exists between thinking and action, and between the designer and the context in which the design activity occurs. Second, there is an assumption that design thinking is a quality shared by all designers, without taking into account the differences of how the design professions and institutions have evolved individually. Third, designers are emphasised as the main agents in design.

Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla & Çetinkaya (2013) distinguish between two distinct design thinking discourses: *designerly thinking*⁵ refers to the academic field of design, which links theory and practice from a design perspective and *design thinking*, a popularised management version of designerly thinking in which design practice and competence are discussed beyond the context of design. Although the difference between these two discourses is of less relevance in the context of this thesis, the two dimensions that are deemed by the authors to have been ‘lost in translation’ from designerly thinking into design thinking are interesting to note. First, the notion of design thinking tends to be equated to creativity, whereas the latter is only one of the many aspects of a professional designer’s practice. Second, design thinking is often visualised as a toolbox. However, the specific design methods are often taken out of context and presented as tools that anyone can use, disregarding the fact that some

⁵ Unrelated to Cairns' (2017) notion of designerly thinking

tools need trained professionals (designers) who know how and when to use them. Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla & Çetinkaya (2013) note that design thinking discourses are based on the assumption that designers' ways of thinking and problem solving somehow differ from (business) managers, of which there is little empirical evidence.

Co-creation approaches, in particular their outcomes, have also been the subject of criticism. Voorberg, Bekkers & Tummers (2015) conducted a systematic review of 122 articles and books spanning a six-year period (1987–2013), which discussed co-creation or co-production with citizens in public innovation. They found that there were few studies that addressed the actual outcomes of the co-creation/co-production process. Moreover, whenever outcomes were reported, the emphasis tended to be on whether the effectiveness of the public service was enhanced. This suggested that the act of co-creation/co-production did not need to be legitimised by any external objectives, but was in fact a virtue in itself. The authors therefore conclude that they could not ascertain whether co-creation/co-production significantly contributed to the outcome of the social innovation process or whether there was a relationship between the degree of citizen involvement in the process and the outcome.

This section has demonstrated that the evidence of design's ability to contribute to the social innovation process in a significant and meaningful way is scarce. Therefore, the premise that design can solve complex social problems is built on a foundation which at best can be characterised as shaky. Several weaknesses of design and social innovation that have been pointed out are its limited usefulness, lack of critical evaluation and apolitical stance. From the observations by Mulgan (2014), it can be concluded that designers are locked in their own bubble, resulting in them being closed-minded and lacking knowledge in areas of implementation as well as organisational culture.

Furthermore, the dominant image that is projected of design and social innovation is one that is one-sided, focusing on the terms 'design' and 'social', simplifying their respective meanings and associations. In this perspective, 'design' is interpreted to be largely equal to 'creative', whereas 'social' implies 'co-creation'. Yet, the evidence that design thinking and co-creation contribute to the social innovation process in a significant way is lacking.

The notion of the mere act of co-creation being seen as a virtue in public innovation, as noted by Voorberg, Bekkers & Tummers (2015), can be extended to design and social innovation as well, with the presence of design somehow perceived as a given in social innovation, even in accounts that are critical regarding its role. The *question* 'What can design do to support social innovation?' appears to have been superseded by the *statement* 'How design can support social innovation'.

2.2.2 The role of the designer

There is an interesting duality present in the perception of the designer's role in social innovation. Through the lens of social innovation studies, the role of designers has often been ill-defined, or in some cases barely recognised. Furthermore, their agency is considered to be weak (Armstrong et al., 2014). In contrast, through the lens of design and social innovation studies, there is an implicit assumption that the designer is the one who is chiefly responsible for introducing change. Within the latter discourse, which is often design-centric, the perception of designers as the catalyst in social innovation appears to have been challenged relatively recently (Kimbell, 2011; 2012).

However, Markus (1972, cited in Lawson, 2005) already distinguished three perspectives on the role of the designer in society several decades ago. In the first role, which is the most conservative, designers are connected to neither clients or makers and wait for commissions. The second role is the exact opposite, where designers function as campaigners, associating directly with community. In this role, however, designers would lose their professional role as well as independence, power and influence, since their resources would be severely limited. The third role lies in between the first two and assumes that designers remain professional experts, but involve users in the design process, which appears to be the direction that designers have eventually followed in design and social innovation.

Papanek (1971; 1985) also notes the changing role of designers, stating that they should not be focused on merely attempting to be more creative than others, but instead function as *comprehensive synthesists*. He argues that designers should not only be 'vertical' subject specialists, but to a certain extent also 'horizontal', acting as a bridge between different disciplines. Blaming the design education system for training vertical specialists instead of horizontal generalists, or synthesists, Designers must bring broad, non-specialised interactive insights to teams, combined with a sense of social responsibility. Papanek envisions an ideal situation where designers and

non-designers could meet to engage in design, learning, studying, teaching, experimenting and discussing with one another.

Elaborating on Papanek, Brown & Wyatt (2010) call for the *t-shaped designer*, whose depth of skill is complimented by an empathy for people and disciplines other than design, stressing the importance of a designer being able to function within multidisciplinary teams. Additional desirable characteristics include openness, curiosity, optimism, learning through doing and experimentation.

The role of the *designer* should, however, not be confused with the role of *design*, although both terms are at times used interchangeably (Cipolla & Moura, 2012; Mulgan, 2014). The shift in the role of the designer in design and social innovation, along with the fact that design methods can be employed by non-designers as well, makes it questionable whether the emphasis should still be placed on those who practice design on a professional basis. In this study, therefore, a distinction between the two is made; issues surrounding the framing and perception of *design* are discussed in sections 2.2.1 and chapter 8, whereas the role of the *designer* is discussed in section 2.2.2 and chapter 9.

2.2.2.1 The democratisation of the non-designer

It was asserted in section 2.2.1 that the commonly held perception of design and social innovation rests upon two fundamentals: design thinking and co-design. Within these respective approaches, the position of stakeholders has moved towards, or is supposed to be, equal to the designers, promoting users, clients, citizens and other actors, to be co-creators or co-designers. It may therefore not be surprising that this democratisation of the design process is assumed to be an integral part of design and social innovation as well, in turn implicating the status and role of the designer in the process. This section will first examine the past and current role of the designer in design thinking and participatory design, which will then serve as a background to the discussion of the perspectives on the designer's role in design and social innovation.

Along with the three approaches to design thinking as distinguished by Kimbell (2011), she thereby also indicates different roles that designers fulfil (see table 2.1, p.33). In the first two approaches, the role of the designer is usually defined as a maker of things, with an on-going tension between the physical (objects) or abstract (services, experiences) realm. Here, designers are perceived to have a unique perspective on

problems and their solutions. The third approach, however, is underpinned by empathy, as designers are perceived to be key interpreters of users' needs, understanding and incorporating end users' needs into the solutions they conceive.

In their discussion of the evolution of participatory design, Sanders & Stappers (2008) point out that the discipline is changing. When describing the respective roles of the researcher, user and designer in the design process, they state that traditionally the researcher's role was to serve as a translator between the user and the designer, who were both perceived to be largely passive. The designer's role is to generate ideas and concepts that are based on the input they receive, gained from the user via the researcher. However, in a co-design process the user is considered the expert and is also responsible for the idea and concept generation. The researcher (who can also be a designer) functions as a facilitator and is responsible for providing the tools for ideation and visualising or executing the user's ideas. The authors conclude that designers should therefore lead, guide, encourage and provide the framework for people of all levels of creativity to express themselves.

In her typology of design participation based on its discourse, Lee (2008) proposes a continuum with at one end the abstract space where experts and designers work and at the other end the concrete space where people ('ordinary' citizens) live. In between lies the realm of collaboration where designers and people meet. Based on these realms, she distinguishes the four different roles that designers assume, depending on the space of operation and the motivation for design participation (see table 2.4).

Space of operation	What is Design Participation for?	The role of 'designers'	The role of 'users'
Abstract space (occupied by designers and experts)	Innovation (designer only)	Masters/authorities	Imagined user/representatives
Realm of collaboration (where designers and people meet)	Collaboration (designer-driven)	Co-designers/facilitators	Co-workers/partners
	Emancipation (user-driven)	Stimulators	Creative people/advisers
Concrete space (occupied by people)	Motivation (user only)	Craftsmen/builders	Active clients

Table 2.4 Typology of design participation. Adapted from Lee (2008).

Using the typology as a basis for conjecture, she proposes three new roles for designers that would stimulate mutual understanding and collaboration between the different actors. *Design developers* encourage the transformation of the participatory process within the design community, *design facilitators* transfer design knowledge in order to emancipate the people and *design generators* explore how design thinking can be used by professionals.

Similar views are held regarding the roles of the designer and the user, or in the context of design and social innovation: the citizen, community member, stakeholder or actor. Jégou & Manzini (2008) attribute the changing role of the designer to a shift in context to one in which designers have to work alongside other stakeholders who might be 'amateur' designers or not designers at all, while acknowledging that designers can no longer monopolise creativity in design and social innovation. However, the authors describe the designer's new role as asserting themselves as experts when collaborating with other stakeholders, but at the same time interacting with them in a peer-to-peer manner. Describing society as an interwoven web of *designing networks*, they view the designers' responsibility to be feeding these networks with their specific design skills, capabilities and sensitivities.

In addition, Jégou and Manzini distinguish two modalities in which designers can operate. When designing *in* creative communities, designers co-design with other actors. In order to facilitate the sharing of ideas and solutions, new design skills are needed, such as promoting collaboration between various stakeholders, helping to construct shared visions and scenarios and combining existing products and services to support the creative communities. When designing *for* creative communities, designers intervene in collaborative organisations (see also p.30) to increase their accessibility and effectiveness. Skills required here are conceiving and developing advanced solutions and/or enabling initiatives, such as platforms and events, for the collaborative organisation in question.

Manzini (2015) further specifies the designer's role by refining the different modalities for *design experts* (professional designers). As *facilitators*, experts facilitate by helping others to take on and maintain a design approach. In the role of *activists*, experts initiate collaborations by highlighting certain conditions, thereby provoking action. When operating as *strategists*, design experts use their strategic design abilities to generate visions and proposals, which promote collaboration between actors and

connect local initiatives with wider ones. As *cultural promoters*, designers use their design culture to create a positive circle of action and reflection: being critical of the existing state of things, but at the same time being able to propose new ideas and values to improve them.

The expert role of design professionals is also highlighted by Sanders & Stappers (2008) when discussing their role in the co-design process, as designers possess knowledge that other stakeholders lack. Moreover, designers are perceived to be the creators of new tools and methods to be used by non-designers to express themselves in a creative manner.

Elaborating on the roles of designers and non-designers, Manzini (2015) distinguishes between *expert design* (conducted by designers) and *diffuse design* (conducted by non-designers). He goes on describing the effect of social innovation in design itself as the fact that the design *process* has become separated from the *design initiative* (activities that trigger and/or support a design process). In the past, both the design process and design initiative were the responsibility of designers, whereas now the design process can involve several (non-designer) actors and it is only the design initiative that lies with the designer(s).

Although in these perspectives non-designers are recognised as also being capable of demonstrating designerly skills, this recognition is only partial, as they are not considered completely equal to the design expert, who still appears to occupy a position that is situated above the other actors and stakeholders.

Other authors see a more intermediary role for designers. Freire, Borba, & Diebold (2011), for example, describe designers as interpreters of the needs of their subjects, who are perceived as the actual experts on the matter, and find solutions for them accordingly. The people's role in the process is to collaborate with the designer to co-create solutions, whereas the role of the designer is facilitating the involvement of people in the creation process. Similarly, Selloni & Corubolo (2017b) propose the notion of designers as *cultural operators*, who would be able to support, accelerate and democratise the innovation process by translating between diffuse and expert design. By co-designing both internally and externally, and experimenting with different forms of collaborations, such as co-design, co-production and co-management, this could ultimately lead to more collaborative models of governance. Designers can then function as advocates, connecting grassroots causes to governments.

Catoir-Brisson et al. (2016) view the role of the designer in social innovation to be a *coordinator* of co-design projects, akin to a film director, contrasting it to the traditional role of the designer as a “maestro”.

In the *collaborative realization* approach put forward by Cairns (2017), which entails the participation of end users in the entire design and social innovation process, the solution will be owned by the end users themselves. However, this solution will still be informed by the professional designer’s expertise, who can point out possibilities outside of users’ experience and challenge “myopic” views. The most important contribution of the expert designer, he notes, is their skills and capability to determine what is (subconsciously) valued intrinsically by the end user.

Designers can also assume an activist role in social innovation as described by Meroni, Fassi & Simeone (2013). In this context, a designer’s tasks could consist of activities such as identifying a topic for action, involving pro-active people/experts, generating and selecting ideas, defining timing, roles and exit strategy, co-designing with the community, developing the solution, producing an event-like prototype or taking the idea to an incubator.

An investigation by Tan (2012) of seven design projects of the Dott 07 (Designs of the Time 2007) initiative, in which designers collaborated with public and social organisations as well as communities, revealed seven roles that designers could assume within the process. Echoing several of the roles proposed by other authors, designers could function as co-creators, researchers, capacity builders, facilitators, social entrepreneurs, provocateurs and strategists. The author notes that aside from the role of co-creator, all other roles also exist in other disciplines. Therefore, she recommends that designers should articulate their roles from the beginning, stressing that they should not aim to replace other professionals’ positions, but instead collaborate with other disciplines in order to tackle complex issues together.

Chick (2012), however, observes that design has already moved further than the democratisation of the design process. The designer’s role is to design outside of the boundaries of a given project, redesigning the solution towards future stakeholders. In a similar fashion, Björgvinsson, Ehn & Hillgren (2010) believe that a designer’s responsibilities should extend beyond the traditional participatory design approach. Instead of only focusing on prototyping (‘use before actual use’), designers should also consider the fact that future stakeholders can be designers (‘design after design’).

Likewise, Manzini (2015) suggests that designers should now focus on creating *enabling ecosystems*, which help to expand people's capabilities. Within these ecosystems, expert design could contribute to its activation through skills such as visualisation (participatory mapping and highlighting promising cases), storytelling (providing the skills, techniques and proposing cultural contexts) and scenario building (design-oriented visions or reality). The designer's role herein is to expand *diffuse* designers' capabilities to use expert design skills in a co-design process. For example, by using toolkits. The authors note that designers should not attempt to control the design process, but initiate and support it.

Table 2.5 summarises the different suggested roles that designers can assume in design thinking, participatory design and design and social innovation.

Role of designer	Author(s)	Responsibilities
Experts, masters, authorities, activists, capacity builders	Sanders & Stappers, Manzini, Lee, Meroni et al., Cairns, Tan	Designers are main agents or catalysts for creativity and innovation
Facilitators, interpreters cultural operators	Lee, Freire et al., Seloni & Corubolo, Cairns, Tan	Designers facilitate or translate stakeholders' ideas and/or wishes
Directors / coordinators	Catoir-Brisson et al.,	Designers are coordinators of the process
Developers	Lee	Designers encourage participatory processes within design industry
Generators	Lee	Designers explore how design thinking can be used by professionals
Strategists	Tan	Designers should connect people to policy
Social entrepreneurs	Tan	Designer utilise design methodologies to stimulate social entrepreneurship
Researchers	Tan	Designers conduct research for inspiration and to build design capability
'Futurists', provocateurs	Chick, Hillgren et al., Manzini, Tan	Designers design for future stakeholders or for future scenarios

Table 2.5 Different interpretations of the role of the designer in social innovation.

Some alternatives have been offered that fall outside of the mainstream view of designers. One such approach comes from Thorpe & Gamman (2011), who warn that designers in the position of outsiders should not adopt a *paternalistic* approach, in

which they assume responsibility for solving problem(s). This approach, the authors argue, originates from a model based on needs, rather than assets and is unlikely to be sustainable in the long run. Instead, either a *maternalistic* or *fraternalistic* approach should be utilised. In a maternalistic approach, facilitation to other actors in the design process is offered in 'dosages', in the sense that the designer does not attempt to do everything or assume that they can. The designer should aim to enable the actors to develop their own capacities, using their own assets. In the fraternalistic approach, the designer does not lead the (co)design process and contributes according to their own context and abilities, assuming a role in which they have presumed to have similar agency and responsibility as the other actors involved.

In their case studies of design in the voluntary community sector involving three charity organisations, Warwick & Young (2016) demonstrate that the trust in the designer as a person outweighs the trust in the design approach. In order to create new perspectives for the charities, the designer needs both to challenge and encourage the participants in the process, where they characterise the designer's role as akin to the concept of the *critical friend*. In this approach by Costa & Kallick (1993), which originates from educational studies, the critical friend is a trusted person who provides a perspective through another lens, asks provocative questions and offers criticism on someone's work in the role of a friend. In addition, the critical friend makes an effort to understand the context in which the work is done and aims to work towards the outcomes that the person is intending. Essential in the critical friendship is the building of trust, which the critical friend can earn by listening well, not passing value judgments unless asked, responding to the work with integrity and acting as an advocate for the success of the work. Moreover, Warwick & Young (2016) point out that discussion regarding the befriending of stakeholders in order to earn their trust, which then enables to assume the role of a critic, is currently lacking.

The designer as a *community builder*, one of the seven roles proposed by Yee, Jefferies & Michlewski (2017), envisions designers creating an open (physical and mental) environment in which the community is encouraged to interact and share ideas. Aside from providing the tools and techniques, designers are responsible for maintaining an empathic atmosphere, allowing for intimate connections with the stakeholders involved.

Akama, Hagen & Whaanga-Schollum (2019) indicate that the dominant view of (design) practitioners in design and social innovation is that they are "culturally neutral,

objective, interchangeable, and a-geographical". The authors argue that this is not the case, as the designers' backgrounds influence what they have become and how they practice design. Designers might therefore bring their own biases into the social innovation process. A reflexive attitude in terms of their position within the existing framework that they step into, taking into account the dynamic power relations, is crucial due to the social nature of the work they engage in.

2.2.2.2 The role of design education

The role of design education in relation to the designer's role in social innovation or when addressing societal issues has been highlighted by several authors. In the beginning of the century, Margolin & Margolin (2002) stressed the importance of social design students learning more about social needs and how they are currently being addressed. In addition, they need to be more multidisciplinary, particularly brushing up on sociology, psychology and public policy.

Discussing the introduction of co-creation to design practice, Sanders & Stappers (2008) envisioned that future design practices would have a significant impact on design education. Although initially disruptive, design practice and design research would eventually merge together, creating new tools, methods and opportunities for both designers and researchers. Several years later, however, Fry (2015) observes that design education still tends to direct its gaze inward rather than outward, thereby extending the status quo instead of addressing the issues that it (too) helped to create. Furthermore, one of the key issues of current design education is that it is disengaged from the outside world, as its agenda is bound by various pedagogic, professional, political and market-driven processes and practices. The result is a fundamental gap between what designers are taught and what designers actually need to know in order to create a world that is more sustainable.

Penin, Staszowski & Brown (2015) acknowledge the difficulties that designers face when engaging in public sector innovation projects, stating that designers are new and inexperienced in this field. Educators therefore must reconsider how complex social and political issues should be approached and framed in an educational context, as the understanding required for effective participation is currently still lacking. The authors argue that instead of relying on interventions based on design methods, design education should move towards more informed interventions based on a

transdisciplinary approach that expands beyond design, including disciplines such as public policy, management studies and anthropology.

Likewise, Vodeb (2015) signals “a neoliberal commodification of higher education and design degrees”, noting that the critical discourses around social design have little influence on design education and warns that unless designers are taught to be aware of the agency of design in the outside world and the need to collaborate with other disciplines, they are effectively “designing blind”.

In her discussion of two case studies which address social issues in Singaporean public housing estates, Chon (2018) calls for design and social innovation practice and education to recognise that human interactions, such as creative place making, are essential in the implementation of social design. In her social innovation model for design education she suggests maintaining a manageable project scope and appropriate objectives, along with realistic design interventions and clear evaluations in order to increase the effectiveness of solutions. In addition, she emphasises the necessity of initiatives’ ability to produce solutions that are self-sustainable by the community.

Design education has not managed to keep up with design and social innovation’s development in practice. Calls for changes in design education were made nearly two decades ago (Young, Blair & Cooper, 2001), but this still not sufficiently reflected in design schools’ curricula. The lack of awareness of social and political issues and multidisciplinary collaboration are known weaknesses of the design approach in social innovation (see section 2.2.1.3), but appear to have already been present in design education.

2.2.3 The sustaining of initiatives

The short-term nature of designers’ involvement with an initiative and, once involved, their responsibility to ensure its survival in the long-term has been recognised for some time (Burns et al., 2006; Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Iversen & Dindler, 2014), even though this task is seemingly paradoxical. Therefore, the community or end users should ideally be responsible for the continuation of design and social innovation initiatives (Janzer & Weinstein, 2014; Wang, Bryan-Kinns, & Ji, 2016; Cairns, 2017). However, the question of how exactly is less well understood, as most research focuses on its definition (DiSalvo et al., 2011; Manzini, 2015; Catoir-Brisson et al., 2016),

implementation (Camacho Duarte et al., 2011; Cipolla & Moura, 2012; Olivastri, 2017) and the role that design(ers) play in the process (Thorpe & Gamman, 2011; Tan, 2012; Meroni et al., 2013).

Academic studies that explore possibilities to sustain design and social innovation fall into three major categories, which at times overlap. The first assumes that the creation of favourable environments and/or (social) infrastructures could support both existing and future initiatives. The second depends on scaling-up and/or replicating the initiatives themselves, whereas the third primarily aims to preserve the knowledge of the underlying concepts and ideas.

2.2.3.1 Sustaining through creating favourable environments

A favourable environment for design could take the shape of a *design milieu*, suggested by Bello (2007), which could act as an environment in which creative thinking lies at the base of how ideas, products and knowledge for social good are developed and arranged, both locally and globally. Within this complex network containing a variety of actors, designers function as a bridge between the global and the local. Moreover, how the different layers of local and/or global actors, such as governments, educational institutes and professionals, interact with one another, can determine whether an initiative is successful or not. Participatory processes are suggested as beneficial in the process.

Similarly, *collaborative organisations* (see also p.30) are characterised by Manzini (2015) as living organisms requiring a favourable environment to start, last and evolve into mature solutions to spread and need an ecosystem of cultural and social structures: an *enabling ecosystem*. Several projects on different levels are required to create such a complex structure. Once established, however, enabling ecosystems can generate conditions that are favourable to design and social innovation projects.

Furthermore, the author argues that collaborative organisations have gradually evolved from providing products and services that are already present towards product and service systems which are specifically designed for a certain purpose. Manzini refers to these systems as *enabling solutions*: “product-service systems providing cognitive, technical and organisational instruments that increase people's capacities to achieve a result they value”. Digital platforms, flexible spaces, logistical services, citizens' agencies, information services, co-design tools and methodologies are considered to be components of enabling solutions, with the ultimate aim of making

collaborative organisations more attractive and effective, by decreasing the intensity of personal investment and increasing the benefit generated.

Addressing the criticism regarding the weaknesses of design in social innovation, such as the fact that the project-based nature of design hinders long-term commitment (Mulgan, 2009) and the inability to move on from scenarios and isolated cases to large-scale interventions that produce long-term change (Schulman, 2010), Hillgren, Seravalli & Emilson (2011) propose the notion of *infrastructuring* (Bjögvinsson et al., 2012) as a possible solution. Originating from Scandinavian participatory design, infrastructuring emphasises long-term commitment, but at the same time utilises an open-ended design structure without any predefined goals or fixed timelines.

Infrastructuring is characterised by a continuous process of building relations with diverse stakeholders while maintaining flexibility regarding the allocation of time and resources. Central to this approach is the perception of participatory design projects as socio-material assemblies of *Things* (see also p.35), in which both designers and other actors are participating, in some instances separated in time and space. Within this process, Bjögvinsson, Ehn & Hillgren (2012) distinguish several instances of design activities: design *during a project*, design *in use* and design *after design*. In particular, when participating in design Things within a project, the designer has to take into account that design Things might continue after their involvement and in the future can consist of different actors and stakeholders.

The authors add that infrastructuring, in this sense, refers to the alignment of socio-material public Things by weaving an infrastructure of relations throughout different places and timeframes. Activities occurring *during* the project (selection, design, development) are related and entangled with activities when *in use* (mediation, interpretation, articulation) and activities *after* the project has ended (adaptation, redesign, maintenance). Adapting an infrastructuring approach during a project can lead to future design Things that can then be absorbed into the existing ecology.

Illustrating the principle, Hillgren, Seravalli & Emilson (2011) discuss a case study where the researchers were looking for a kitchen that could be used by HKF, a Swedish NGO of immigrant women, and coincidentally connected the women to a media company, which opened potential new opportunities for the exchange of services between the NGO and the media company. The authors emphasise the advantages of infrastructuring as being able to provide the base for building the

relational qualities deemed necessary by Jégou & Manzini (2008) for collaborative organisations and support their concept of *designing networks*, a system of inter-related design processes, involving individuals, (non-profit) organisations, local and global institutions who use creativity to achieve concrete sustainable solutions.

Hillgren, Seravalli & Emilson (2011) proceed by describing the infrastructuring process in their case study as a conscious strategy characterised by a constant search for opportunities to connect smaller initiatives with larger institutions and businesses. Trust was found to be a crucial element as several of the actors relied on the investigators' credibility as university researchers. In this instance, infrastructuring brought the stakeholders together in a long-term cooperation, while at the same time cultivating an atmosphere of mutual trust. However, the authors also note certain disadvantages; the flexibility of the approach required frequent rescheduling of activities and resulted in the emergence of opportunities occurring simultaneously or at a time when resources were insufficient.

Manzini (2015) proposes several design initiatives that could contribute to the process of infrastructuring. For example, *enabling infrastructures* that use digital platforms, physical spaces and supporting services, *empowering design capabilities*, teaching non-professional designers how to co-design in a more expert fashion, *networked governance*, referring to the shifting relationship between subjects and state shifts from vertical to horizontal in Europe and *places for social experiments*, characterised by tolerance and openness towards new things, and fostering learning capacity.

An example of a project which has explored infrastructuring in relation to design is Open4Citizens, which aims to increase citizens' awareness of open data as a resource. In their study of the project, Morelli et al. (2017) state that designers played a crucial role in setting up a facilitating infrastructure for co-production. This included: 1) setting up technological infrastructures, such as data, visualisation tools and links to relevant design tools, 2) building an ecosystem of stakeholders who could contribute to the co-design process, and 3) organisational tools, such as toolkits, information and communication tools that would support both the technological and social infrastructure. In addition, the design team involved in the project also envisioned the OpenDataLab, a permanent physical or virtual infrastructure containing knowledge and providing services to facilitate working with design and open data.

2.2.3.2 Sustaining through upscaling and replicating initiatives

The upscaling of design and social innovation initiatives is perceived by Jégou & Manzini (2008) to be desirable as this would enable sustainable lifestyles for a large number of people with the potential of redirecting current social and economic changes towards sustainability. Upscaling in this sense does not refer to an increase in volume by means of industrialisation, but instead using creativity, design, entrepreneurship and technological knowledge to increase the accessibility and effectiveness of initiatives, enabling larger scale implementation.

Jégou and Manzini warn of a paradox appearing when scaling-up collaborative organisations, as the social qualities of the respective initiatives are related to its original small scale. An inherent danger exists for these small-scale initiatives to evolve into large corporations. An example would be the cooperative movement in the previous century, which in various European countries has resulted in a variety of cooperative organisations, such as banks and supermarkets. Similarly, when attempting to replicate design and social innovation initiatives, the authors state that it is not the highly localised cases and creative communities that are replicated, since this is not possible. Instead, the focus must be on creating conditions that are favourable to the replication of service ideas that can be adapted to new contexts. Scaling up and replication occurs by connecting initiatives into a network, increasing their number, and not their size.

Murray et al. (2010) view scalability and replicability in a similar fashion, but refer to it as *generative diffusion*. 'Generative' in the sense that the adoption of an initiative is not necessarily a replication and 'diffusion' because it spreads along multiple paths. However, they perceive the success of this diffusion in different terms, attributing it to *effective supply*, the growing evidence that an innovation actually works, and *effective demand*, the willingness to pay for the innovation. Although both are deemed necessary, priorities can shift between supply and demand. Persuading stakeholders to go either way is perceived to be difficult, as innovation tends to be resisted and will only be adopted if strong pressures, incentives or emotional motivations are present.

A recent review by Mulgan (2017) on social innovation in the past decade lists ten possible priorities for the next decade, of which six refer to some aspect of scalability or replicability. The need to tackle larger problems, using different units of analysis and action, vehicles and methods. In addition, the increase in the scale of the problems must also be matched by the amount of funding, resulting in a need to

explore new ways of financing. Scale also is important in linking individual social innovations to broader programmes, including those in countries that are unfavourable to social initiatives. Digital social innovation and civic technology can be taken to a higher level by connecting them to the more traditional civil organisations and charities, who often experience difficulties when trying to upscale. Knowledge on how to practice social innovation, including the generation, development and scaling of ideas needs to be more widely spread and supported. Mulgan concludes by stating that smart adaption should be prioritised over originality, noting that the necessary skills to adapt social innovations to new contexts must not be neglected.

2.2.3.3 Sustaining through preservation of concepts, ideas and examples

Aside from reaching different and potentially larger audiences, the upscaling and replicating of projects are considered to be ways that concepts and ideas underpinning the initiatives can be preserved.

Jégou & Manzini (2008) note that in order to scale-up collaborative organisations, systems will need to be developed that possess a high degree of relational qualities.⁶ The intention is not to replicate the most promising cases, but instead create an environment in which the replication of the ideas becomes more likely, while keeping each initiative's small-scale and relational qualities. Rather than enlarging the initiatives, the authors propose a replication strategy in which the initiatives are connected to one another, creating a large network.

Elaborating on the idea of a network of initiatives, Manzini (2015) proposes a sustainable networked society: the Small, Local, Open and Connected (SLOC) scenario. The impact of small initiatives can be increased and grown without losing the initiatives' collaborative nature using two main strategies. The first approach focuses on *replicating*, which entails adapting an initiative to new circumstances and contexts requiring both diffuse and expert designers. This can be accomplished through horizontal scaling (scaling out) and vertical scaling (increasing in size). The second approach uses *connecting*, in which smaller initiatives are synergised into larger programs. This strategy can also be employed horizontally (similar organisations) and vertically (other types of organisations).

⁶ Infrastructuring was also proposed as such as system by Hillgren et al. (2011)

In addition to upscaling and replicating, networks can serve to preserve knowledge and contacts of the field of design and social innovation itself, rather than the individual initiatives. Perhaps the most well-known example of such as network is DESIS, a global network of design labs located in higher education institutions. Its main functions are “to use design to trigger, enable and scale-up social innovation” and “to demonstrate the potential of design and social innovation, both inside and outside of the design industry (DESI, 2019).

An example how the strength of networks can be leveraged is proposed by Manzini, Baek & Zhong (2010), who explore how design and social innovation could be implemented in China. One of the ‘leapfrog’ strategies they suggest in this context is using design institutes as agents for change, in particular the DESIS China network.

Similarly, Cipolla, Serpa & Afonso (2017) see a role for Social Innovation Support Units (SISU), which promote social innovation processes between the university and outside actors. SISU proactively involves design experts (see also p.27) as they liaise between the university, the community and other stakeholders. The unit will act as a gathering place or hub in which knowledge and creativity from both inside and outside of the university can interact with one another and promote mutual learning.

A network that originated in, but is not specifically focused on, academia is the Design and Social Innovation in Asia-Pacific (DESIAP), which functions as a platform, network and community, bringing together practitioners, communities and professionals in the Asia-Pacific region. Its main aim is to share inspiration and insights through practical examples and stories (DESIAP, 2019). Other global networks include the Social Innovation eXchange (SIX), a cross-sector platform that facilitates meaningful connections between actors in the social innovation field, encourages capacity building and conducts research to advance knowledge (Social Innovation Exchange, 2018). Impact Hub is a global community consisting of physical hubs that offer support for entrepreneurs who are looking to create positive change in society through events, programs and providing a social and physical infrastructure (Impact Hub, 2019). Acting in a more proactive manner, Ashoka identifies promising social entrepreneurs and invites them to join their fellowship programme, which provides initial financial support and access to its network of peers and partners (Ashoka, 2019).

Other popular and convenient ways to replicate design and social innovation ideas, particularly its methods, are guides, toolkits and courses that are constructed and

published by a variety of organisations and scholars. IDEO's *Field Guide to Human-Centered Design* (IDEO.org, 2015), takes aspiring social innovators through the steps of design thinking: inspiration, ideation and implementation, proposing the methods that could be associated with each of the phases. Online courses offered by IDEO are *Introduction to Human-Centered Design* and *Human-Centered Design 201*. +Acumen uses the same departure point, but provide the opportunity to collaborate on a design project with like-minded people from around the world.

Frogdesign's *Collective Action Toolkit* (2012) distinguishes six *activity areas* that teams can go through in a non-linear fashion when pursuing a shared goal. Within these areas, *clarify your goal*, *build your group*, *seek new understanding*, *imagine more ideas*, *make something real* and *plan for action*, several activities (methods) are suggested that can be used to develop solutions in order to achieve change.

The *Social Design Methods Menu* by Kimbell & Julier (2012) incorporates ideas from management and social sciences along with design, recognising that designers do not necessarily know what is best in social innovation. The methods are categorised along four key *modes*, *exploring*, *making sense*, *proposing* and *iterating*, which are occupied when developing a venture or service. In addition, the modes and the methods associated with them, can be combined into *recipes* that can serve particular purposes, such as improvement or innovation.

Other examples of social innovation toolkits that feature design methods, but are not specifically design-centric include *The Open Book of Social Innovation* by NESTA and The Young Foundation (Murray et al., 2010) and the *DIY: Development Impact & You* toolkit by NESTA (2014).

2.2.3.4 Challenging the dominant perspective on sustaining initiatives

Despite the fact that there are many suggested approaches to sustain design and social innovation initiatives, accounts of actual utilisation or evaluation are extremely rare. A reflection by Hillgren, Seravalli & Agger Eriksen (2016) on the work conducted over a period of seven years by Malmö Living Labs would perhaps come the closest to a practice-based study of long-term infrastructuring. *Agonism* and *commoning*, two principles believed to be beneficial for this purpose, were explored in different projects. The principle of agonism aims for the creation of *agonistic spaces* where those with opposing views can meet one another, while at the same time respecting their adversaries. The initial objective was to create an agonistic space by connecting

marginalised actors with more powerful ones. However, the authors note that this process was extremely difficult, both in the recruitment of the marginalised actors as well as convincing the powerful actors to participate in the process. The principle of commoning is based on participants sharing resources, developing, running and co-owning initiatives, leading to more horizontal decision-making processes. Paradoxically, while the open nature of communing allows a more inclusive and collective atmosphere, the implicit shared understanding limits the amount of diversity that can be present within the initiative for it to keep functioning properly.

The often temporary nature of designer's involvement in social innovation initiatives poses serious problems for continuity. This might not be surprising, when considering that design, in essence, has remained a project-grounded discipline that is based on a particular creative culture (Catoir-Brisson et al., 2016). One such indicator indicating a limit to design involvement, is the emphasis put on the need for an exit-strategy (Meroni et al., 2013; Olivastri, 2017), which the designer can use to leave the project in an agreeable manner.

Other inherent problems have been highlighted by Iversen & Dindler (2014), who stress that sustainability is not something that is built in participatory design methods, nor the mutual learning process. Instead, they argue that sustainability should be considered as a separate perspective that should be developed during the process. Cipolla et al., (2017) note that interactions between actors located within the university and those outside can be problematic, causing knowledge produced in universities to stay within the academic environment. In other cases, outside communities are unaware of the knowledge located within universities due to a lack of effective mediation.

However, recently there have been several new perspectives on sustaining initiatives that fall outside of the three dominant streams described in the previous sections. Iversen & Dindler (2014) distinguish four types of sustainability for participatory design initiatives: maintaining, scaling, replicating and evolving, emphasising that these are ideal forms that do not exist in reality, but can be perceived as lenses through which projects can be viewed. *Maintaining* refers to a state in which the initiative and its context remain stable, thus existing within the same context after completion of the project. *Scaling* sustains an initiative's idea system or operations, but changes its context from a small to a large group or organisation. *Replicating* also retains the idea

system or operations, but changes the context of the initiative to another, different context. Finally, *evolving* can entail changes to the idea system or operations as well as the context.

The authors emphasise that the four types of sustaining should not only be perceived as ideal goals, but can also be used to evaluate the results of individual projects. Furthermore, in reality the types are not fixed nor mutually exclusive, but can exist at the same time or blend with one another. For example, in one initiative it might be better to focus on maintaining, rather than replicating. Or in another instance, priorities or ambitions might shift during a project, making one type of sustaining preferable over another.

Another example is suggested by Vodeb (2015), who criticises the corporate influence on design education, countering it by highlighting *Memefest*, an initiative which connects the inside world of design institutes to the non-institutionalised outside world. Through friendly competitions and festivals, knowledge from inside of the institutions dispersed and responded upon by a variety of outsiders, such as artists, social scientists, philosophers, alternative professionals and amateurs, enabling friendly interaction between the different actors. Although the author did not specifically address sustainability, the Memefest case study provides a more tangible example of how an enabling ecosystem or a form of infrastructuring could be established and what form it could take.

Addressing the existing gap between design and social innovation initiatives and government policy, the classification of social design into three main tendencies by Koskinen & Hush (2016) might also be relevant for this discussion. Mainstream design is defined as being *utopian social design*, in the sense that utopian beliefs underpin design outcomes. However, designers operating within this paradigm attempt to improve situations while disregarding the larger structures that have created those situations in the first place. *Molecular social design*, on the other hand, is content by improving the world incrementally, without necessarily aiming to achieve changes on a large scale. It oftentimes focuses on working with local communities, which it does effectively. At the same time, however, it distances itself from the government. The authors propose a third category, *sociological social design*, which is supported by sociological theory instead of utopian beliefs, thereby providing the necessary analytical frameworks. In addition, it provides a common ground with social scientists, who oftentimes hold positions within the public sector, linking designers with policy.

The authors argue that through this sociological foundation, designers can gain insight into the social structures that are responsible for creating and maintaining the situations that they would like to improve while enabling a critical investigation of the relevant social dynamics. Sociological social design can therefore form a critique that is more explicit compared to molecular design and take up a position that is more anchored in theory than utopian design. Moreover, Koskinen and Hush emphasise that the main benefit of using a sociological social design approach is that it can adopt a molecular approach, but at the same time can connect to the public sector more easily than the two others by its ability to prototype policies as well, instead of just objects or services.

A three-year participatory action research study in Taiwan by Yang & Sung (2016) explored how service design can be systematically applied to the creation of value in social innovation to increase efficiency and sustainability. Four types of key stakeholders were identified that should be involved in order for the social innovation to be sustainable in the long-term: designers, NGO/NPO and public sector participants, private sector participants and co-creation mechanism owners. Moreover, the study pinpointed the key stakeholders' role positioning and motivators, which could facilitate their sustained participation in the process (see table 2.6)

Key stakeholders	Role Positioning	Motivators
Designers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging current conditions • Strengthening users' demands • Leading multi-disciplinary discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of specialty • Establishment of relationship network • Opportunity for self-actualization
NGO/NPO and public sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing the current status of issues • Guiding the direction of innovation • Delivering the results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injection of innovation and transformation energy • Establishment of relationship networks
Private sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing human resources • Supporting funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of human resources • Injection of innovation energy • Improving resource synergy
Owners of Co-Creation Mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers • Coordinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable business model • Co-creation effectiveness • Team and individual growth

Table 2.6 The role positioning and motivators of key stakeholders. Adapted from Yang & Sung (2016).

Even though there are only a handful approaches in academic discourse that are situated outside of the mainstream, they provide compelling insights that help create new perspectives on how to effectively sustain design and social innovation initiatives.

2.2.4 The significance of social relations

The notion that social relations can influence the design and social innovation process has been recognised relatively early in academic discourse (Jégou & Manzini, 2008). However, recent studies have described the role of social relations in design and social innovation in greater depth, which appear to fall in two broad streams that are not necessarily mutually exclusive (see figure 2-A). The first proposes that design and social relations should be used as a basis to sustain initiatives. It builds further on the notion of *enabling (eco)systems* (see p.45), asserting that through design interventions, favourable environments are created that can form the basis for meaningful encounters. In turn, these encounters provide opportunities to build future relations, thereby sustaining the initiative. Here, design provides the ecosystem in which social relations flourish. In the second stream, the usage of design and social relations act as a vehicle to address larger issues. The application and/or outcome of a design approach brings about a positive change in social dynamics within a certain context, which then helps address another, overarching issue in a more effective way. Here, design attempts to influence the social interconnections between the different actors in a positive manner.

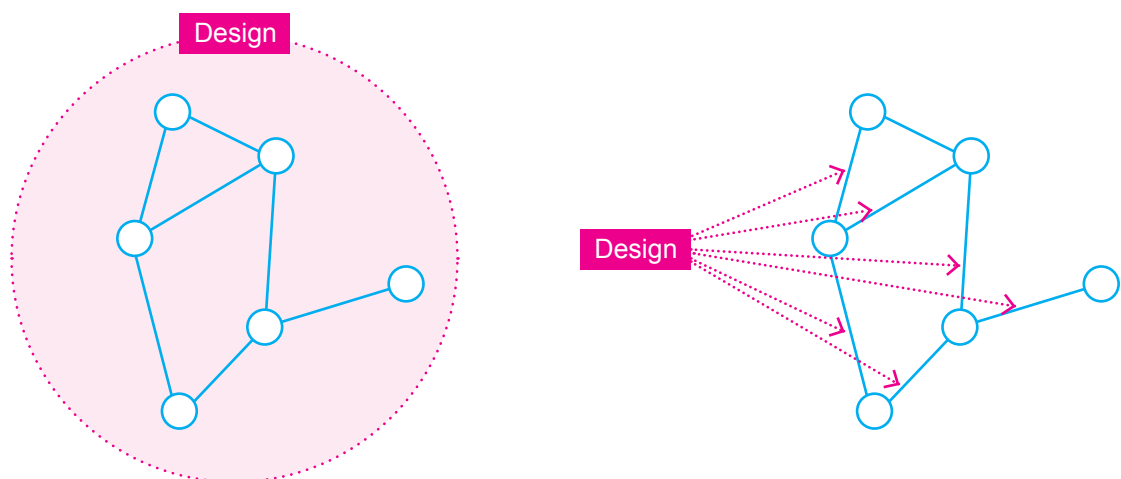


Figure 2-A Visualisation of the role of design and social relations in the social innovation process. Left: design as an ecosystem for social relations. Right: design as a relational influencer.

2.2.4.1 Design as an ecosystem for social relations

Light & Akama (2014) examine how participatory design can shape social relations, particularly in relation to future relations (also known as *infrastructuring*, see p.50) through their discussion of three case studies. Characterised as design *Things* (see also p.35), the interventions did not have the intention of designing products or services that structure relations, but instead emphasise the creation of awareness, understanding and connections between people, both during and after the design process. Central herein was the concept of *care*, which in this context is interpreted as “intrinsically relational, situated inside interdependency”. The three cases demonstrated that the act of designing contributed to the process of shaping social relations between people on different levels. The encounters organised by the researchers inspired the participants to continue building on the relations created, demonstrating that social relations are, in fact, fluid and can be changed or impacted by design activity, and vice versa.

Manzini & Thorpe (2018) observe that traditional social systems, characterised by a higher degree of social cohesion and social resilience, tend to be replaced by social forms that are more loosely constituted, consisting of different types of social ties and are more fleeting in nature, not requiring a particular sort of commitment. These new types of communities are not as clearly defined and exist by choice, instead of being based on a certain affiliation or identity. The creation of *enabling systems*, favourable environments in which *collaborative encounters* can take place (see also p.45), helps build these communities. Moreover, fundamental in the creation of a society that can be considered resilient is the concept of *communities-in-place*, which refers to the special relation that exists between collaborative encounters and the place where they occur.

The authors base their observations on findings from the *Cultures of Resilience* project, which is intended as a platform where various initiatives concerning social resilience and community building exchange knowledge and experiences, thereby arriving at three key insights. The first is that if the quantity and quality of encounters is low, insufficient social values are created, reducing social resilience. The second suggests that art and design can play a role in creating possibilities for meaningful encounters. The final insight is that these encounters are relational and can only be designed indirectly by increasing their probability and quality. The Cultures of Resilience project highlights the importance of relational *Things*, which can trigger

relational or empathic encounters and places which ensure them happening in a safe environment. Developing research methods and tools that emphasise empathic qualities, such as journeys, personas and stories will contribute in fostering these encounters.

A study by Cipolla (2018) elaborates on the idea that social resilience is a prerequisite of successful design and social innovation, and that social relations cannot be designed directly. Through a series of community projects involving local stakeholders in specific contexts, various art and design interventions were used to promote *weak ties* and *light encounters*⁷, as these were the type of encounters that art and design interventions usually permit. The findings suggest that emphasising vulnerability as a positive aspect in the design process opens up the possibility for higher quality interpersonal encounters. Moreover, light encounters were demonstrated to generate both weak and strong ties, regardless of the frequency of meetings, personal effort or the time spent. For designers, designing for vulnerability therefore means that they need to accept that outcomes can be unpredictable and that the design process as well as its results might not be under their control.

2.2.4.2 Design as a relational influencer

The *Makeright* project, initiated by Gamman & Thorpe (2018), builds on findings from the field of criminology, which suggest that fostering social cooperation relations in a prison environment can lead to empathy and mutual understanding, reducing the rate of reoffending. By asking inmates to design against crime, collaborating with volunteers who often had a design background, the project aimed to improve their confidence level and problems solving skills. The usage of some design methods in particular, such as user personas, storyboards, social games and role playing, were thought to increase empathy among the inmates. Although the effects of the course on recidivism cannot be evaluated at this stage yet, initial results appear to be promising; compared to other courses, attendance was high and positive behavioural changes were noted by prison staff in those who participated.

Prendiville (2018) describes how social relations can be made visible and augmented by using a co-design approach in her study of the Home Library Service

⁷ In this context, *weak ties* refer to the strength of social ties between stakeholders and *light encounters* are brief meetings that do not require a significant amount of time and/or personal effort.

(HLS). A service design project aimed at people who were unable to access library services due to various reasons, the HLS delivered and collected (audio)books, CDs, DVDs and electronic devices to homes located in the London borough of Camden. Through visual and design ethnography as well as co-design sessions with HLS users, opportunities were found to remodel the mostly paper-based HLS service into a digital-based one. The research activities revealed a community of readers which was previously invisible to one another, but were linked by the HLS through its knowledge of clients' interests and daily activities. The new digital platform built upon this by focusing on this knowledge instead of clients' (perceived) needs, suggesting an improved model for elderly care, which aside from performing a service, augmented social relations by acting as a prevention against loneliness.

The studies in this section illustrate two different ways in which design can influence social relations in the social innovation process. In the first, design creates an environment that facilitates meaningful social encounters, which in turn can help sustain initiatives. In the second, design activities alter the existing social dynamics within a certain context, thereby providing a different approach to larger issues

2.3 Current issues in the study of design and social innovation

The prevalent themes in current discourse, discussed in the previous sections, show substantial progress in the study of design and social innovation. The various case studies in academic literature (see section 2.2.1) provide inspiring examples of the various ways design methods can be implemented and how they can prove to be beneficial for social innovation practice. Designers working within the design and social innovation space are trying to reposition themselves as professionals that are able to work alongside people from different disciplines, operating in different modalities. The on-going research on infrastructuring, for example, explores how the survival of initiatives can be ensured after project and financial support from academic or government sources has ceased. Subsequently, the upscaling and replication of promising initiatives is seen by most authors as the next step in the design and social innovation lifecycle. Toolkits and courses spread the underlying concepts and ideas to a global audience, while networks perform a similar function for the design and social innovation community itself. And more recently, attention has turned to the exploration

of the many ways that the building and maintaining of social relations can be beneficial to the process.

The developing knowledge base on design and social innovation is, however, paired with a number of significant issues that need to be addressed in order for it to grow into a field of study that can be characterised as mature. The dominance of academic literature that is assuming, or is focused on, a European perspective, along with the lack of critical analysis of how, and if, design actually contributes to social innovation practice are the two most important problems facing the field of design and social innovation today.

2.3.1 The absence of non-western perspectives

Publications and studies examining design and social innovation in a European or North American context currently dominate academic literature (Meroni, 2007; Morelli, 2007; Jégou & Manzini, 2008; Brown & Wyatt, 2010; DiSalvo et al., 2012; Westley, Goebey & Robinson, 2012; Ilstedt Hjelm & Mårtens, 2011; Meroni et al., 2013; Olivastri, 2017; Di Prete & Mazzarello, 2017). Studies and cases from the rest of the world are significantly less represented.

In a way, this focus on Europe and the US is not surprising, as Emilson, Seravalli & Hillgren (2011) trace the origins of design and social innovation as an academic discipline to three sources in these regions. In the UK, *transformation design* by the British Design Council's RED unit was an early example of what is now known as design and social innovation and already featured many of its hallmark characteristics. In this approach, stakeholders are involved in the process from the start through participatory design. Prototyping and the transfer of capacities in the form of tools, skills and organisational capacity were emphasised as important (Burns et al., 2006).

In Italy, the Sustainable Everyday Project (SEP) and the Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability (DESIS) networks, led by François Jégou and Ezio Manzini at the Politecnico di Milano (Jégou & Manzini, 2008), have been identifying and collecting design and social innovation case studies for the past decade as well as developing and popularising the concepts of *creative communities* and *collaborative services* (see section 2.2.3.1).

Research on design and social innovation in the US is mostly conducted by organisations such as IDEO, Continuum and frogdesign or NGOs, and tends to focus

on initiatives in developing countries (see, for example, Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Amaral, Bento, & Nugroho, 2014).

In addition to the three strands originally identified by (Emilson et al., 2011), a fourth can be added. The Scandinavian participatory design approach, originally aimed at democratising organisations from within through the empowering of marginalised groups, has reoriented itself from the workplace to encompass everyday life as well (Ehn, 2008; Björgvinsson, Ehn & Hillgren, 2010). Ideas from participatory design that have been applied in design and social innovation include shifting the focus from design projects to design *Things* (see p.35) and the process of *infrastructuring* (see p.50).

The fact that design and social innovation research has a strong western influence due to its origins in a western context does not have to be an issue per se. What is problematic, however, is the notion that cases or ideas that were developed in the west can be adapted and used in other parts of the world (Bala-Miller et al., 2008; Manzini, 2015). As design and social innovation projects are connected to their respective social and cultural environments, the transfer of methods and ideas that have proven to be successful in the west might or might not be appropriate or desirable in a different context (Brown & Wyatt, 2010). Local knowledge and practices are in danger of being substituted by imported solutions and paradigms not necessarily better suited to address local issues. Furthermore, these local approaches could also serve as good examples for the west (Bala-Miller et al., 2008; Akama et al., 2019)

Akama & Yee (2016) explain the tendency to assume a 'universal adaptability' of design ideas and methods through Kasulis' (2002) *integrity vs intimacy* framework. The *integrity* orientation views knowledge as external in the sense that the knower and the known are independent from each other. Furthermore, both are governed by rules and principles that can handle disagreements and implies that the same knowledge can be obtained by any person. It therefore follows that design knowledge, too, can travel between different contexts and is universal. In the *intimacy* orientation, however, the knower and the known are seen as inseparable as the known is always tied to both the person and reality. Knowledge is personal and can therefore only be obtained through practice and does not exist independently to the person in question. Unfortunately, the integrity orientation is noted by the authors to be the prevalent mode of thinking in design and social innovation studies, judging by the popularity of the *Double Diamond* and *Stanford d school* models. This is also evident in the many toolkits available to

help those interested in implementing design methods in social innovation (see also p.54).

Going into an unfamiliar context as an outsider can be problematic, as noted by Erözçelik & Taşdizen (2017). In their study of a design workshop series running over a period of three years on Gökçeada/Imbros Island, they found that the 'copying and pasting' of methods intended for homogeneous communities was unworkable, as the island had a multicultural and heterogeneous identity. Furthermore, issues surrounding the diversity of traditions, habits and attitudes along with context-specific issues, such as the islanders' introverted disposition and the politico-economic slowdown, posed significant challenges for the researchers.

Wang, Bryan-Kinns & Ji (2016) describe the challenges of engaging in participatory design in rural China, noting that as most social designers originate from an urban environment, they lack the knowledge and experience of a rural lifestyle and do not know how to communicate with local people. Subsequently, the complexity of the local context that designers have to work in, such as the need for provisional networks and having a broad knowledge base, can be demanding for many designers.

The notion of universal adaptability also lies at the base of how the concepts of scalability and replicability are understood at this moment. Approaches that encourage upscaling, replication and the spreading of concepts and ideas, implicitly share the assumption that design ideas and methods are more or less independent from the locality and context in which they were originally applied. Jégou & Manzini (2008) do not call for literal replication of initiatives, but do advocate the creation of conditions allowing the adaption of ideas to other contexts. VanPatter notes that exporting (traditional design) and product/service design methods might not be appropriate to tackle wicked design challenges that lie in the area of social transformation (Jones & VanPatter, 2009). In a similar fashion, Mulgan (2017) calls for a wider dissemination of knowledge on social innovation practice, emphasising the process of idea generation, development and scaling.

Although the common explanation for the driving force behind the need to upscale or replication is increasing social impact (Jégou & Manzini, 2008; Cipolla & Moura, 2012; Manzini, 2015), there is no evidence that suggests that this is a necessity, priority or even desirable in all contexts that design and social innovation is practiced. Most likely, this desire originates from the field of social innovation, as scalability and/or replicability are commonly emphasised as being the final stages of a

successful social innovation initiative (Mulgan, 2006; Seyfang & Smith, 2007), perhaps due to its potential to influence public policy (European Commission, 2013).

The issue of the western perspective dominating design and social innovation discourse is situated in the broader discussion surrounding the decolonising of knowledge. Most notably propagated by Walter Mignolo (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006; Mignolo, 2007), the process of *decolonising* is not only applicable to geographical territories, but to knowledge and being as well. Mignolo (2007) draws and elaborates upon the work of the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (1992), who asserts that the currently dominant world view is Eurocentric and originates from a small group of people (white Christian European men), who lay down the fundamentals of knowledge as if they were universal. Quijano concludes that knowledge must be *decolonised*, but not by rejecting the current dominant world view by proposing another, 'better' one. Instead, he proposes to de-link modernity/rationality from coloniality, which he argues are entangled with one another.

One such method that would be able to achieve this, as suggested by Mignolo, is (critical) *border thinking*, which connects the *pluriversal* colonial histories into a *universal* project, consisting of many different worlds co-existing with one another. In this way, other forms of knowledge that have been previously colonised and repressed would be recognised and not subjugated by a single world perspective. Rizvi (2018) points out that experiences of colonisation can differ, depending on where in the world it took place. Therefore, the decolonisation process can also differ and needs to be tuned in into these specific historical contexts and how the populations themselves were impacted in order to construct a decolonial future.

In the *decolonising design* approach, the trajectories and relations of ideas, projects and designs to certain contexts are recognised and respected. Moreover, it rejects singular perspectives and "common denominators", preferring to design relations that acknowledge differences (Schultz et al., 2018). The centre of design culture (traditionally based in the west) should therefore be de-linked from its colonial narrative of modernity and reconnected to narratives that are pluriversal in nature and assume multiple centres of design (Onafuwa, 2018).

For example, in an account by Moran, Harrington, & Sheehan (2018) design is perceived by Australian Indigenous knowledge as "a natural and naturalising power" due to its prevalence both human cultures and other species in addition to being an

environmental force. Design is therefore a form of cooperation and co-creation shared by all living entities. This philosophy is currently not shared with the ‘colonising’ design of the west, which has the tendency to singularise and construct hierarchies that do not stimulate cooperation – it is based on the assumption that humans have the authority to disrupt (natural) environments for their own benefits. The authors therefore propose the concept of *Respectful Design*, which is based on the notion that knowledge and design do not solely exist reside within humans and their consciousness. Instead, they are ancestral and, together with humans themselves, embedded in and related to their environment. Design can be understood as action in relation and therefore everything that exists is a designer.

Escobar (2018) elaborates on the notion of pluralistic design by questioning of how it could contribute in counteracting the current global capitalist “one-world order” that is wreaking havoc on the planet. His suggestion is that design should create the conditions that promote responsible behaviour and inter-existence, rather than act on the impulses to behave as “modern” individuals that are more concerned with their own self-improvement.

In a sense, this thesis argues for a decolonisation of design in social innovation, as described by Mignolo & Tlostanova (2006) and Mignolo (2007), acknowledging the (co-)existence of a multiplicity of centres of design and design knowledge. However, an outright rejection of “common denominators” as proposed by Schultz et al. (2018) would go too far, as this implies that the various ways of knowing develop independently from one another, which is oftentimes not the case. The difference with the mainstream approach lies that this study does not presuppose top-down knowledge, but instead constructs knowledge bottom-up by sharing insights gained from the case studies.

2.3.2 The lack of critical analysis

The abundance of promising cases and examples of best practices have created a favourable impression of the benefits that a design approach could have for social innovation practice. Apart from pointing out possible limitations, the narrative that is presented in design and social innovation discourse is relatively uncritical. There are, however, exceptions. Mulgan (2014), for example, points out that although the last decade emphasised showcasing design and social innovation, there is still a lack of evidence of what works and why and raises the issue that designers oftentimes tend to

resist formal evaluations. He also criticises the “uneven usefulness” of design, not having the same effectiveness for all stages of social innovation processes as well as design’s weaknesses being evident when implemented in novel fields.

Komatsu et al. (2016) go even further by characterising the debate around design thinking in social innovation as “superficial”, demonstrated by the lack of serious elaboration in design practice and its application in the social innovation process. In addition, no distinction is being made between the use of design thinking at an operational or strategic level. Moreover, their analysis of 26 projects under the SIMPACT, an initiative funded by the European Commission, found that in only two cases design could improve commercial competitiveness: through the use of communication and brand strategy. There was, however, no proof that methods that are ‘typical’ of design and social innovation, such as co-design and prototyping were actually used. The authors therefore conclude that the design methods that are often heralded in academic literature as adding value to social innovation are largely neglected and actual practice is a long way from applying even the most basic principles of design.

Mulgan (2017) arrives at a similar conclusion when reviewing the developments in social innovation in the last ten years. He concludes his observations by stating that analysis of what achieves the most impact should be more ingrained in organisations: what works where and when, and what funding is needed at which stage.

Although not specifically referring to design, but certainly relevant in this context is the issue highlighted by Cajaiba-Santana (2014), who notes the absence of a relationship between agency and structure in social innovation, preventing empirical analysis.

2.4 Design and social innovation in Asia-Pacific

The “Asian 21st Century”, a term coined by economists and political journalists, suggests that developing economies in this region are projected to outpace developed economies in Europe in this century. GDP growth of the ASEAN-5 (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam) exceeds that of the Eurozone by far (AUSTRADE, 2015). From this, it has been noted that cities like Singapore, Tokyo and Hong Kong are readily ‘importing’ design from Europe and the US through design innovation consultancies such as IDEO, frogdesign, Fjord and Deloitte, who offer

design thinking and methods to solve economic and social problems. Following such apex economies in Asia, lower income countries, such as Myanmar and Cambodia, are signalling an interest and desire to adopt design innovation to deliver solutions that can help bring 'order' and a 'transparent process' to development efforts (Akama & Yee, 2016).

Similarly, middle income developing countries, such as Thailand and Malaysia, are turning to design and social innovation approaches to address post-industrial and post-globalisation issues of growing income divides as well as social and political freedom. It is of concern that this region continues to follow trends of 'looking west' to seek answers from design and social innovation exemplars to address their own social and sustainable needs. This trend can inadvertently obscure or replace cultural, traditional and heterogeneous practices with imported beliefs that replicate narratives of industrialized progress or indeed reproduce the failings of current development efforts (Bala-Miller et al., 2008).

The predominantly western-centric perspectives, theories and case studies paint an incomplete picture of the rich world of design and social innovation practice. Initiatives that are taking place in other parts of the world, such as Asia-Pacific, are currently significantly less studied or analysed. Problematised further by the lack of methods that critically analyse the effectiveness and value of design in social innovation initiatives, it is becoming increasingly difficult to uphold the perception that ideas, methods and approaches from the west can be modified for implementation in the rest of the world. As such, this study seeks to address this blind spot by identifying the diverse practices of design and social innovation in Asia-Pacific, and critically examine how design contributes to social innovation in order to inform the broader discourse.

The fact that little is known about design and social innovation in Asia-Pacific does not mean that it is practiced less; a preliminary review of 74 initiatives based in Asia-Pacific compiled by the researcher suggests that there are many initiatives that are active across almost every country in the region, tackling a variety of challenges.

In Indonesia, *Solo Kota Kita* utilises design tools, such as mapping, with local citizens in Surakarta (Solo) to facilitate their participation in the annual participatory

budgeting process.⁸ *Habi Education Lab* co-designs learning experiences for schools in the Philippines.⁹ Using design thinking and lesson prototyping, they co-design with, and rely on, the active participation of the teachers, resulting in a customised approach for each school, based on their respective context. A social enterprise based on creating economic value for local textile design, *Ock Pop Tok* in Laos provides local women in Luang Prabang with a sustainable income.¹⁰ Annual visits to an international fair in the US enable the Laotian workers to interact and collaborate with fellow artisans from other parts of the world. Based in Nagpur, India, *Zero Point Energy* designs devices that are powered by renewable energy.¹¹ The mobile shoe charger, which charges mobile phones by walking, is their signature product. *The Zó project* aims to revitalise the traditional art of Vietnamese Dó paper making by organising creative events and workshops to increase its appeal and pass on the skills to younger generations¹². Their profits are returned to the paper making community in the north of Vietnam.

What is known about these initiatives remains fairly superficial, however. The focus often lies, as with their European counterparts, on the identification and description of a perceived problem or challenge, an intervention (using design methods) and an outcome, although the latter is not necessarily present.

The Design and Social Innovation in Asia-Pacific (DESIAP) network aims to provide a deeper understanding by providing a platform where practitioners, communities and professionals active in design and social innovation practice in the region can connect and engage in the exchange of knowledge and experiences. The DESIAP symposia held in Singapore (2015), Bangkok (2016) and Kuala Lumpur (2017) have brought together academics and practitioners from throughout the region. Examples include *Innovation Studio Fukuoka* in Japan, a city-wide innovation program that brings together participants from multiple disciplines, collaborating with the city council, local businesses and academia to build creative and entrepreneurial capacity in local change agents.¹³ *Proximity Designs* utilises user-centred research to design affordable irrigation products and services for rural Myanmar, using state of the art

⁸ <https://solokotakita.org/>

⁹ <http://habieducationlab.org/>

¹⁰ <https://ockpoptok.com/>

¹¹ <https://www.f6s.com/zpenergy>

¹² <http://zopaper.com/>

¹³ <https://re-public.jp/en/project/innovation-studio-fukuoka>

technology, local and international insights, and prototyping.¹⁴ *The Australian Centre of Social Innovation* (TACSI) also uses prototyping, combined with co-design research methods, to develop, test and spread solutions in collaboration with organisations who are focused on innovation, ultimately aiming for system change.¹⁵ In Cambodia, the organisation *iDE* adopts a human-centred approach to design solutions tuned in to local farmers' social as well as commercial needs and desires.¹⁶

In addition, DESIAP workshops held in Bangkok and Newcastle in 2016, have identified six themes for further investigation: 1) *Cultural nuances* examines the cultural complexities, highlighting non-western perspectives in design and social innovation. 2) *Relationship* shifts the emphasis on relationships as an outcome of design and social innovation, rather than only a prerequisite. 3) *Precariousness* seeks to understand the role that uncertainty and risk play in design and social innovation. 4) *Temporality* explores issues concerning the complex relationship that time has in relation to design and social innovation. 5) *Ethics* concerns itself with the ethical discussion that arises when design intervenes in someone's life and lastly, 6) *Impact* discusses the evaluation the impact of design on social innovation. Research into these themes is currently on-going.

Academic studies on design and social innovation initiatives that focus on or share insights gained in the Asia-Pacific region are growing, but are still relatively few in number. Focusing on aspects that have not (yet) been addressed sufficiently in mainstream discourse, such as perception, local practices and relational qualities, these studies highlight the significance of acknowledging insights originating from other contexts than the west.

The importance of perception was evidenced in a study by Camacho Duarte et al. (2011), who discuss the benefits of using the practice of *reframing* in combination with co-design with stakeholders in crime prevention in Australia. In their approach, the context is examined in order to establish to which extent crime problems can be redefined in terms of broader social and environmental issues and whether they are deemed more responsive to intervention by design. In this manner, the design process remains focused on desired outcomes instead of problems, allowing the development

¹⁴ <https://proximitydesigns.org/>

¹⁵ <https://www.tacsi.org.au/>

¹⁶ <https://www.ideglobal.org/country/cambodia>

of solutions of a completely different nature. For example, a closer examination of the environment of one of Sydney's railways stations revealed that the perceived safety problem in this area was not only the occurrence of crime, but also the restrictions placed on law-abiding citizens to make use of the help points. As these were outfitted with warnings of a fine in case of misuse, it deterred potential users from using the facilities in emergencies due to the ambiguity of what is actually understood under 'misuse', rendering the help points ineffective. By reframing the problem so that the focus would be the passengers' perspective, a solution was conceived in the form of a continuous, high-visibility LCD interactive 'help strip'. The strip would be activated by pressing it for five seconds or tapping it repeatedly, increasing (the feeling of) security and reducing crime opportunities.

Amaral, Bento & Nugroho (2014) discuss a project by the NGO Mercy Corps in which a design thinking approach was used to design a seed storage system for use in Timor-Leste. A study conducted two years earlier by an American expert suggested that the seed management practiced by local farms which were based on ancestral traditions and methods was highly ineffective. Instead, a recommendation was made to focus on reducing storage losses and raising the quality of the saved seed by improving handling and storage after harvest. In response, Mercy Corps designed and developed a metal-based seed storage solution, customised to consider the Timorese farmers' preference for drum-shaped containers as introduced by the Portuguese, and produced by local manufacturers. Rapid prototyping and consultation with users allowed regular iterations of the program approach and storage design. Notably, instead of distributing the units for free, the program used a voucher system which had the farmers pay a small additional fee to buy the metal drums, facilitating the creation of demand. Making an investment in the product made the farmers value it more highly, increased their sense of ownership and further increased their awareness of the fact that high quality seeds are important. However, the distribution of the vouchers, originally meant for the most vulnerable farmers, caused conflict in many of the communities. The project team learned that in order for the distribution process to proceed without problems, they had to understand the circumstances of the beneficiaries, explain the criteria for selection, and have the process to be accepted by the entire community.

A study conducted by Obata et al. (2012) demonstrates that the adoption of western models does not automatically lead to a successful outcome. Their research

entailed employing the MUST method for conducting a participatory design project on social innovation for the aging population in a Japanese city. This participatory design method, successfully applied in commercial contexts in the US and Scandinavia, consists of four phases. In the *Initiation* phase, the aims, resources and stakeholders of the project are identified, the project organisation is assembled and an initial plan is made. In the next phase, *In-line analysis*, the project's relation to business and IT-strategies are established to determine which work domains will be focused upon. Next, in the *In-depth analysis* phase, a detailed understanding of the work domains forms the base for prioritising of problems, needs and ideas for improvements. In the final *Innovation* phase coherent visions for change are developed, such as prototypes, ideas for work reorganisation and a realisation plan. Although the researchers were successful to a certain extent, by gaining approval from the city mayor with the promise of further cooperation, issues were reported regarding the level of participation, which was lower than participatory design generally requires, prompting the design of incentive structures for different stakeholders. In addition, the lack of tradition in user involvement in idea generation was reported to be a problem, requiring the researchers to take on the role of the main drivers of the project.

Social relations, although acknowledged, have until recently received relatively little attention and/or weight in the dominant narrative of design and social innovation. In several studies focusing on the Asia-Pacific region, however, the understanding of the relational dimensions of design and social innovation, and their inherent complexity, have been foregrounded as being essential for the progress and success of initiatives.

An example is an account by Wang, Bryan-Kinns & Ji (2016), describing a participatory design initiative in rural China. The authors note that the relative isolation of these communities often means that the local people are not familiar with the concept of modern design in a global context. The outcomes and experiences of co-creation activities can therefore be markedly different than compared with similar, more technologically savvy communities. The authors note that social design is often perceived by the locals as fieldwork conducted by outsiders with the help of a handful of invited community members, adding that “the design process often has no meaning for local people in their cultural frame of reference”. In addition, three design paradigms are proposed in relation to co-creation with rural communities:

- 1) The *Cultural Intermediaries* paradigm utilises methods applied by outside designers that are mainly quasi-ethnographic in nature, such as participatory observation and interviews. Typically, the outsiders' role is that of an expert, while the involvement of the community is passive.
- 2) The *Product–Service System* paradigm is characterised by the co-creation of artefacts, such as products and/or services by either the design expert and/or the community, who assumes an active role.
- 3) The *Community Engagement* paradigm is an event-driven approach that focuses on short-term, transdisciplinary activities, such as festivals, aiming to develop and empower the community local community.

Wang et al. see several advantages in the Community Engagement paradigm in terms of the facilitation and building of community consensus, the preservation of cultural identity and building on the existing creative traditions. Moreover, adopting such an approach enables the local community to address local issues by producing their own sustainable and customised responses.

Akama & Yee (2016) are concerned that the field of design and social innovation is dominated by the perception that 'the west knows best', demonstrated by western experts 'teaching' design methods to local professionals in Asia. The authors stress the importance of relationships in design and social innovation practice and argue that the current *integrity*-based orientation of design (see also section 2.3.1) omits certain critical relational dimensions, such as personal, cultural, tacit, affective and spiritual characteristics. Therefore, by complementing the dominant integrity orientation in design with one based on *intimacy*, different types of questions can be asked, issues identified, and approaches followed, instead of merely replicating best practices that were developed in the west.

Applying Actor-Network Theory in combination with social design in a Cambodian context, Kang (2016) argues that by acknowledging and utilising the social qualities within the actors, networks and devices that are embedded in their contexts, these social qualities as a whole can construct new relationships between the processes, participants and artefacts involved. The authors further argue that social problems cannot be solved by designers who hail from contexts that are more politically and socio-economically developed than the one that they are operating in, as the "outcome and spirit" of these designers will vanish after they have left. In order for a social design

practice to be successful, designers should function as a 'device', which helps extract and reflect on the local knowledge and values, thereby empowering the participants in the initiative. In addition, the author asserts that designers should recognise that issues are entangled within their respective contexts and people, which should be reflected in the design intervention. Toolkits might therefore be of limited use, as they are too universal to be useful in a local context. Kang stresses that the most important aspect of social design is that it creates and rearranges the social relations surrounding a phenomenon, which affects both our perspectives of the outside world and our social interactions.

Examples shared by Akama et al. (2019) demonstrate the strength of a relational approach to design and social innovation, which has been practised in Aboriginal and Maori cultures long before the term 'design' was even conceptualised in the west. In Australia, the aquaculture design of the Gunditjmara people are among the earliest in the world and is intimately interwoven with various aspects of their culture and surroundings, such as the landscape, flora, fauna, weather and spirituality. In New Zealand, *whanaungatanga* (relationships) are central to Maori life, which also manifests itself in co-design activities. For example, the goal of *Nga Uri O* is to bring various practitioners together in order to stimulate new design collaborations. By asking the questions "Ko wai au?" (Who am I?), "Ko wai koe?" (Who are you?) and "Ko wai tatau?" (Who are we?), the importance of knowing oneself and one another is emphasised before working on an issue together.

Another example is the *whanau* (family)-centric design process, which imbues the design thinking approach with Maori values, centring the activities around the *whanau*. This entails that how, when, with whom and for how long the *whanau* would like to participate takes precedence over the allocation of people to specific stages of the design process.

In their study of a distant collaboration between a social enterprise based in Myanmar and a university in South Korea, Baek, Kim & Harimoto (2019) found that the concept of social innovation can have different meanings in different cultures, noting that the cultural specificity of intentions and impacts can lead to a difference in perception of the social value created. The project involved the introduction of precision farming technology to farmers in the two countries. However, the Korean university students who were tasked with the design of the farming technology, did not sufficiently understand the needs of the respective farmers, resulting in the adoption of a

technological instead of a social innovation approach. Focusing on improving the technology behind the existing solutions, the intervention did not sufficiently address the underlying problem of the farmers' mistrust towards new technologies (a social concern). The team concluded that external intervention can only have limited benefits in cross-cultural collaboration projects, such as inspiring, discussing different perspectives and stimulate divergent thinking. Furthermore, technological innovation needs to be paired with long-term trust and capacity building in order to be effective.

Other studies that foreground social relations in design and social innovation are an account by Yang & Sung (2016), discussing the implementation of service design in Taiwan (see section 2.2.3.4) and a study by Chon (2018), examining the construction and interpretation of social issues in Singapore (see section 2.2.2.2). In addition, two case studies from the University of Malaya in Malaysia, demonstrating the concept of *Heartware*, an approach to integrated watershed management based on community-shared values, described by Mohamad et al. (2015; 2018), will be discussed in section 6.4 and elaborated upon in chapters 8 to 10, as two of the authors were also respondents in this study.

In the first section of this chapter, the origin of design and social innovation was traced within two academic disciplines: the study of design and the study of social innovation. This was followed by an overview of the major themes in design and social innovation discourse, which includes the framing of design in social innovation, the role of designers in the process, the sustaining of initiatives and the significance of social relations. Next, two issues that design and social innovation is currently facing were highlighted: the lack of non-western perspectives and the lack of critical analysis. The last section explained the motivations behind the focus of this research on Asia-Pacific and presented an overview of accounts focusing on the region, foregrounding the importance of local contexts and social relations.

In order to explore what constitutes design and social innovation initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region, a field study was conducted in three different cities in the region: Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. The following chapters will outline the theoretical and methodological frameworks and provide a detailed description of the case studies in each of the three cities.

Chapter 3 / Methodology

The first section of this chapter will explore the theoretical background of the methodological perspective underpinning the research, followed by an explanation of the case study method and the steps undertaken to construct the case studies. The next section elaborates on the data collection process, introducing the Activity Theory framework and highlighting its suitability as a method of data collection for design and social innovation initiatives. This is followed by a description of the data analysis phase and a discussion of thematic analysis, which was used to analyse the data and distil the (key) themes. The last section consists of a methodological map, which presents a diagram of the methodological approach of this study.

3.1 Theoretical background

As the underlying assumption of this research study is based on the inseparability of the stakeholders in design and social innovation initiatives and the context they operate in, this study begins from a perspective that is rooted in social constructionism.

Although there is no single definition or school of thought of social constructionism, some of the common central tenets are that it recognises meaning to be central to human activity, and together with understanding, originates in social interaction where these concepts are constructed according to certain shared agreements. In addition, through the lens of social constructionism, meanings and understandings of events can differ depending on the situation (Lock & Strong, 2010). These multiple realities, constructed by different groups, as well as their implications, definitions and experiences of the phenomena, are what is being studied in social constructionism (Patton, 2015).

3.2 Case study method

The social constructionist approach of the research assumes a heavy dependence on the contextual conditions in which phenomena occur. Therefore, in order to understand how initiatives operate in their own environment, case studies were considered appropriate for this purpose. Defined by Yin (2018) as an in-depth empirical

investigation of a phenomenon within its context in the real world, a case study is a suitable method to examine how or why a social phenomenon works, particularly when the phenomenon does not possess clear boundaries with its context. Furthermore, the construction of case studies does not require control of behaviour events (see table 3.1 for comparison with other approaches).

Method	Form of research question	Requires control of behavioural events?	Focuses on contemporary events?
Experiment	How, why?	Yes	Yes
Survey	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes
Archival Analysis	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes/No
History	How, why?	No	No
Case Study	How, why?	No	Yes

Table 3.1 Overview of when to apply which research method (adapted from Yin, 2018)

3.2.1 Case selection

The initial objective of the study was to arrive at approximately fifteen design and social innovation initiatives from the Asia-Pacific region (three different countries with around five initiatives each) in order to have a wide range of different types of cases. The number of case studies was based on an estimation of the time and budget available for the study. The field research comprised two separate field studies. The first study had a duration of one month and was focused on Bangkok. Its main objective was the creation of a local network and the conducting of preliminary interviews. The second study had a duration of seven months, during which Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur were visited. The researcher spent two months in each city, contacting initiatives, building relationships with the interviewees and conducting the interviews.

A total of sixteen initiatives, five in Hong Kong, six in Thailand and five in Malaysia, were eventually selected as case studies. The choice of countries was partly influenced by both the researcher's and supervisor's existing networks and familiarity with the culture, which would facilitate access to the initiatives and possible cooperation of the respondents. Consideration was given to ensure that the locations represented diverse ecosystems influenced by different cultures, political structures and different stages of design adoption. In order to be able to draw comparisons

between the different contexts, relatively similar, urbanised cities were chosen within the three countries.

Hong Kong is a city-state which is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China and does not have a capital, but is instead made up of different districts, regions and islands, most of which are urban and densely populated. In Thailand and Malaysia, this entailed that the field study was conducted in the respective capitals of Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, which in terms of urbanisation were comparable to Hong Kong. However, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur stand in contrast to their large rural hinterlands, unlike Hong Kong, which is almost completely urbanised. This urban context is particularly interesting as most research on design and social innovation that has been conducted in the region does not consider the effects of place or tends to focus on rural contexts (see, for example (Amaral et al., 2014; Yang, 2015; Kang, 2016), where different rules apply.

The three cities are similar in the sense that they are all considered to be ‘modern’ global cities¹⁷ with a well-educated population, an extensive public transport network and a tightly knit (design and) social innovation community. These factors significantly facilitated the researcher’s efforts to build a local social network and connect with initiatives. In other aspects, however, the cities were remarkably different from one another, with each city having their own respective cultures, issues and challenges. The context-specific themes from each of the cities are further discussed in chapter 7.

The preferred method of contacting initiatives in the three cities was through *warm acquisition*. The terms ‘warm’ and ‘cold’ acquisition, or leads, originate from sales and marketing. Warm leads have already come in contact with the product or service in one way or another, whereas cold leads have not (hence the term ‘cold calling’). In the context of the research, warm acquisition entailed approaching initiatives or respondents that were already known or contacted before by the researcher, the supervisor and/or a (local) contact person.

¹⁷ A global city in this context is a city which has a high level of interconnectivity with other major cities. All three cities are positioned at the top end of the GaWC (Globalization and World Cities Research Network) scale. Hong Kong is ranked as an *Alpha+* city, whereas both Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur are considered *Alpha* cities (GaWC, 2019)

The selection of the initiatives was based on the judgement of either the researcher or the (local) contact person. In most cases, the decision to contact an initiative was informed by two criteria: there must be a social dimension to the work and design must play a role in the process in one way or another. In some cases, contact persons also facilitated the initial communication between the prospective participants and the researcher. Alternatively, when there was no local contact available, *cold acquisition* was used, during which the researcher contacted the initiators or participants of an initiative directly via email or in person, for example during a conference, event or other type of social gathering. Two types of initiatives were considered in the field study: active and non-active cases. Active cases are currently on-going projects that have not yet reached some form of closure. Non-active cases are either put on hold by the initiator(s) and/or stakeholders, are dormant, with no activity by any of the stakeholders, or have been terminated, for whatever reason.

3.2.2 Case study design

The study utilises a multiple-case study design, in which multiple cases are studied within their respective environments (Yin, 2018). For this study, this involved multiple cases being selected in multiple countries, each of which was studied in their own context (see figure 3-A).

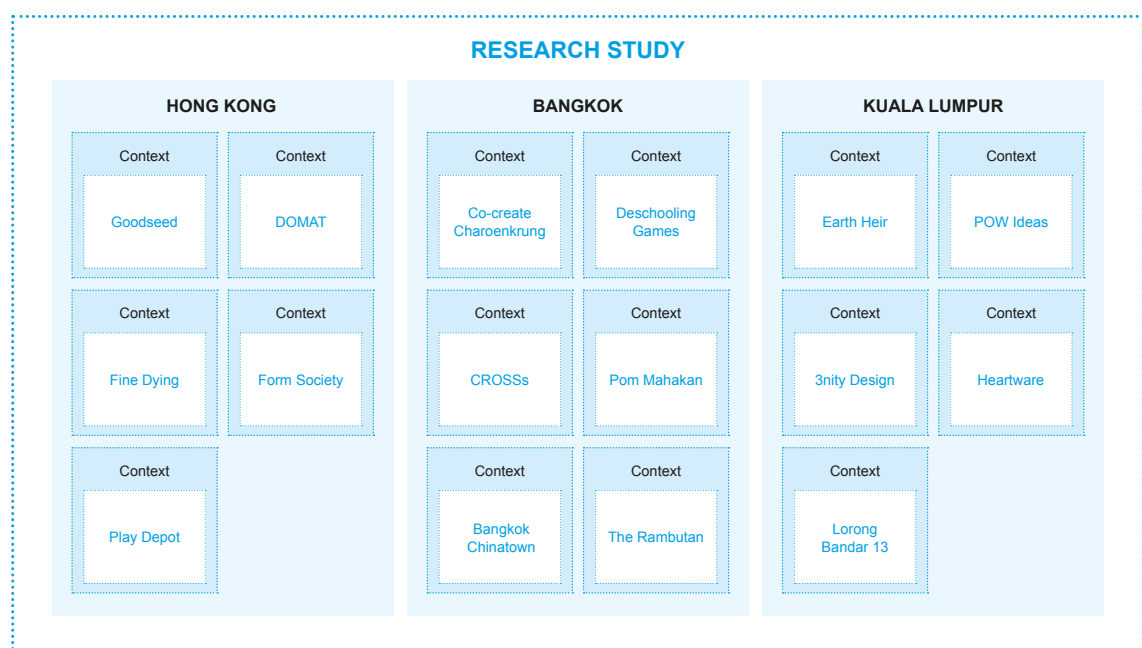


Figure 3-A Case study design of the research study.

3.2.3 Unit of analysis

What exactly is considered a 'design and social innovation initiative' should be explained further. As prescribed by Yin (2018), the unit of analysis in a case study is defined by first determining what phenomenon is being studied exactly: is it a group, a community, a city or perhaps a country? The second step should consist of establishing what the boundaries of the case are in terms of who or what is included as well as its limits in time.

However, attempting to define what a design and social innovation initiative is using these criteria can be problematic, as an initiative can take many shapes. In its most straightforward manifestation, an initiative could be an organisation, a project, an event or a body of work. Initiatives can also be several of these at the same time, which at times can overlap. For example, an organisation can be its own (pilot) project and have several follow-up projects. Initiatives can also be embedded within another initiative. An initiative can be extremely formalised, taking the form of a research institution or it can be extremely informal, a one-time collaboration between certain participants during an event.

Furthermore, establishing the boundaries of an initiative can be challenging, or in some cases impossible, as participatory projects, which design and social innovation initiatives usually are, tend not to have an end date. In addition, there is always a possibility that an initiative is continued at a later date by one or several of the involved stakeholders (Huybrechts, Schepers & Dreessen, 2014).

There is another issue that is more political in nature: what exactly is the difference between a 'design and social innovation initiative' and a 'social innovation initiative' without design. In other words, who makes the decision what the 'design' component is in a social innovation initiative? Would this be the practitioner, the researcher, or both? (see also p.213).

All of the issues described above are complicated further by the fact that the respondents in the field study often did not clearly distinguish between their different activities. Instead, they were more likely to consider their work as a whole, driven by the same philosophy, instead of separate, discrete projects. Although the discussion on the initiative as a unit of analysis is important, to further examine its philosophical and political ramifications in the broader discourse falls outside of the scope and focus of this thesis. Therefore, a working definition was formulated for usage in this particular context:

A design and social innovation initiative is a phenomenon characterised by an innovative activity conducted by one or several stakeholders, whose objective appears to be directed at a greater social good and does not have the primary motivation of seeking financial gain. In addition, some form(s) of design activity is taking place that is performed by one or several of the stakeholders.

Within the thesis, the words 'project' and 'organisation' are sometimes used interchangeably with the word 'initiative' when describing the latter, as respondents often signify their work as such.

3.2.4 General procedure

The standard procedure that was followed after the selection of an initiative as a potential case study began by contacting stakeholders and enquiring whether they would be interested to participate in the study. If the stakeholder(s) agree, the researcher briefly explained the background of the study to the participants by email or in person, before the actual interview. In some instances, a participant information sheet, outlining the details of the research, was sent in advance, but in most cases contact was initiated in an ad-hoc and informal manner. It was therefore deemed culturally inappropriate by the researcher to present a form that would need to be signed as this would jeopardise the possible participation of the respondents. Similarly, informed consent forms were prepared beforehand, however, in practice it was not possible to present this to the respondents and instead, permission was asked on the audio recording itself. In addition, at the end of each interview, respondents were asked whether they had any questions regarding the research study that were not addressed. Respondents were also informed that they could contact the researcher via email or phone should any questions come up later.

If applicable, or when invited, the researcher made further arrangements for (follow-up) interviews or site visits with the parties involved. In some cases, this occurred with the help of a local contact; for example, when there was a need for mediation by a third party due to issues pertaining to language or access.

For active cases, the researcher aimed to attend relevant meetings or visit project sites, during which notes, photos and audio recordings were made whenever possible and when given permission by the stakeholders. For both active and non-

active cases, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to gather information from the stakeholders involved (see also section 3.3.5).

3.2.5 Sampling criteria

The initial aim was to gather respondents from a wide range of backgrounds: ‘ordinary’ citizens, designers, academics, civil servants and professionals working for both for-profit and non-profit organisations. Due to various circumstances, such as respondents declining to participate, it was not possible to ensure the participation of every type of respondent as originally envisioned. However, in all three countries similar types of initiatives and respondents were found, facilitating comparisons between the three cities. See table 3.2 for an overview.

HONG KONG				
Initiative	Type	Initiated by	Respondents' backgrounds	Usage of design
Goodseed	Organisation	Government	Social service	Capacity building, design thinking, co-creation
DOMAT	Organisation	Architectural agency, social enterprise	Architecture	Architecture, product design
Fine Dying (SI.DLab)	Project	Non-profit social design agency	Academia & social design, product design	Design thinking, co-creation, empathy, immersion, prototyping, capacity building
Form Society	Organisation	Independent	Social design	Event organising
Play Depot	Organisation & project	Independent	Visual art	Design activities are organised by stakeholders
BANGKOK				
Initiative	Type	Initiated by	Respondents' backgrounds	Usage of design
Co-create Charoenkrung (TCDC)	Project	Government	Graphic design, Education, Business	Urban renewal, prototyping, visualisation, event organising
Deschooling Games	Organisation	Independent	Graphic design, Education, Engineering	Game design, event organising, co-creation

Pom Mahakan	Body of work ¹⁸	Independent	Engineering, Architecture, Graphic design	Design thinking, prototyping, co-creation, community architecture, participatory mapping
Bangkok Chinatown	Organisation & project	Architectural agency	Architecture	Design thinking, prototyping, co-creation
CROSSs	Organisation	Architectural agency	Architecture	Participatory design, architecture, prototyping, designing relations
The Rambutan	Organisation	Independent	Graphic design, visual art	Graphic design, activism
KUALA LUMPUR				
Initiative	Type	Initiated by	Respondents' backgrounds	Usage of design
Earth Heir	Organisation	Social enterprise	Business, International development	Product design
3nity design	Organisation	Design & branding agency	Design	Branding, graphic design, product design
Green pocket park (POW Ideas)	Project	Architectural agency	Architecture	Architecture, art
Lorong Bandar 13 (Think City)	Project	Government	Architecture	Urban renewal, architecture, co-creation, visioning
Water Warriors & Mukim Pasangan (UM)	Project	Academia	Watershed management	Designing relations

Table 3.2 Overview of types of initiatives and respondents.

3.2.6 Positionality of the researcher

Whether researchers position themselves in a way that is culturally appropriate can have a considerable influence on the quality of the data that is collected during the research process (Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2018). As the researcher is not native to any of the countries where the field study was conducted, the five evaluation criteria for cross-cultural research proposed by Im et al. (2004) are useful as a framework to discuss the issue of the researcher's positionality (see table 3.3).

¹⁸ There have been many people involved with the village of Pom Mahakan. There are characteristics of an organisation, depending on the perspective and the time period. Therefore, it is perhaps best considered as a body of work undertaken by many stakeholders throughout the decades.

Evaluation criteria	Definition
Cultural relevance	Refers to whether the research question can serve a specific cultural group's issues and interests in improving their lives.
Contextuality	Includes sensitivity to structural conditions that contribute to participants' responses and to the interpretations of situations informed by experiences, by validation of perceptions, and by a careful review of existing knowledge.
Appropriateness	Refers to whether the study uses appropriate communication styles, conceptualizations, and translation process.
Mutual respect	Involves all aspects in specific cultures of the researchers and the participants of being esteemed, and it can indicate the rigor of the studies.
Flexibility	Flexibility refers to whether the researcher was flexible in usage of languages and time for data collection.

Table 3.3 Summary of evaluation criteria for rigor in cross-cultural nursing research. Adapted from Im et al. (2004).

Cultural relevance

As the respondents in the field study consisted of various stakeholders, the question whether the research question (and findings) would be somehow beneficial for them is not easy to answer. The respondents who could be considered as initiators or had an active role within the initiatives expressed considerable interest in the outcomes of the research study and were often eager to hear about the findings so far, as this might help their own practice. There were also respondents which did not have an immediate interest in the research study and would therefore most likely not benefit from it. These include those who participated in the initiatives themselves, but were not part of the initiatives' organisation, such as citizens and clients. In most instances, these respondents agreed to participate in the study because they were asked by the researcher's contacts at the initiative. There was, however, no obligation to participate in the study. Although respondents rarely refused to participate, in some cases they did not reply or follow-up on emails sent to plan an interview date, which the researcher interpreted as an unwillingness to participate and therefore did not pursue.

Contextuality

The researcher's degree of contextual knowledge differed per city. In the case of Hong Kong, the researcher was relatively knowledgeable regarding the local environment, customs and culture as he had graduated from one of the local universities, having spent three years studying and living in the city. Similarly, the researcher had some familiarity with Malaysia, due to his cultural background as an Indonesian and his

experience working in neighbouring Singapore for several years. Both Indonesia and Singapore share common, albeit different, characteristics with Malaysia, which was particularly beneficial to the researcher when engaging in social interactions. In a sense, the Thai context was the farthest away from the researcher's own, not having lived nor worked there. However, after spending several months in Bangkok, the researcher experienced Thai culture and customs to have many similarities with Indonesian culture, in particular in terms of social hierarchy (see also section 7.2.2). Although the researcher has consciously adopted an attitude that is sensitive to the respective local contexts, and based on his own experiences, attempted to act accordingly, it must also be acknowledged that these efforts will not be equal to the knowledge of a true local. The Activity Theory framework (discussed in section 3.3.1) therefore provided a framework, which allowed the context surrounding an initiative could be constructed by the respondents, rather than the researcher.

Appropriateness

The majority of the interviews took place in an informal setting, often taking place in a café over lunch or coffee. Only a few interviews, mostly with respondents from government organisations, were held in an office. In some cases, this had an effect on the way the respondents communicated. The respondents that were interviewed in an informal setting were often more frank and outspoken, whereas those in a formal setting tended to be more reserved and nuanced in their opinions. This was also reflected in the researcher's position, who adopted a more formal or informal stance, based on the situation at hand.

Mutual respect

Im et al. (2004) point out that researchers can experience difficulty gaining the trust of participants due to their perception of the researcher (or research in general), which can become even more problematic when the researcher is of a different ethnicity or does not speak the same language. None of the stakeholders that were eventually interviewed for this study appeared to have a negative image of researchers. However, they might have been self-selecting as there were other stakeholders that initially agreed to be interviewed, but did not follow-up; their motivations for not participating remain unclear. As all interviews were conducted in English, there is a chance that some nuances might have been lost, due to the fact that in all but one case, it was not

the respondents' native language. However, all respondents spoke English with a high level of proficiency and if the answers that they gave were somehow unclear, the researcher would ask them to elaborate further. The researcher did not encounter any noticeable issues regarding ethnicity, as at first sight his appearance was relatively similar to the local population in the three countries. Nonetheless, this did not automatically mean that he was accepted into the initiative's circle; he remained an outsider.

Flexibility

Particularly in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, a high degree of flexibility in terms of time management was expected of the researcher. Planning appointments with (prospective) respondents often occurred on an ad hoc basis, in some cases one day before or on the same day, and often had an informal character (see also section 3.2.7). Flexibility in language use would have been possible in Kuala Lumpur, as the researcher could have conducted the interviews in Malay, which is mutually intelligible with Indonesian. However, all of the respondents chose to conduct the interview in English, which is common in Malaysia in daily interactions.

3.2.7 Observations during data collection

Maintaining good social relations and the building of trust between the researcher and the respondents was essential in both field studies, which evidenced itself in several areas:

- ***Planning for the interviews.*** In most cases, the researcher communicated with prospective respondents via email or Skype several months before meeting them in person. On multiple occasions, particularly in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, several casual meetings with respondents took place before the actual interview was held. Therefore, although both field studies combined amounted to eight months, most of this time was spent building the relationships between the respondents and the researcher.
- ***Choice of interview venue and its consequences.*** In all instances, the interview venue was determined by the respondents, which was not always ideal. Oftentimes, interviews were held in informal settings over coffee, lunch or dinner, which

influenced the quality of the audio recordings. The casual atmosphere also made it inappropriate to present respondents with formalities, such as a participant information sheet.

- ***Warm acquisition through respondents.*** Several respondents were referred to by other respondents in the study. In some cases, these prospective interviewees were already contacted by the researcher. However, only after being approached by other respondents, whom they knew personally, they agreed to being interviewed. In a sense, some of the respondents acted as gatekeepers or referees for others.

3.2.8 Ethical considerations

As mentioned in section 3.2.4 and 3.2.6, it was not always possible to provide the respondents with a participant information sheet or informed consent form. Instead, the information and approval were given orally and recorded on audio. In order to ensure that the respondents are represented in a manner they deem appropriate, excerpts of the thesis have been sent to respondents for final approval, whenever possible. Furthermore, all respondents have been anonymised, with only their function and the initiative they were involved in indicated in the case study descriptions. In some cases, where the respondents' answers were of a sensitive nature, they have been completely anonymised.

3.3 Data collection

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, which were recorded using an audio recording device. The questions asked during the interview were structured around the *Activity Theory* framework (described in the following sections). In addition, the researcher indicated tentative topics or themes and highlighted significant comments in the handwritten notes for easier retrieval during the data analysis phase. In some instances, the researcher was invited by the respondents to join site visits or be present as an observer during events. At such occasions, field notes and photos were taken by the researcher for documentation purposes.

3.3.1 Activity Theory

Activity Theory, sometimes also referred to as Cultural Historical Activity Theory, is a framework used for the analysis of qualitative data and is rooted in multiple theoretical traditions: classical German philosophy, the writings of Marx and Engels and the Soviet cultural psychology of Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Luria. Instead of the traditional dualistic approach, in which individuals are perceived to be separated from the social structures that surround them, Activity Theory assumes a monist approach, in which both individual and context are studied at the same time, accomplished by studying the generated activity (Engeström, 1999). Its ability to describe activity structures and developments within their own contexts (Lauche, 2005; Tarbox, 2006; Tan & Melles, 2010), makes Activity Theory fit well within the social constructionist approach adopted for this study, as it can look past isolated design methods, processes or ideas by providing insight into the ecosystems in which initiatives are embedded.

Activity Theory has been used to study organisation studies (Blackler, 1993; Chatzakis, 2014), learning (Wells, 1993; Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999) and human-computer interaction (Kuutti, 1996), among others. There are also accounts, although relatively fewer, of the framework having been applied in the study of design. Examples are interaction design (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006), service design (Sangiorgi & Clark, 2004), graphic design (S. Tan & Melles, 2010), industrial design (Desai, 2008) and collaborative design activity (Calvo, Sclater & Smith, 2016; Zahedi, Tessier & Hawey, 2016).

3.3.1 The Activity System

Central to Activity Theory is the notion that *subjects* (either individuals or groups) are to be studied together with their social contexts (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow, 2003, cited in Chatzakis, 2014). Using *tools*, which can be concepts and/or artefacts, subjects attempt to achieve their *objects*, which are their desires or intentions (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006). An *activity*, characterised by the subject-tools-object relationship, is therefore conducted by the subject to achieve a particular *outcome* (Tan & Melles, 2010). Activities that are conducted by collectives or groups of people are driven by communal motives, which are shaped by underlying objects which satisfy collective needs. These motives are embedded in the object of the activity (Engeström, 2000). Implicit or explicit limitations or *rules* connect the relationship between subject, tools and object to the wider social context, along with the *community* (consisting of other

activity systems) and the *division of labour*, if the subject consists of a group (Chatzakis, 2014). The interrelation of these elements is visualised in a triangular framework known as the Activity System, considered the basic unit of analysis (see figure 3-B).

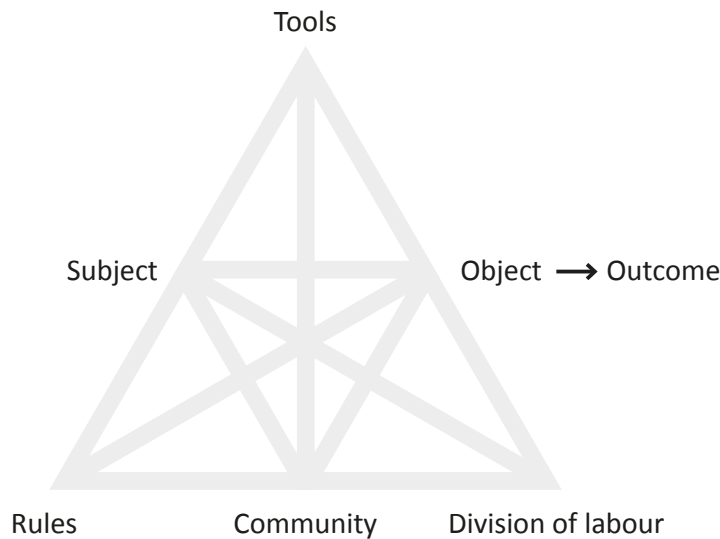


Figure 3-B The Activity System – adapted from Engeström (1999).

3.3.2 Benefits of Activity Theory

Using Activity Theory as a method of data collection is advantageous, due to several of its characteristics:

1. The activity system allows the construction of a rich account of what actors do, how they do it and with whom, set against the context in which the activity takes place and considering the relevant internal and external elements (Chatzakis, 2014). In doing so, Activity Theory can reveal the (power) relations between the actors in a design and social innovation initiative. Furthermore, it can preserve the (cultural) context of the activity, as it is embedded in the framework itself.
2. Innovation networks can be considered as networks consisting of activity systems, each with their own objects, knowledge and resources (Miettinen & Hasu, 2002). Design and social innovation initiatives could be perceived as such a network, consisting of several actors, each with their own activity system. The Activity Theory framework would enable the examination of the same initiative, or an

activity conducted within it, from the perspectives of different stakeholders (see figure 3-C).

3. By considering both the researcher's and the subject's perspective, Activity Theory avoids objectification of the subject (Engeström, 1999; Tan & Melles, 2010). It is less sensitive to researcher bias as the construction of the activity system is dependent on the input and interpretation of both the researcher and the subject.
4. By constructing activity systems at different points in time, certain issues can be tracked over time (Engeström, 2001). In this way, a past situation can be extrapolated via the current situation to the future.

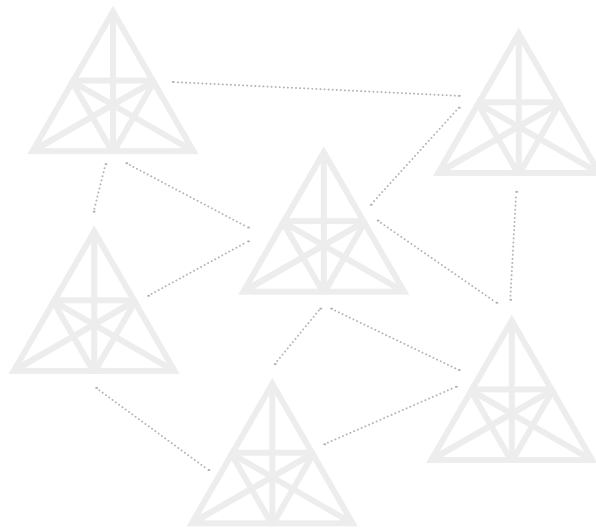


Figure 3-C Innovation networks as networks of activity systems.

3.3.3 Alternative approaches

Prior to the selection of Activity Theory, Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) was considered as a possible method of data collection and analysis. ANT, originally from science and technology studies, enables the mapping of actors in networks of agency and considers all entities, both human and non-human as *actants* (Latour, 1996). Moreover, it is based on the assumption that interactions are mediated by *actant networks*, which actively create and participate in all social life (Law, 1992). The notion of society, and therefore culture, being created by the interaction between actants, however, implies that there was no pre-existing society nor culture. This is problematic as this includes the society from which the actant networks themselves came (Bloor, 1999). In addition, as success in ANT is defined by the length of the network, instead of the value created,

it prevents the addressing of normative problems (Radder, 1992). It follows that ANT would be unsuitable for this study as it lacks the ability to analyse issues regarding culture, norms and values in design and social innovation.

Another potential approach for data collection and analysis that was considered was *participatory action research*, which perceives the active involvement of researchers in a certain practice, working together with those who are the focus of the study, as a means of achieving change. Action research is characterised by a cyclical process, during which the activities of planning, acting, observing and reflecting repeat themselves (Robson, 2013). In addition, *passive participant observation* was considered as well. In this approach, which requires less involvement, data collection and analysis are based on the observations by the researcher, who is accepted as a member of the group that is being studied, but does not actively participate in its activities (Robson, 2013).

Participatory action research and/or passive participant observation were not deemed suitable as principal methods to collect and analyse data for this study, as these types of approaches would be too demanding on the allocated time and budget. Although passive participant observation was used in certain instances, for example, in cases when the researcher was invited to site visits or events, the data collected from these endeavours was not used as main components for data analysis. Furthermore, difficulties in gaining access to initiatives and planning the field study to coincide with initiatives' key activities made the pursuit of these approaches impractical.

3.3.4 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted several months before the first field study to establish whether data collection using Activity Theory would be able to produce meaningful data. For this purpose, a workshop was organised at a university in which multidisciplinary students enrolled in the MA/MSc Multidisciplinary Innovation course were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. After a short seminar explaining the theoretical background, groups of students were asked to fill in handouts featuring the activity system with observations from their own projects (see figure 3-D), after which the results of each group were discussed with the whole class. The pilot study demonstrated that Activity Theory could:

- 1) reveal who the stakeholders are in a project, how they influence each other and their decisions, and in what ways they tried to achieve their goals;
- 2) provide insight into outside influences (such as social media) on a project;
- 3) function as a reflective tool, to investigate why certain stakeholders behave in a certain way.

The results from the pilot study confirmed that Activity Theory would be suitable to examine initiatives in their own respective context, with the possibility to do so through multiple perspectives. The pilot study has been described in detail in a conference paper published by the researcher and both supervisors (Tjahja, Yee & Aftab, 2017), describing the use of Activity Theory to examine design and social innovation initiatives. The paper has been included in this thesis as Appendix C.

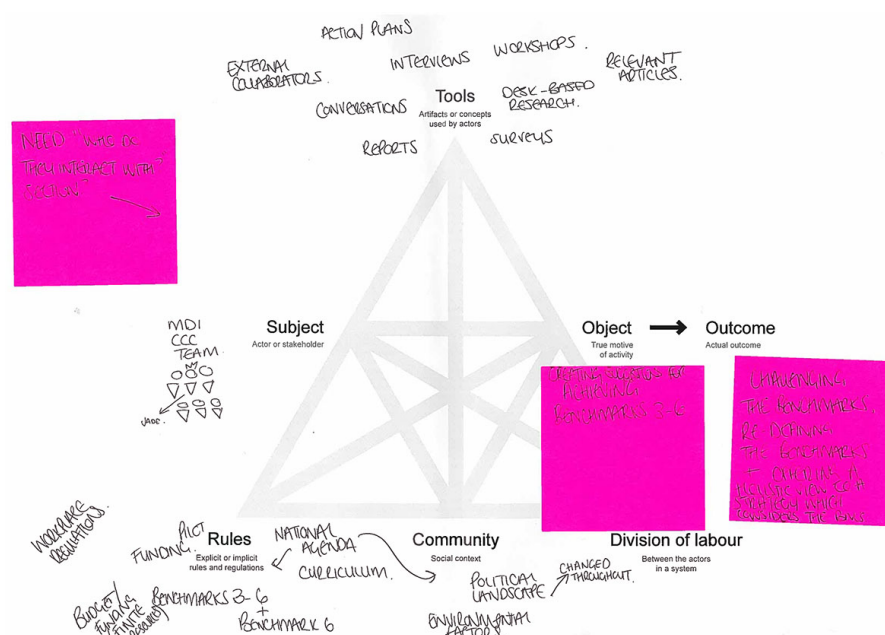


Figure 3-D Example of a handout used by the student teams to analyse their projects using Activity Theory.

3.3.5 Data collection using Activity Theory

The bulk of the data collected consisted of the audio recordings of the interviews with the respondents, supplemented with photographs made during site visits or events and relevant materials, such as leaflets, magazines, books and videos, given to the researcher by the respondents. The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that the questions asked by the researcher followed the categories of the activity system

(see section 3.3.1), which was not revealed to the interviewee, unless explicitly asked¹⁹. In general, after asking for permission and thanking the respondent for participating, the researcher would start the interview with a broad question asked in a casual way, such as 'Could you tell me a little bit about how you got the idea to start this project?'. From then on, the researcher would try to make sure that all of the categories in the activity system were sufficiently addressed, by occasionally prompting or nudging the respondent(s) to either elaborate further or steer them back to the topic. The questions pertaining to the categories of the activity system were in principle standard or very similar across initiatives, but could vary in specificity according to the initiative or topic. Some of the categories and examples of associated questions are:

Subject

- Could you tell me a bit about your background?
- Could you describe your involvement in the project?

Object / outcome

- What was your motivation for participating in this project?
- Did you feel that you have accomplished your goal? Why?

Tools

- How did you approach the local residents?
- Did you use any specific methods during the co-creation workshops?

Rules

- Did you experience any limitations when trying to set up your project?
- Were there any aspects in the process that you found particularly challenging?

Community

- How did the community react to the event that you organised?
- What were your experiences with (social) media?

¹⁹ In some instances, the respondents asked the researcher the reason or underlying motivation for asking particular questions, often out of interest. When this situation occurred, the researcher would explain the Activity Theory framework in a concise form and elaborate if needed.

Division of labour

- What were the responsibilities of the individual team members?
- Who has the ultimate say in <a particular issue>?

Wherever possible, the researcher endeavoured to interview multiple respondents who were involved in the same initiative in order to obtain multiple stakeholders' perspectives on the same events or issues²⁰ and, in addition, to interview each respondent on at least two occasions.²¹

Questions surrounding the categories 'rules' (limitations, restrictions, challenges), 'tools' (tools, methods or approaches) and 'object' (motivations, goals), in particular, elicited responses from the interviewees which provided deeper insight into how initiatives operated in their respective contexts (see figure 3-E).

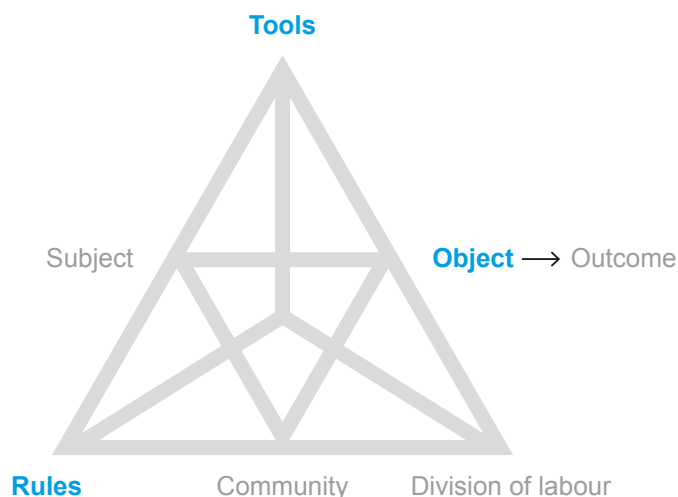


Figure 3-E The Activity System – highlighting the *rules*, *tools* and *object* categories.

²⁰ Although for each of the sixteen initiatives, multiple respondents were contacted to be interviewed, seven of the initiatives only had one respondent. The lack of other respondents for these initiatives was either due to an unwillingness to participate or scheduling conflicts.

²¹ However, this proved possible in only one instance, as in most cases respondents were reluctant to be interviewed again, due to their busy work schedules. Therefore, Activity Theory's strength of examining phenomena from different perspectives by incorporating multiple stakeholders' views was not fully utilised.

3.4 Data analysis

Although Activity Theory significantly contributed to the structuring of the interview process, provided the preliminary framework for analysis and interpretation of the data and could have been used for data analysis as well, thematic analysis was utilised instead, due to its more structured approach. The next section will give an overview of its theoretical framework, followed by how this process was applied during the data analysis phase of this study.

3.4.1 Thematic Analysis

A method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data, thematic analysis is a widely used in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It can be used within a range of epistemological positions that investigates underlying causes of human action (King, 2004). This study approached the data in an inductive manner, in the sense that the findings are presumed to be the result of interactions with the data by the analyst, a process leading to the identification and construction of patterns, themes and categories (Patton, 2015).

Furthermore, following the constructionist paradigm, the thematic analysis has been conducted on a *latent* level, requiring an interpretative act to develop the themes. The resulting analysis is therefore not merely descriptive, which is the case in semantic thematic analysis, but has already been theorised (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As the constructionist paradigm postulates that meaning and experience are (re)produced socially and are not inherent within individuals (Burr, 1995), thematic analysis conducted within this framework focuses on socio-cultural contexts and structural conditions, rather than individual motivations or psychologies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Yin (2016) and Castleberry & Nolen (2018) outline five stages in the process of thematic analysis:

1) *Compiling*

In this stage, the data is compiled into a useable form. For example, by transcribing interviews. During this process, the researcher gains an impression of the scale of the data, allowing a greater understanding of its meaning when viewed in a larger context.

2) *Disassembling*

When the compilation and organisation of the data has been completed, it will be disassembled. This involves the separation of the data into meaningful groupings, often through coding. Features of the data deemed interesting by the researcher will be systematically identified across multiple levels. The codes function as tags, allowing the researcher to retrieve and categorise similar data that has been tagged with a particular code.

3) *Reassembling*

The codes are reassembled by putting them into context with one another in order to create themes, which can be considered as patterns in the codes that show the overall picture. Tools such as hierarchies, matrices, flowcharts, concept maps and diagrams can be used to visualise the structure and relationships between the different groups, context, constructs and codes. The data is gathered into the tentative themes, which are constantly reviewed to test their robustness in relation to the original codes and data sets.

4) *Interpreting*

In what is perhaps the most important stage in the process, conclusions are made from the data that has been distilled into themes. This interpretation process does not have to occur at the end of the process, but should already have been started during the first three phases. After the reassembling of the data, the researcher can start interpreting the themes in order to capture the underlying phenomenon. The significance of a themes does not depend on its frequency, but rather on its relation to the research question(s). Oftentimes thematic maps are developed in this stage that show the relationships of the themes in a visual manner.

5) *Concluding*

The final stage outlines the response to the initial research questions or the purpose of the study, based on the findings that have been obtained through the process in the previous stages.

3.4.2 Benefits of thematic analysis

Several advantages of thematic analysis have been highlighted by Braun & Clarke (2006):

- 1) It is a method that is characterised by its flexibility, ease of use and low learning curve, making it attractive for researchers who do not have much experience conducting qualitative research.
- 2) The results are easily understood by the educated general public. Its qualitative analyses are suitable for informing policy development.
- 3) It is a method that is useful in the context of participatory research, where participants are considered as collaborators.
- 4) Large datasets can be described in a rich manner and summarised in a practical way, with the ability to point out both similarities and differences.
- 5) Using thematic analysis can provide insights that were not anticipated from the start of the research.
- 6) Both social and psychological interpretations of the data are possible.

3.4.3 Data analysis using thematic analysis

The process of thematic analysis conducted in this study followed the five steps of thematic analysis prescribed in section 3.4.2 and will be discussed per individual step:

Compiling

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed manually using the NVivo qualitative research software. The handwritten notes of the same interviews were matched with the audio recordings and, if applicable, additional observations were added in the transcription that might not have been evident in the audio recordings. For example, notable facial expressions or body language relevant to the context.

Disassembling

The audio transcriptions were subsequently coded into preliminary categories (nodes). Initially, these categories were based on those from Activity Theory, as this was the framework used for data collection. However, after transcribing several interviews it became apparent that certain topics and issues tended to reoccur. The initial categories were then broken up into more specific topics according to the patterns that were identified (see Appendix A for an example of a transcript coded in NVivo).

Reassembling and interpreting

The preliminary topics were then grouped together, leading to the creation of broader themes. Thematic maps were constructed for each city, visualising the connections between the themes and indicating whether they could be considered as a driver, condition, issue, tool, goal, outcome or actor (see Appendix B). The maps show that most themes fall into multiple categories. For example, ‘communication’ can function as a driver, condition, tool, goal or issue, sometimes fulfilling several of these roles simultaneously within an initiative.

Table 3.3 compiles the themes from all thematic maps, showing that some of the themes occurred in all three cities (across several initiatives), whereas others were reported in two or one of the cities, either across different initiatives or within the same initiative by different respondents. Furthermore, each city featured specific themes that were mostly relevant in their particular context. These context-specific themes will be elaborated upon in chapter 7.

Reoccurring themes	Cities		
	HK	BK	KL
All three cities			
(Lack of) ownership of public space	x	x	x
Resistance from the local community	x	x	x
The importance of tangible results	x	x	x
The importance of social relations in general	x	x	x
The importance of relations between stakeholders	x	x	x
Conflict of interest between stakeholders	x	x	x
Initiatives struggling with business model	x	x	x
The importance of capacity building	x	x	x
Survival / sustaining of the initiative	x	x	x
The role of education	x	x	x
The role of internal and external communication	x	x	x
The creation of value	x	x	x
The perception of value	x	x	x
Raising awareness about issues	x	x	x
The role of design / the designer	x	x	x
The lack of resources (manpower, funding)	x	x	x
Building trust with the community	x	x	x

Two of three cities	HK	BK	KL
The negative attitude of the design industry	x	x	
The negative perception of design(ers)	x	x	
The passive attitude of local people	x	x	
The lack of control over the design process	x	x	
The negative influence of the media	x	x	
The position that the initiative holds towards others	x	x	
Understanding the limits of what design can do	x	x	
The attitude of the general population towards design(ers)	x	x	
Issues around funding constraints	x	x	
(Mis)adaptation of western / foreign ideas		x	x
The influence of the private sector		x	x
The importance of creating a sense of ownership		x	x
The importance of knowing key people		x	x
The lack of maintenance / preservation culture		x	x
The importance of aligning with government policy		x	x
Mostly Hong Kong	HK	BK	KL
The lack of physical space	x		
Urban poverty	x		
Ageing population	x		
Ambiguity in the process	x		
The necessity of sustaining yourself	x		
Mostly Bangkok	HK	BK	KL
The attitude of the (military) government		x	
The effects of social hierarchy		x	
The importance of the initiative benefitting all stakeholders		x	
Mostly Kuala Lumpur	HK	BK	KL
Institutional racism			x
Flexibility in attitude / way of working			x
Institutionalisation of the initiative			x
Issues around censorship			x

Table 3.4 Reoccurring themes per city.

The examination of the themes' interrelation in the thematic maps led to the proposal of the three key themes: the perception of design and social innovation, the role of the designer and sustaining design and social innovation (see figure 3-F). The three key themes will be discussed in chapters 8, 9 and 10, respectively.

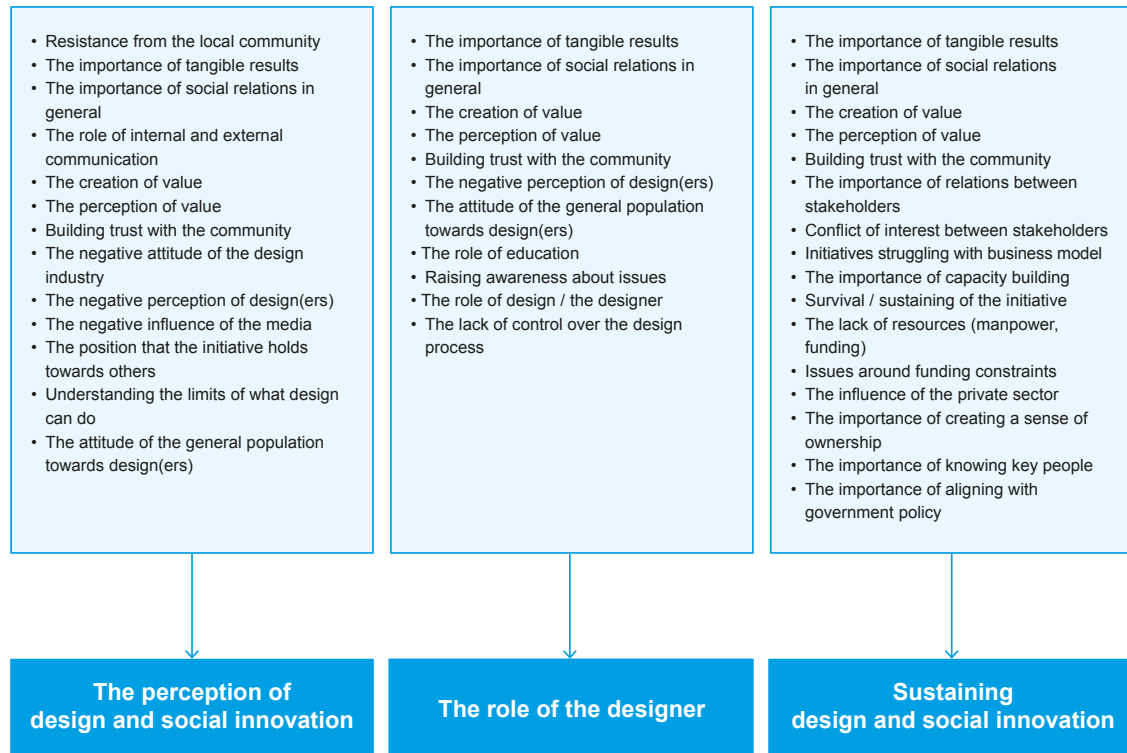


Figure 3-F Diagram outlining the grouping of themes into key themes.

Two of the three key themes from the field study, *the role of the designer* and *sustaining design and social innovation*, coincide with the themes that were identified in the current discourse on design and social innovation (see section 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, respectively), whereas *the perception of design and social innovation* could be considered as the opposite of *the framing of design of design and social innovation* (see section 2.2.1). Although initially the formation of the key themes was not intentionally based on the previously identified themes from academic discourse, at a later stage the literature did inform the process of grouping the minor themes into broader themes, as this would facilitate drawing the findings into a broader context.

3.5 Methodological map

Figure 3-G provides a schematic summary of the study, outlining the steps taken starting from the identification of the issues leading to the data analysis phase. The sections and chapters that discuss the respective stages are shown on the right of the figure.

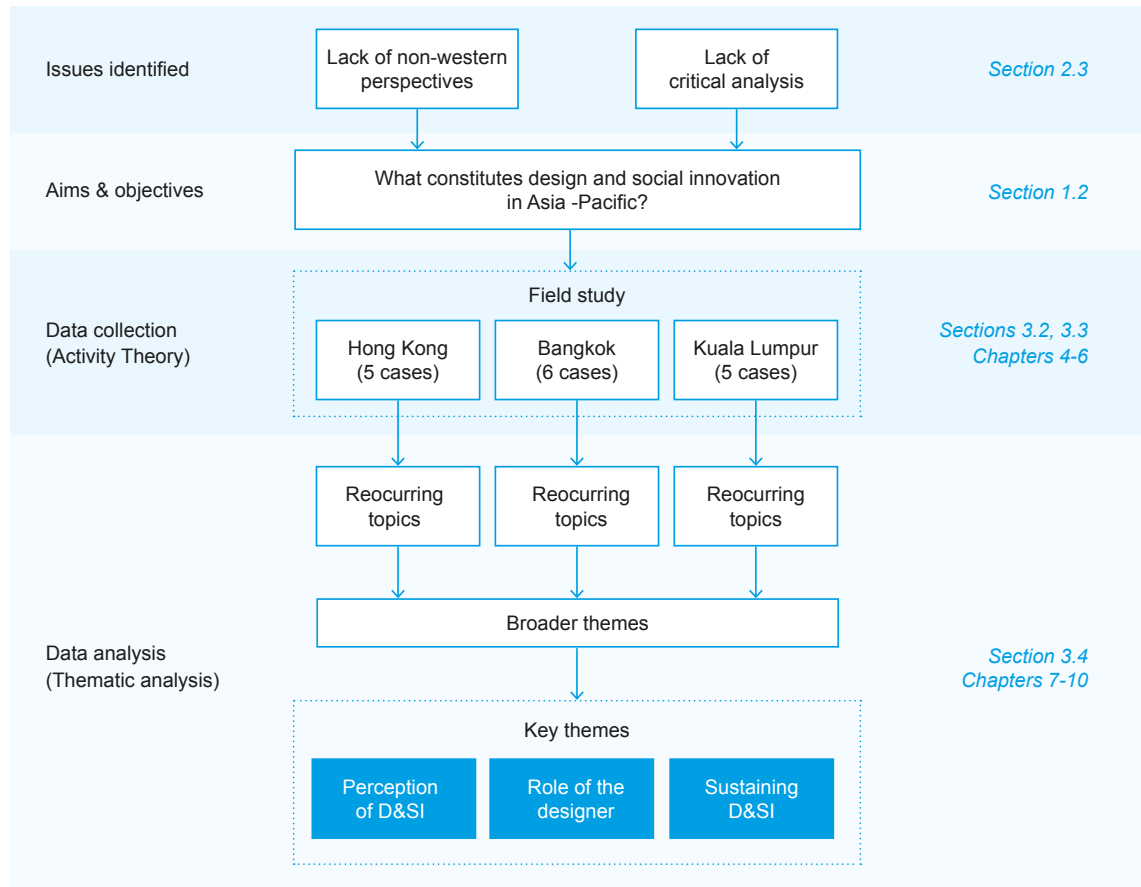


Figure 3-G Methodological map of the research.

Chapter 4 / Hong Kong

This chapter, dedicated to the Hong Kong case studies, will begin with a general introduction to the city and its social innovation climate. Next, the five case studies will be discussed following a standardised format, consisting of a general introduction, interviewee profile(s), history and context, structure, mode of operation, timeline or timespan and the current status or outcome. Chapters 5 (Bangkok) and chapter 6 (Kuala Lumpur) will follow the same structure.

Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, is located in the southeast of the country. It comprises three main areas: Kowloon, Hong Kong Island and the New Territories (including the smaller outlying islands). With a population density of 6,830 people per square kilometre, 7.3 million inhabitants are located on less than 24% of the available land (GovHK, 2019). Some of the major issues that Hong Kong is currently facing are urban poverty, lack of affordable housing, an ageing population, and issues surrounding self-determination (Yu, 2017; Liang, 2018).

The Social Innovation Enterprise (SIE) Fund is the Hong Kong SAR government's main funding body for social innovation, which mostly funds initiatives through intermediaries. Recently, the social landscape in Hong Kong has changed from mainly NGO-led social enterprises towards pioneering social innovation projects (SIE Fund, 2019a). The SIE fund will be discussed in greater depth in section 4.1.

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) supports social innovation through the Jockey Club Design Institute for Social Innovation (JC.DISI), an organisation combining social innovation research with practice using a participatory approach as its main strategy. One of its key programmes is Goodseed, which is one of the case studies in this thesis (discussed in section 4.1). Since 2017, the School of Design at PolyU also offers a BA course in Social Design.

Make a Difference (MaD) is an organisation that provides a platform for young people in Asia to engage in social innovation through participatory programmes. Some of its subsidiaries include the Jockey Club MaD School, the Jockey Club MaD Social Lab and the MaD Good Lab. The MaD Festival is a large annual event that attracts over 1,300 aspiring innovators from over 100 cities in Asia (MaD, 2019).

Other notable organisations that provide funding and/or support social innovation initiatives (with or without design component) are the Hong Kong Arts Council, The Hong Kong Jockey Club, which funds both Goodseed and MaD, and St. James Settlement, a local charity.

The following sections will give a description of the five Hong Kong case studies.

4.1 Goodseed

Goodseed is a programme operating under the Institute for Entrepreneurship of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). The programme aims to help young people develop creative and innovative solutions towards poverty alleviation, in particular low-income families and elderly, people with physical or mental disabilities, ethnic minorities and homeless people. Goodseed trains and supports prospective social innovators in their bid for a HK\$100,000 fund²² awarded by the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund (SIE Fund).

Interviewee profile

The assistant programme manager of Goodseed has a background in the social services and was effectively in charge of the programme and its daily operations.

History and context

In late 2012, the Hong Kong SAR government's Commission on Poverty launched the SIE Fund, which aims to alleviate urban poverty and support underprivileged citizens by stimulating social innovation initiatives (Lam, 2015). The SIE Fund supports both individuals and organisations, mostly through four intermediaries: PolyU (through the Institute for Entrepreneurship), the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS), the Yeh Family Foundation and the SOW (Asia) Foundation²³ (see figure 4-A). Together, the intermediaries are responsible for supporting promising initiatives during an engagement period of three years, building capacity by generating ideas, prototyping, starting and scaling up, with the ultimately goal to create an innovative ecosystem

²² Around £9,800 (March, 2019)

²³ The SOW Foundation has ceased being an intermediary in 2016.

(SIE Fund, 2019b). The Goodseed programme was launched in March 2015 by the Institute for Entrepreneurship and the Jockey Club Design Institute for Social Innovation (JC.DISI), with the other three intermediaries having their own respective programmes with similar commencing dates. Goodseed offers support on the stages of idea generation and prototyping, whereas other intermediaries, such as the HKCSS, support the same stages, but in addition support the starting-up and scaling-up stages.

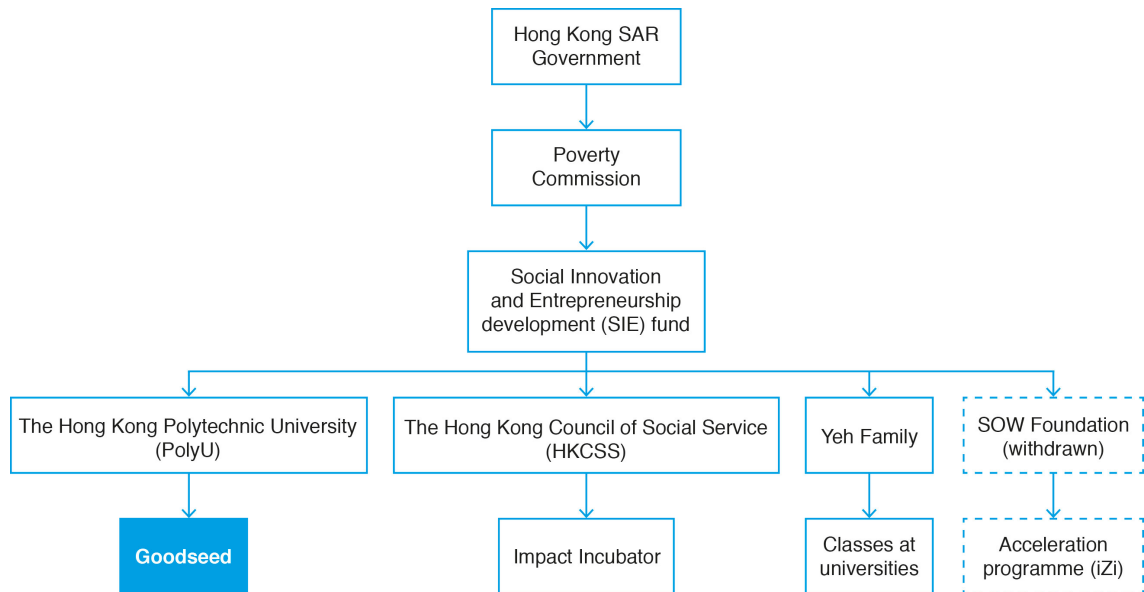


Figure 4-A The Goodseed programme in a wider context.

Structure

The Goodseed programme consists of four core members. The *program leader* and *program director*, who respectively are the director and assistant director of PolyU's Institute for Entrepreneurship, make up the management team. The *assistant programme manager* is responsible for the daily operations, is in charge of the *programme officer* and reports to the *programme director*. The *SIE Taskforce*, which consists of a group of experts on social innovation and entrepreneurship, oversees Goodseed, together with the other intermediaries. The *advisory committee* consists of eight PolyU staff members from different disciplines and provides (non-binding) advice to the programme team. *Partners* provide support by promoting the programme and sharing knowledge and resources with the participants (see figure 4-B).

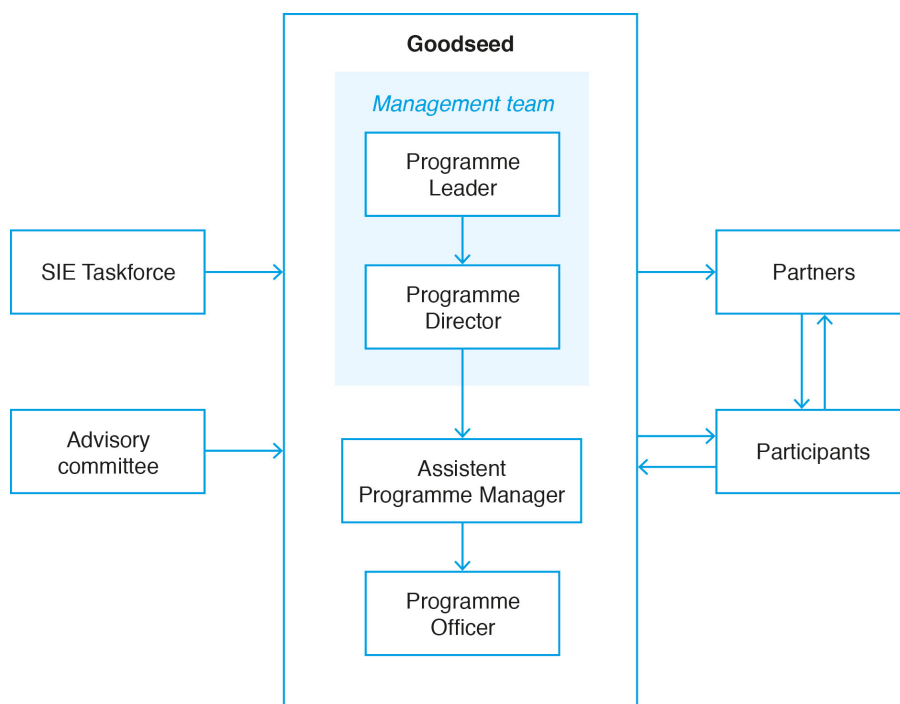


Figure 4-B The organisational structure of the Goodseed programme.

Mode of operation

Local students, graduates from higher education institutes and overseas graduates in possession of Hong Kong citizenship can apply for the programme on the Goodseed website. From its start in 2015, there have been one to three application rounds per year with the amount of rounds being determined by that year's KPIs, which are set by the programme director. In several introduction sessions the selected candidates are given the opportunity to get to know one another and share their thoughts and ideas after which they are encouraged to form teams among themselves. The teams will then undergo three stages, inspired by the phases of the design thinking process:

interactive training, idea competition and project implementation.

First, the participants are offered training modules focused on design, technology and business in the interactive training phase. Among others, they are taught the principles of design thinking, how to do user research, how to define the problem and they learn how to ideate. At the same time, the Goodseed team will take the teams out to do field work and create the opportunity for them to engage with NGOs and local community groups. The teams will then share and consolidate their experiences and, using the tools that they have been trained to use earlier, formulate insights which form

the basis for the idea generation process. Goodseed will encourage the participants to discuss their ideas with external stakeholders, while in the meantime providing training on the basics of the lean start-up process, such as pitching skills, social impact measurement and business modelling.

In the idea competition phase, the teams submit the proposals that have been developed in the first stage to the SIE in order to apply for funding. The proposals are reviewed by a multi-disciplinary panel, which includes one member from the SIE taskforce and three members from the fields of design, NGO and business, respectively. The winning teams will be awarded HK\$100,000 by the SIE Fund to further develop and implement their project ideas.

The final project implementation phase sees the teams who have been awarded the 'good seed money' implement their projects with the support of PolyU, NGOs and mentors from Goodseed's network, who will also offer support in terms of knowledge transfer after the official programme has ended.

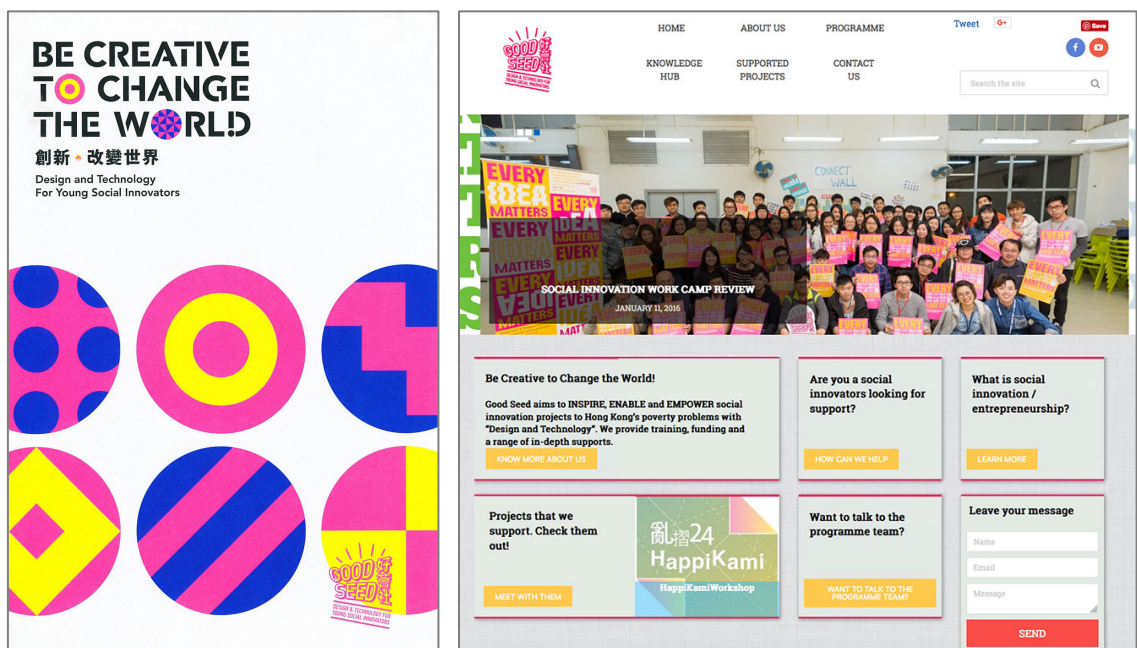


Figure 4-C The Goodseed promotional brochure (left) and website (right).

Timespan

Although the original engagement period was March 2015 to February 2018, the programme was extended until September 2019.

Current status and/or outcome(s)

At the time of writing (beginning 2019), 41 of the initiatives that were mentored by Goodseed were awarded a fund by SIE, exceeding its initial aim of funding 40 initiatives. Examples of initiatives that have been successfully funded are:

- UNSPOKEN, a fashion brand that helps ex-offenders develop their talents by connecting them with designers and journalists.
- The Second Box, an initiative that aims to support elderly scavengers by buying the cardboard boxes and aluminium cans they collect at a higher price and upcycle them.
- Alpha Commons, a project-based learning community which connects primary schoolchildren to social innovators in order to develop solutions to real-world programs together.

4.2 DOMAT: Home Modification for Low-income Families

DOMAT is a not-for-profit agency founded by two architects who believe that good design and a good living environment should be available for everyone. The agency works with communities in Hong Kong and the rest of China who would usually not be able to afford architectural services. Their first project as an agency was the *Home Modification* project commissioned by the Society for Community Organisation (SoCO), which will be the focus of this case study.

Interviewee profile

One of the founders of DOMAT was interviewed for this study. Although both founders have considerable commercial experience, they came from educational backgrounds emphasising the social and human-centred aspect of architecture, respectively. This inspired them to steer their agency towards a social direction.

History and context

Subdivided homes, which are common in Hong Kong, are apartments that are divided into smaller units in order to increase the landlord's rental income. For example, a unit of 700 square feet would be divided into three or four smaller units, making a subdivided home only 150-200 square feet each. SoCO is particularly interested in working with families with children, as they believe that if children do not have a good study environment at (their subdivided) home they will not perform well at school.

This will lead to poor results and make it difficult to get a good job in the future, which in turn forces them to live in the same conditions.



Figure 4-D A subdivided home in Hong Kong (Source: www.domat.hk).

To break this cycle of poverty, SoCO aimed to improve the children's study environment and was looking for some architectural or design input. A mutual friend introduced the architects to SoCO and for a few months they worked together informally on several pilot cases. The idea was to make use of the apartments' high ceilings in order to free up space for dedicated study areas. DOMAT realised early on that improvements to the house itself might be more beneficial to the landlord than the tenants. Therefore, DOMAT designed the furniture to be both durable and adaptable, making it possible for the family to bring the furniture with them when moving house. After additional projects started to come in, the architects decided to formalise their activities and start up the DOMAT agency.

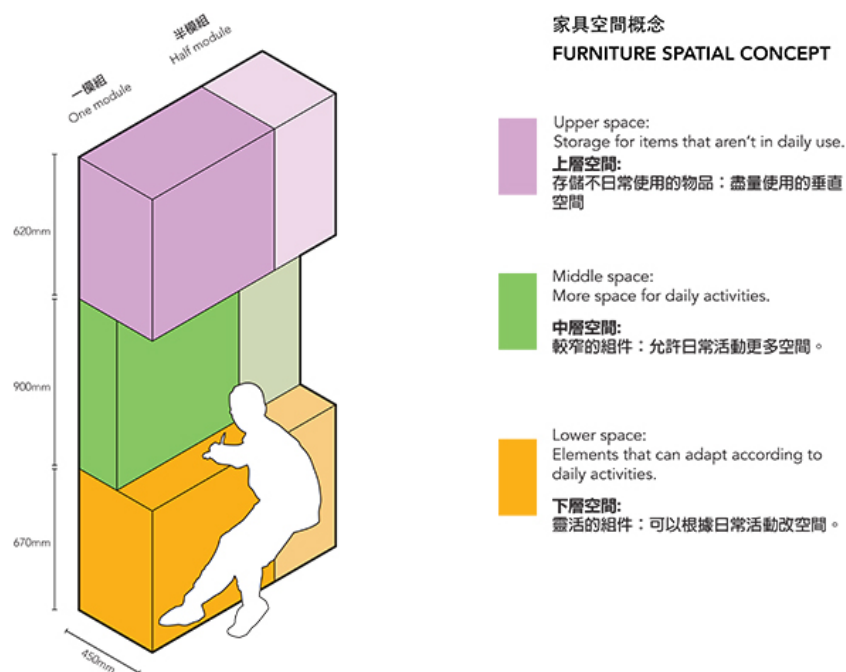


Figure 4-E DOMAT's furniture spatial concept (Source: www.domat.hk).

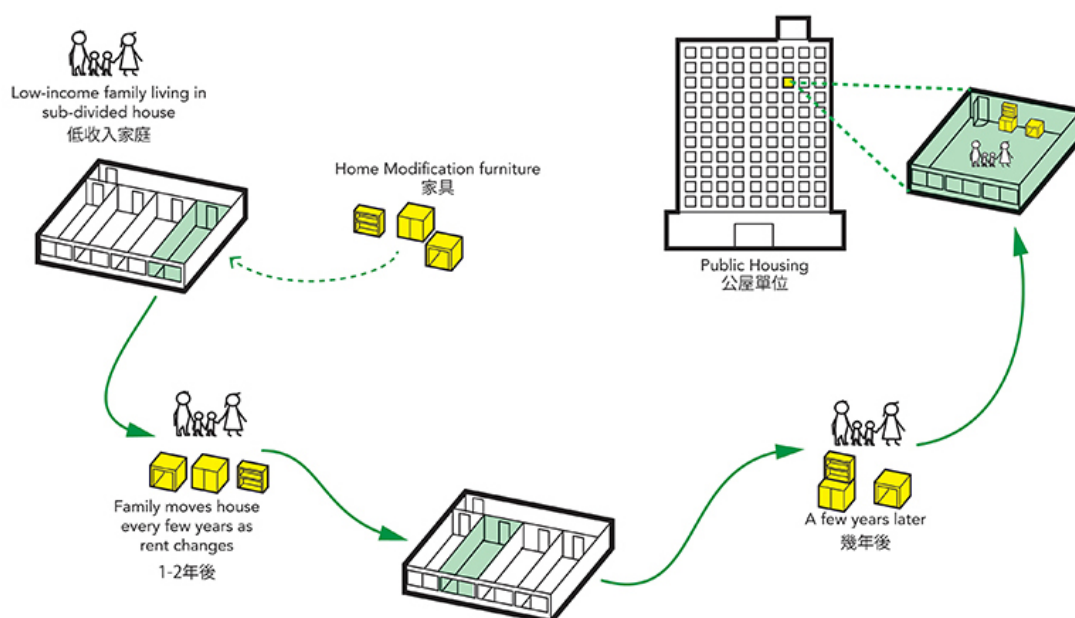


Figure 4-F DOMAT's Home Modification process (Source: www.domat.hk).

Structure

The Home Modification project is completely funded by SoCO. DOMAT and SoCO both interact with the families. In addition, DOMAT also liaises with volunteers and the furniture maker.

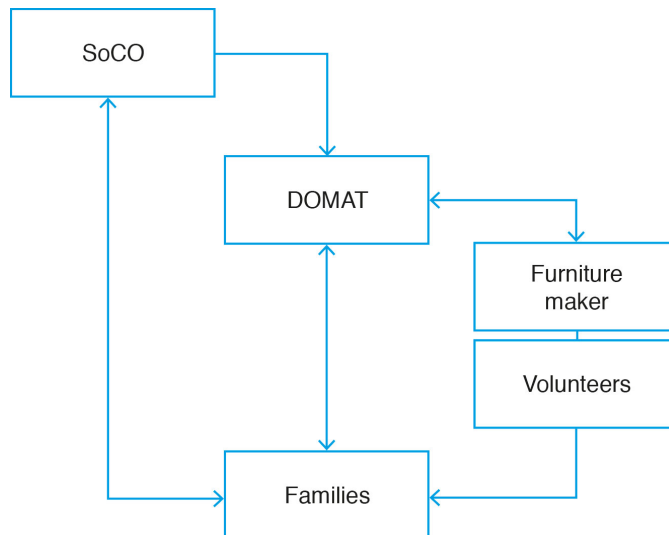


Figure 4-G Structure of the Home Modification project

Mode of operation

SoCO selects the families that will participate in the project by running a background check in order to assess their particular situation and to determine whether they will benefit from participating. Once SoCO has identified a suitable beneficiary they will contact DOMAT, who will visit the family and inform them about the changes they are planning to make to improve their living conditions. At this stage, DOMAT will visit with a team of volunteers to measure the house. After the measurements have been made, DOMAT will make design proposals and present the ideas to the family, who can comment on them. When the family is satisfied with the design, DOMAT will approach the furniture contractor to get a quotation, which will be passed to SoCO. SoCO will check the quotation against the budget, confirm with the furniture contractor and start the production of the furniture, a process that takes several weeks. Once the furniture is ready, DOMAT will arrange with the family to tidy up the house and will help to make final adjustments to the furniture. The case will then be handed to SoCO, who will continue evaluating the family for a period of time and see how the family has used the furniture. This cycle will be repeated for each family participating in the project.

Timespan

The project started in 2013 and is currently on-going.



Figure 4-H DOMAT's furniture inside a family's apartment (Source: www.domat.hk).

Current status and/or outcome(s)

SoCO's have set their initial target to 100 families. Currently, 75 families have participated in the project. DOMAT and SoCO are currently considering applying for more funding to extend the programme.

4.3 Social Innovation Design Lab: Fine Dying

Fine Dying is the first theme addressed by the *Social Innovation Design Lab* (SI.DLab), a programme in which citizens come together and try to develop innovative approaches to ageing. Two other themes, *Dementia Going* and *Productive Ageing* are structured in the same manner and will be run consecutively.

Interviewee profiles

Two stakeholders were interviewed: the programme leader of SI.DLab, is a social designer, design researcher and activist, who specialises in creative participation for social inclusion and innovation. Milk Design, a renowned product design agency, provided design mentoring for the students during the project. The founder and creative director, one of the product designers and the account director were asked about their thoughts and involvement in the project.



Figure 4-I Fine Dying Information flyer (front and back).

History and context

Enable Foundation, a non-profit social design agency, is the initiator and operator of SI.DLab, a two-year capacity building programme. Supported by the SIE Fund, it is currently Enable Foundation's only programme and consists of three related projects that are concerned with ageing innovation. *Fine Dying* was launched in the summer of 2017 as the first project, in which citizens explore and co-design solutions to issues surrounding human mortality in Hong Kong, in particular in relation to local problems such as land scarcity and the ageing population. *Dementia Going*, the second project, explores how to include people with dementia back into the community and *Productive Ageing*, the third project, investigates ways to grow old in a dignified manner. Each of

the projects is supposed to initiate a process of new thinking, in which ideas could be further developed into a service model. For this phase, SI.DLab has agreed with the SIE Fund to produce two outcomes: a Kickstarter type of video, in which the financial costs and social impact of an eventual Fine Dying series will be demonstrated. The second outcome is an open-source co-creation idea bank, in which the ideas that were generated in the three projects will be made available to the public as a showcase of co-creation. The idea bank will not only feature final outcomes, but will also document the insights that were gained during the co-design process to make it a rich source of inspiration. In addition, everyone who has participated in the process will be acknowledged, not just the designer.

Structure

In addition to the founder of Enable Foundation / Programme Director of SI.DLab, the programme's core team consists of a design researcher, graphic designer, design manager, design editor and photo/video maker. The team members are all involved on a part-time basis and funded by the SIE Fund. The physical space where SI.DLab is located is funded by Hysan, a large property developer in Hong Kong. Other stakeholders involved are design students, Hong Kong senior citizens, social issue experts (social workers and people working in the social field) and design mentors (design professionals who act as mentors for the students). There is a clear definition of roles; the core team is responsible for content and develops the program, whereas the design mentors give advice on the design aesthetics and engage with the students. Each of the three projects involves different social issue experts. In Fine Dying, for example, one of the experts was a professional working at the body donation unit at the Chinese University's Medical School.

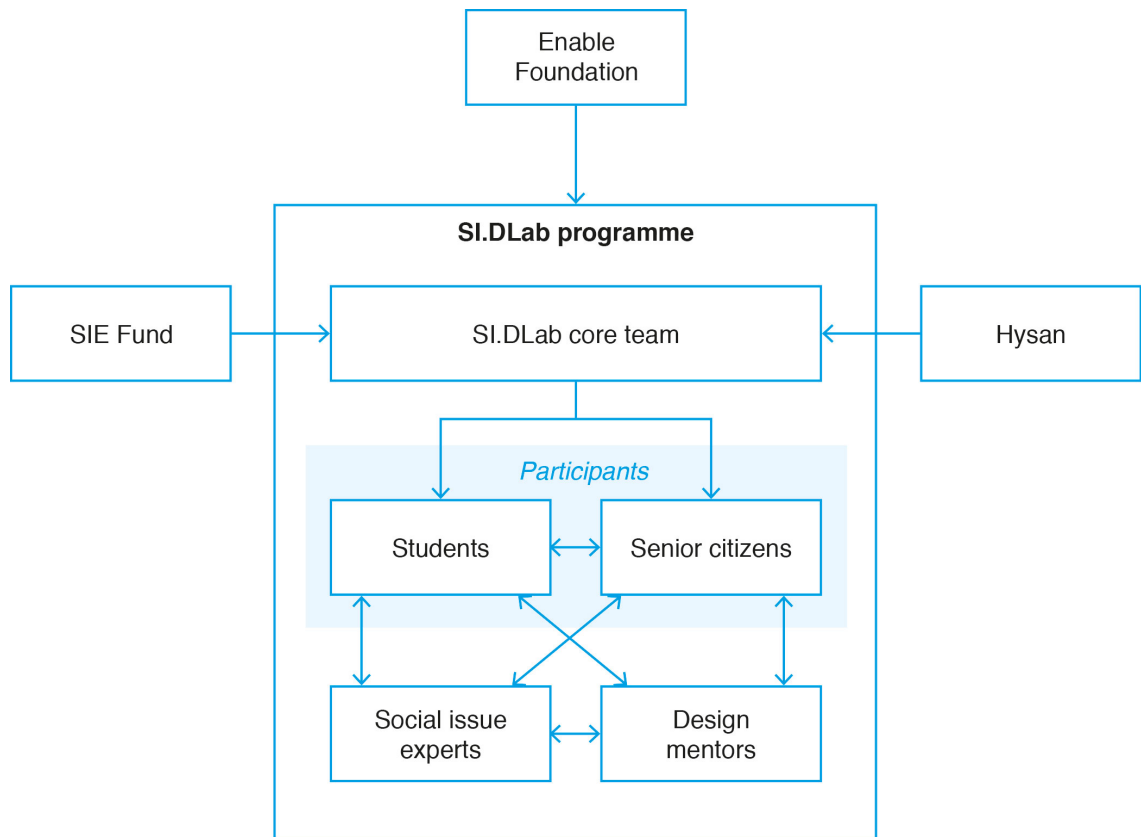


Figure 4-J Structure of the SI.DLab programme.

Mode of operation

All three projects, *Fine Dying*, *Dementia Going* and *Productive Ageing*, have a similar structure and process, which is characterised by what the programme team refers to as the three I's: immersing, ideation and intervention. In *the immersion* phase, all participants, students, senior citizens, designers, go through a process in which they will challenge traditional empathy, by not only empathising with others, but *becoming* them as well. In order to achieve this, students visit a body donation centre, a cemetery and a crematorium, among others, where they engage with experts and professionals from the respective fields and immerse themselves in the experience of, for example, lying in a coffin (see figure 4-K).



Figure 4-K Visit to the Body Donation Centre (Chinese University of Hong Kong).
 Left: Student immersing himself in the experience of lying a coffin. Right: Students exploring the use of an ash container (Image source: Author).

At the same, the elderly were taught about design to prepare them for *ideation*. In this phase, the students will co-create with the elderly in multiple sessions. The co-creation process and the insights that resulted from this process will be documented by the students and archived in an open source co-creation idea bank, which is one of the projected outcomes. An advisory board consisting of people from SIE, the government, businesses and social issues experts will select one or two ideas which will move on to the intervention stage. In this stage, professional designers will be commissioned to develop and construct a working prototype. These prototypes will then be tested by citizens, who will be recruited for this purpose. The research team will follow the process and make a fundraising video for the launching of an entire series of Fine Dying projects.

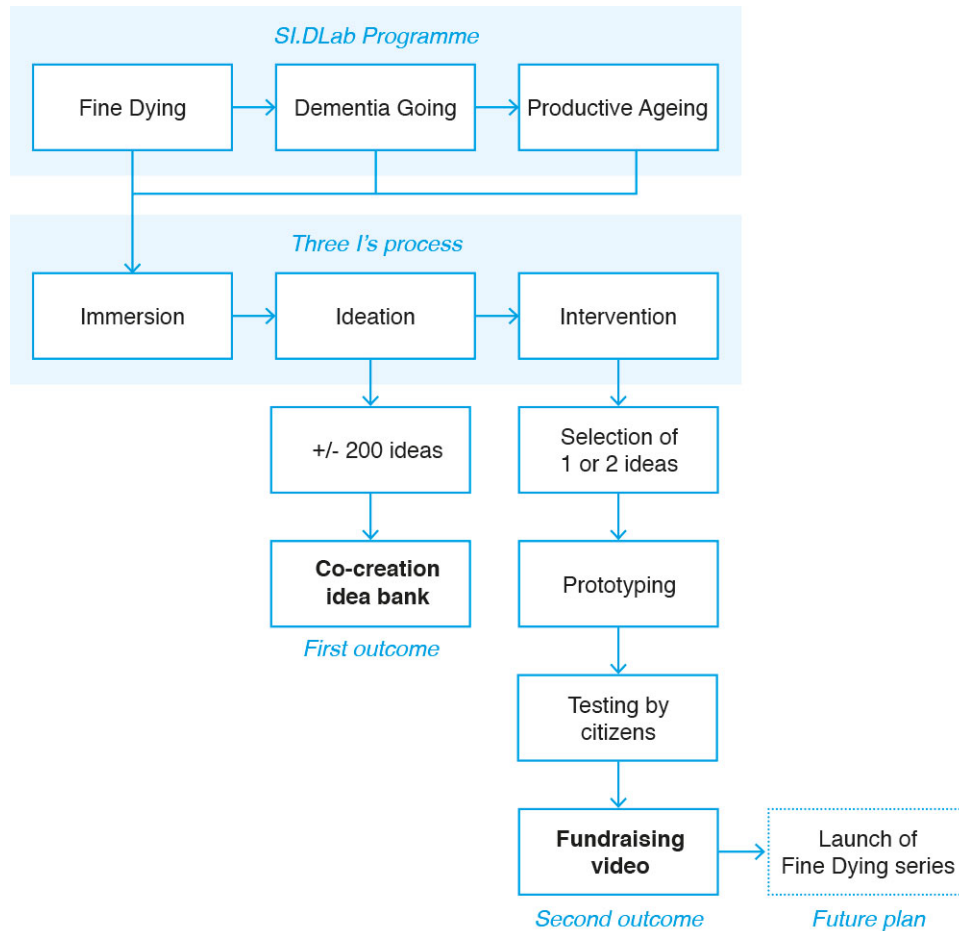


Figure 4-L Structure of the Fine Dying project.

(The Dementia Going and Productive Ageing projects follow a similar process)

Timespan

The total length of the SI.DLab programme will be two years, with each of the three projects running for around six months.

Current status and/or outcome(s)

The co-creation sessions between 200 design students and 100 elders during the Fine Dying project resulted in +/- 200 ideas, which were exhibited in September 2017. The exhibition explored four categories of life and death in Hong Kong: 'Funeral Home', 'Four Life', 'Garden Funeral' and 'Sea Burial'. At the time of writing, the SI.DLab programme is running Dementia Going, its second project.

4.4 Form Society

Form Society (合舍, or 'Hap Se' in Cantonese) is an art and cultural space located in a shop house in the Sham Shui Po neighbourhood of Hong Kong. The space provides a multitude of functions for the local community, such as a repair café, exhibition space, bar/restaurant, workshop space, record store and gathering space. Run by a collective of artists and designers, it is completely self-funded, without any institutional or commercial support.

Interviewee profile

A social designer with a background in sustainable product design, is one of the partners in the Form Society collective. She is also the founder of a product design agency specialising in reusing post-consumer waste materials.

History and context

The initiator and main tenant of Form Society's physical space is a visual artist who invited the designer to join his project in the beginning of 2017, along with one of her partners from her agency as well as another visual artist. Together they came up with the idea that they needed to provide some kind of service in order to encourage people to drop by frequently. Coming from a sustainable design background, the designer suggested to open a repair café that would be different than the other repair services found in the area. Opening in June 2017, they invited experts who repair cameras, ceramics, guitars and other artisans that the community might be interested in. Currently, the front section of the space is the repair shop, where people can drop by and have their goods and electronics repaired. The centre section of the store consists of the *collaboration space*, where artists are invited to hold exhibitions or artisans to host workshops and a kitchen, where different chefs are invited every weekend to cook. On the second floor there is a record store which sells imported Japanese records.



Figure 4-M The Form Society art and culture space. Left: The front section (repair café). Right: The centre section (collaboration space) currently hosting an exhibition and the kitchen (Image source: Author).

Structure

The relationship between the members of the Form Society collective is informal and not strictly defined. The two designers from the agency consider themselves equal partners with the initiator in the repair section. The relationship with the other visual artist, who is also a partner, is unclear and is usually referred to as a cooperation. Although all of the partners can always provide suggestions, the initiator will have the final say. Other stakeholders are the artisans, artists and chefs that are invited to collaborate in the space and the local community (see figure 4-N).

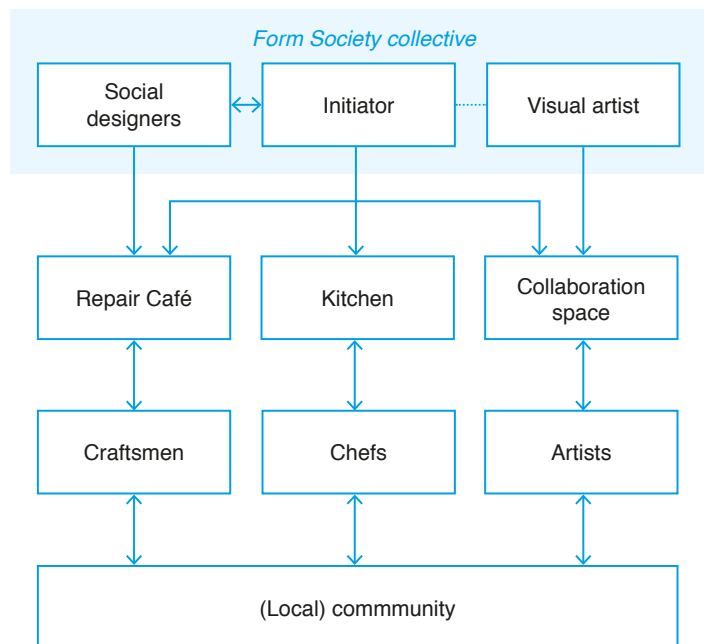


Figure 4-N Structure of Form Society

Mode of operation

This section will mainly focus on the operations of the repair shop, as it falls under the designer's responsibility. Every month the repair shop will feature a different theme, such as cameras, guitars or shoes. Professionals who are experts on the subject, usually friends or acquaintances of either the designer or the initiator, are invited to work in-house at the repair shop. People can register a time slot on social media to visit the craftsman and talk face to face. It is also an opportunity for exchanging stories and experiences: the craftsman learns the personal history of the item and the customer learns more about the item itself and how to maintain and repair it.

Form Society also organises sharing sessions during which artisans share stories about their repairs and workshops where they teach people how to properly maintain their items. The invited craftsmen deal with the customers directly and are not charged any commission. However, Form Society does charge the audience for participating in the workshops held by the craftsmen. Some of the craftsmen are even prepared to conduct the workshops for free as their costs have been covered already by the extra repair jobs gained through Form Society. Each section of the space runs according to its own business model. For example, the kitchen operates on a pay-what-you-can basis.

"I think that kind of cooperation is quite good. We're not talking in terms of money, it's just what we have. I can provide space and [the craftsman] needs space, so [they] can come here. Kind of exchange items instead of money."

– One of the partners in Form Society

Current status and/or outcome(s)

Form Society is still operational at the time of writing and regularly holds talks, workshops and exhibitions. Future plans include collaboration with local social organisations, such as the homeless organisation in Sham Shui Po. As some of the homeless are craftsmen and can repair electronics, they could be invited to conduct in-house repair services. Other ideas include coupons that can be bought in shops in the neighbourhood. Local people could give these to people in need, such as the elderly, who could then use the coupons at Form Society to do repairs for free.

4.5 Play Depot

Play Depot is an initiative based in To Kwa Wan, an old neighbourhood in the Kowloon district, once home to a variety of industries. Using the concept of 'play', a group of friends invited six groups of designers, makers and artists to hold playful educational workshops at the Cattle Depot, a former slaughterhouse which currently functions as an artist village. Through the events and activities organised by the artists, the venue was temporarily transformed into a public playground where local residents, regardless of gender, age or ethnic background can share thoughts and experiences.

Interviewee profile

The executive director of Play Depot has a background in visual arts and is also currently working at the Centre for Research and Development in Visual Arts at Hong Kong Baptist University.

History and context

The To Kwa Wan neighbourhood is one of most dense residential areas in Hong Kong. It has many old tenements and is less well-connected in terms of public transport compared to other neighbourhoods in the area. The move of the old airport Kai Tak, which was situated nearby, to its new site at Chek Lap Kok, brought many changes to the neighbourhood. More recently, the coming of the MTR metro network to the area spurred on the construction of new high-rise luxury apartments, causing friction between the newcomers and the existing residents.

Four years earlier, two of the current team members, Play Depot's executive director and project manager, worked together on *Social Manufacturer*, a project focusing on upcycling, social design and maker culture. Three artists were invited to work with artisans, crafts people and people from the community to design useful products using industrial waste materials, which are easily found in the To Kwa Wan area. One of the aims of the project was to assemble a network of communities to produce these products. When the project ended, the team felt that the network and synergies that were built up in the process should not go to waste. Although the outcome of *Social Manufacturer* was a functional product, there might not be a market for such items in the area. The team therefore wanted to produce something that is not functional, but something that people would still want. Creative play was considered to be an appropriate theme to build around, since it was something that anyone could

relate to. The team submitted a proposal to the Hong Kong Arts Council and secured funding for the project. Six groups of artists were invited to participate: some of the artists from the first project, some new artists and three local organisations. Due to practical reasons, such as funding, administration and possible future development, the 'playground project' grew from being the spiritual successor project to Social Manufacturer into the formal organisation Play Depot.

Structure

Play Depot is fully funded by the Hong Kong Arts Council. As a small organisation, the core team work together as partners with different skills. The executive director's main responsibilities are administration and writing. The project officer conducts research and is in charge of coordinating the artists. The project manager is the local area expert, responsible for the management of the space and maintaining the relationships of the organisations and people in the local community. All team members work at Play Depot on a part-time basis.

Of the six groups of artists, three groups are based in To Kwa Wan. *Ching Chun Warehouse* collect memories and stories in the community about how elderly people played. They then recreate the games to let people enjoy them again. *Wheel Things Maker* make objects that have wheels, such as carts, bicycles, shopping carts, from materials that they have collected. Rather than buying toys, they encourage parents and children to make toys and play with them together. *Jik Jik Team* often work with children and their families, exploring stories in the communities through play and role playing.

Three groups of artists are not based in the area: Chan Po Fung is a contemporary jewellery designer whose community practice is characterised by revisiting and recategorising skills learned through play during his childhood. Together with a master carpenter, he constructs toys that are placed in local shops to encourage the community to come together again. *MUDwork* explores how built structures change people's interaction with objects by changing public spaces into playgrounds. *Saturn Wood Workshop* uses discarded wooden materials to make percussion instruments to teach children about the materials and the concept behind the instruments.

Both Chan Po Fung and MUDWork also participated in the Social Manufacturer project. In addition, there are also people from the community who come and help out, such as students and young people.

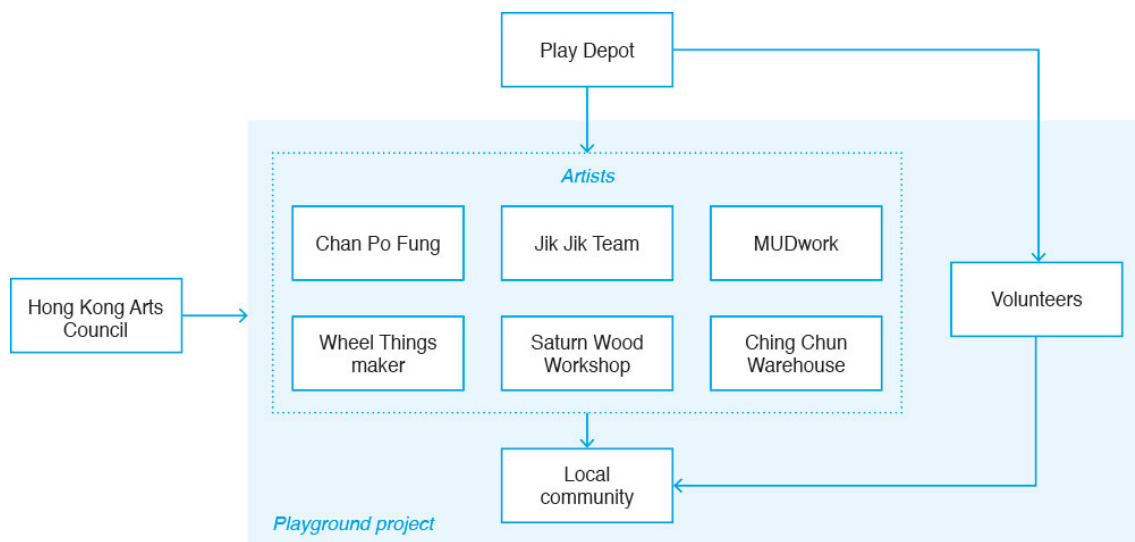


Figure 4-O Structure of Play Depot.



Figure 4-P Left: MUDworks Right: Wheel Things Maker (Source: www.playdepot.org.hk).

Mode of operation

When the funding for Play Depot was granted in September 2016, the project had to be started within one month. As the team already knew some of the collaborating artists, this could be achieved relatively fast. An initial meeting was organised with the artists in October and the organisational framework was set up. From December 2016 to February 2017 the artists conducted research within the local community and organised workshops from March to April. In the last phase, from May to June, the Cattle Depot was transformed into an exhibition / public playground.

Timespan

The project ran from September 2016 until June 2017.

Current status and/or outcome(s)

After the 'playground' project was concluded, Play Depot started *Play-form*, a new project in which artists explore the connection between art and play. During a two-year time period, eight artists in residence will be invited to stay at the Cattle Depot Artist Village using recycled waste materials to find new ways of interaction with the local community.

Chapter 5 / Bangkok

Bangkok is the capital and most densely populated city in Thailand with more than 8,2 million inhabitants, constituting 12,5% of the country's population (NSO, 2010). As with many of the large cities in Asia, there are many issues that have accompanied its rapid urbanisation, such as traffic congestion, pollution, infrastructure, flooding and lack of green space. Furthermore, the city council, also known as Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA), has been criticised for not doing enough to facilitate public participation (Bangkok Post, 2018).

There are several institutions and organisations active in Thailand's social innovation space. The National Innovation Agency (NIA) is a public organisation established in 2003 by Royal Decree. The NIA positions itself as catalyst, supporting and developing innovation through co-creation, networking and collaborating with organisations from a variety of fields, such as academia, technology and finance. Its main instruments to achieve this are knowledge management, academic and financial support mechanisms (NIA, 2019).

The local branch of the UNDP, the United Nation's lead development agency, is another major force in social innovation. Its policy is guided by the focus on working towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 objectives that aim to address issues such as poverty, environment, education and inequality (UNDP Thailand, 2019). The Thailand Social Innovation Platform was launched by UNDP Thailand in 2017. The platform's main objective is to strengthen the social innovation ecosystem by connecting initiatives based throughout the country, which it hopes would facilitate reaching the SDGs. In addition, the NIA and UNDP, along with several partnering organisations, collaborate on the Youth Co:Lab events, which aim to equip young social innovators with entrepreneurial skills (UNDP Thailand, 2018).

The Thailand Creative and Design Center (TCDC), a public organisation under the Office of the Prime Minister, focuses on the promotion of design and creative practice in Thailand. *Co-create Charoenkrung*, their large-scale participatory urban renewal project, was the first of its kind in Thailand. As the initiative is one of the case studies, it will be further discussed in section 5.1. The School of Global Studies at Thammasat University offers an MA course in Social Innovation and Sustainability and

is home to G-Lab, an organisation which aimed at building capacity using workshops, co-creation, incubation to support social entrepreneurs and their initiatives.

Other organisations that are engaged in social innovation in Thailand are the global fellowship programme Ashoka and Thai Health Promotion Board, which is responsible for funding many design and social innovation initiatives, including several of the initiatives discussed in this chapter.

The next sections will provide an outline of the six initiatives in Bangkok.

5.1 TCDC: Co-create Charoenkrung

Initiated in 2016, the Co-CreatE Charoenkrung was a high-profile large-scale top-down urban renewal project by TCDC that accompanied their relocation from the Emporium Mall, located in the central Sukhumvit area, to the historical Grand Postal Building in the Charoenkrung neighbourhood. The relocation marked the beginning of TCDC's ambition to initiate a creative district in Thailand that has been co-created and co-designed with its residents and other local stakeholders. Several of the co-created proposals were prototyped on true (1:1) scale, a first in Thailand.

Interviewee profiles

Interviews were conducted with six stakeholders who were involved in the project:

- The policy manager at TCDC who initiated the project and was responsible for the entire process.
- The project / design manager connected with the design agency Shma SoEn, responsible for the design component of the project.
- The successor of the policy manager who left at the end of 2017. Currently in charge of continuing the pilot projects / prototypes launched during the project.
- One of the senior business development managers with ties to the project.
- A teacher from a local college who participated in the co-creation sessions organised by TCDC.
- A teacher from a local primary school who participated in the co-creation sessions organised by TCDC.

History and context

TCDC was founded with the intention of stimulating Thailand's economy by strengthening the power of the designers and to increase awareness about the importance of design and creativity, as the government realised it could not beat the low salaries and manpower of other Asian countries, such as China and Vietnam. When TCDC was founded in 2005, the concept of a design centre was still a novelty in Thailand. To lower the perceived threshold, TCDC organised exhibitions, workshops and symposia to get ordinary Thai citizens interested in design. As Thai people in general enjoy spending their leisure time in shopping malls, it made sense at the time to be located at the luxurious Emporium Mall in the heart of downtown Bangkok, which is easily accessible by public transport. Ten years later, however, TCDC believed that their initial goal, to familiarise Thai people with the concept of design, had been reached and that it was time to pursue a more proactive direction. Combining its need for a larger space as well as bringing itself closer to the people it is supposed to serve, TCDC made the decision to relocate. After considering several sites, a suitable location was found in the monumental *Grand Postal Building* located in the neighbourhood of Charoenkrung; an old, multicultural neighbourhood inhabited by many different ethnicities and communities. As TCDC's wish was not only to relocate to the neighbourhood, but also help to improve it, it decided to 'introduce itself' to the neighbourhood by organising a series of co-creating activities with neighbourhood residents: the *Co-create Charoenkrung* initiative.

Structure

Co-create Charoenkrung was launched by TCDC with the design agency Shma SoEn and Thammasat University (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning) considered as equal working partners. Each partner had a specific role in the process: Shma SoEn led the design-related activities, such as co-creation sessions, creating visualisations and prototypes. Thammasat University provided the design research to back the project, such as determining the key drivers for creative districts. TCDC was responsible for the overall process, which also included liaising with various departments of the local government. Aside from government officials, there were hundreds of other stakeholders involved in the project, such as secondary school students and teachers, local business owners and representatives from the local

communities. The project was 90% funded by the Thai Health Promotion Board with the remaining 10% funded by TCDC itself.

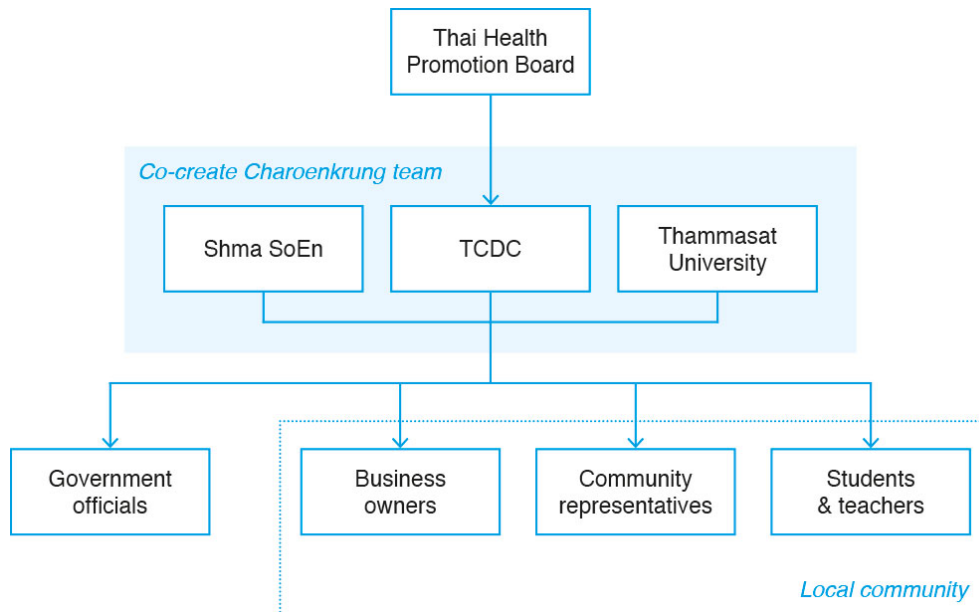


Figure 5-A Structure of the Co-create Charoenkrung project.

Process

Launched in July 2015, the initial phase of the project focused on research and defining the process. A team from TCDC spent four days and nights in Charoenkrung to get an impression of the neighbourhood. After this initial exploration TCDC considered potential collaborators and chose Shma SoEn and Thammasat University as its partners in the project. By October a framework for the project had been constructed, followed by the first presentation in November where the Co-create Charoenkrung project was introduced to the community. From November until May, the team held interviews and organised focus groups where participants used co-creation and design thinking methods, during which they learned from the residents what exactly they wanted to improve in their neighbourhood. After the co-creation sessions, prototypes and models were constructed of some of the ideas that the residents suggested. Eventually, five ideas were selected to be developed into so-called 1:1 prototypes, executed on real scale (see also figure 5-B):

- 1) *Connecting alleyways*. A major issue in the neighbourhood is that many of the alleys are either not connected to each other or that residents do not realise that they are

connected. In order to improve the situation, the team mapped out all the alleys in the neighbourhood so that people know which alley leads to where.

- 2) *Creating neighbourhood signage.* Related to the previous project is the placing of signage in the neighbourhood so residents know how to navigate and also make it more attractive for outsiders, such as tourists, to wander through the neighbourhood.
- 3) *Green pocket space.* Another issue that residents would like to see improved is the lack of green space in the neighbourhood. As it is difficult in Charoenkrung, as well as the rest of Bangkok, to create a park because most land is privately owned, the team made a small 'green pocket space' in front of the Grand Postal Building.
- 4) *Renovating abandoned buildings.* There are many old shophouses and buildings in Charoenkrung. Aside from being an eyesore, these buildings should be preserved and could be put to other uses. TCDC renovated a small shop space in the neighbourhood and organised a photo exhibition and workshops to show what potential these spaces could have.
- 5) *Development of the riverfront.* Many of the residents had mentioned that they have no access to the Chao Phraya river, which is situated next to the neighbourhood, as all land adjacent to the river is owned by someone. To demonstrate what an accessible riverfront could look like, TCDC organised an event at the riverside with live bands, food, movie screenings and invited neighbourhood residents, business owners and government officials to join.

In May 2016, the team held a Co-create Test Day, where all the research was summarised, followed by a final presentation at the end of the following month.

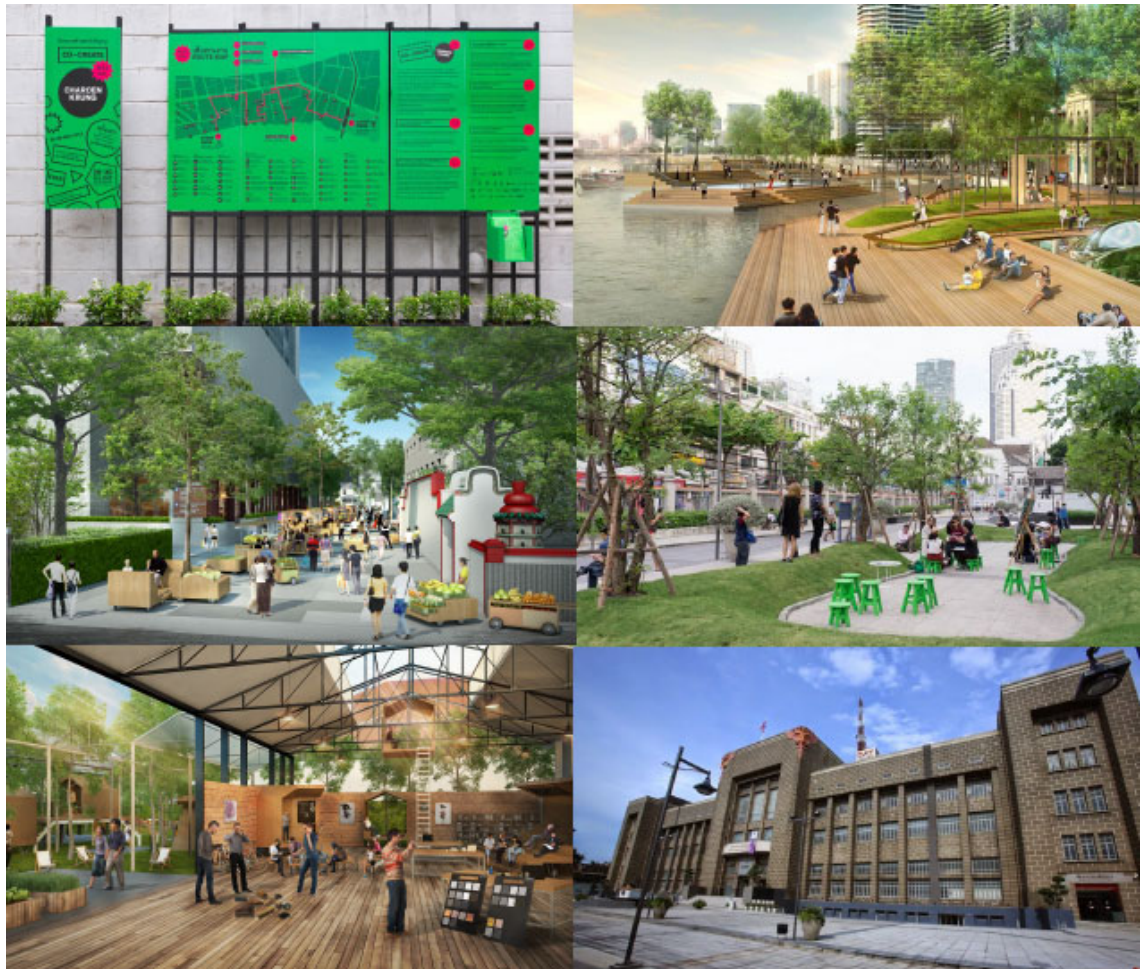
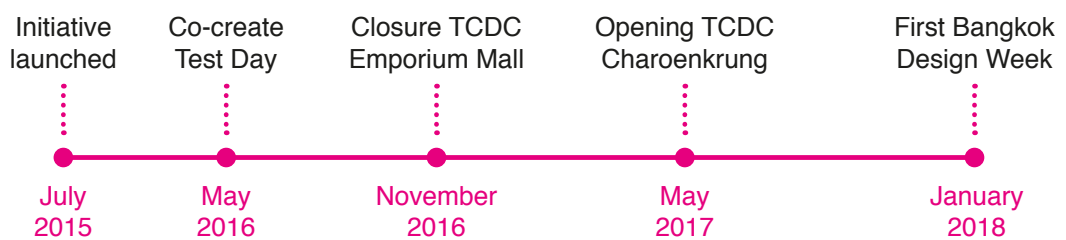


Figure 5-B The five 1:1 prototype projects of Co-create Charoenkrung. From left to right: Creating neighbourhood signage, Development of the riverfront, Connecting alleyways, Green pocket space, Renovating abandoned buildings and the Grand Postal Building.

Timeline



Current status and/or outcome(s)

After the Co-create Charoenkrung project had been completed successfully, TCDC relocated to Charoenkrung in the beginning of 2017 and published the *Co-Creat* *Model*, based on the insights gained during the project, allowing anyone to develop their own urban renewal project (see figure 5-C). The Ministry of Digital Economy has

expressed interest to develop the area to be centre of innovation where anything can be prototyped before implementing it in other regions. TCDC is collaborating with a renowned public administration school to share its knowledge about co-creation with future civil servants and influencers in areas outside of Bangkok.

In the Charoenkrung neighbourhood itself, various creative businesses have sprung up in its vicinity. Right next to the new TCDC, Warehouse 30 is a renovated warehouse housing a shop selling local designers' products, an artisanal table maker and a coffee shop, among others (see figure 5-D). The first Bangkok Design Week was organised in the beginning of 2018, centring around the Charoenkrung area and highlighting the local design industry. TCDC is also currently exploring the possibilities of continuing some of the ideas that were prototyped in the Charoenkrung project.

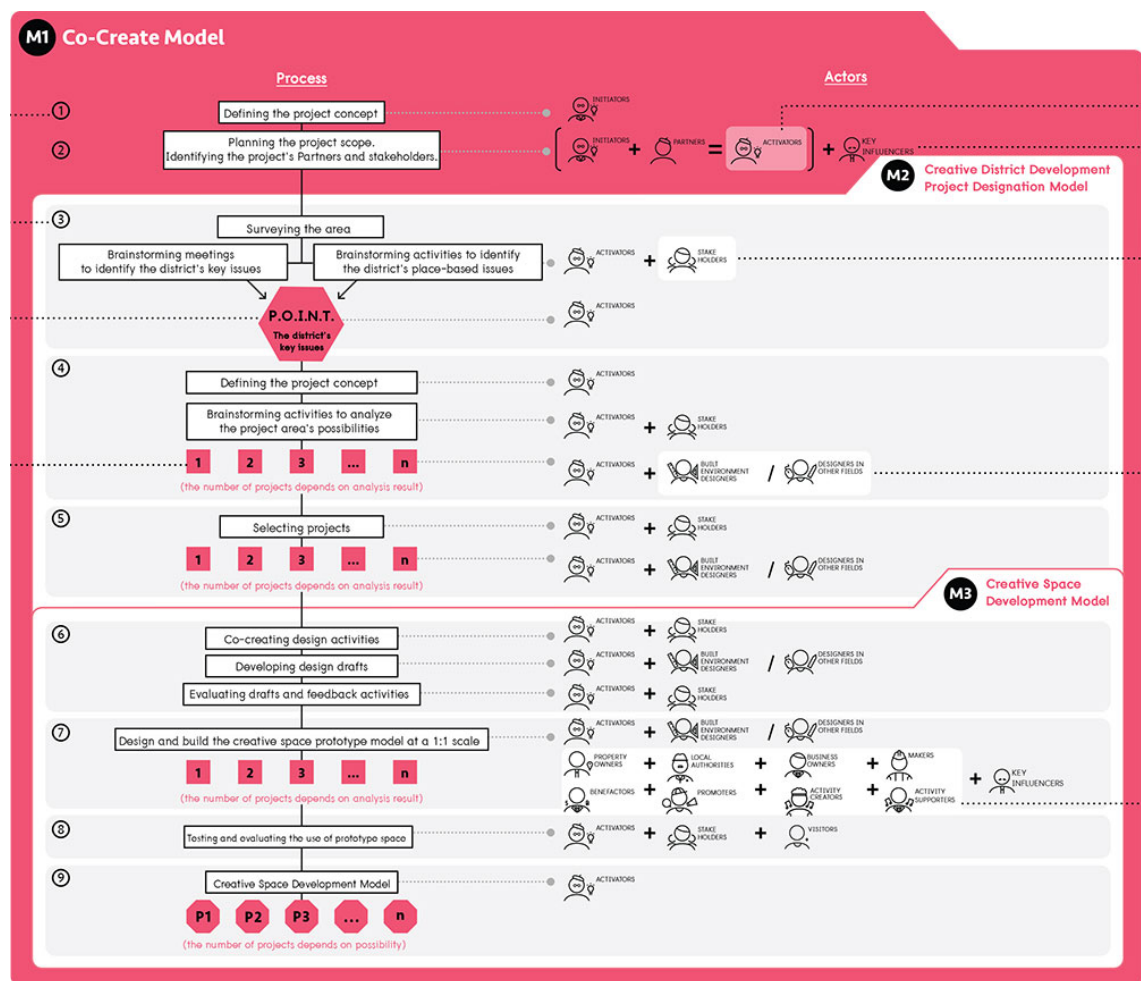


Figure 5-C Excerpt of the Co-create Model (Source: TCDC).



Figure 5-D Interior of a design store in Warehouse 30, located next to the TCDC building (Image source: Author).

5.2 Deschooling Games

A collective that aims to solve problems by equipping their clients with the (design) skills to gamify learning experiences, Deschooling Games sees it as their challenge to empower the bottom (students, parents and educators), while at the same time giving ideas to the middle (management and HR) with the ultimate aim of creating movement in the Thai educational system, which they perceive to be stagnant.

Interviewee profiles

Three stakeholders have been interviewed about their involvement in the initiative:

- One of the core members of Deschooling Games who is a game designer.
- A faculty dean at a local university who collaborated with the Deschooling Games team on several projects.
- An engineer who occasionally acts as a facilitator and game designer for Deschooling Games.

History and context

The three core team members of the team met in the middle of 2015 at the *Deschooling University*, a community where participants share skills, knowledge and educational practices. Through *sharing workshops*, the community aims to both increase people's understanding of themselves and their sense of connection to one another, in order to enable them to teach others on a deeper level. The Deschooling Games team was introduced to each other by the leader of the Deschooling University community, who suggested that the three current core members should form a new team around a certain theme. The newly formed Deschooling Games team, named after the community where they first met, decided to focus on games for education and started to generate ideas on how to use games to motivate learning and how games and learning could be connected or combined.

การใช้ “เกม” เพื่อการ “เรียนรู้”

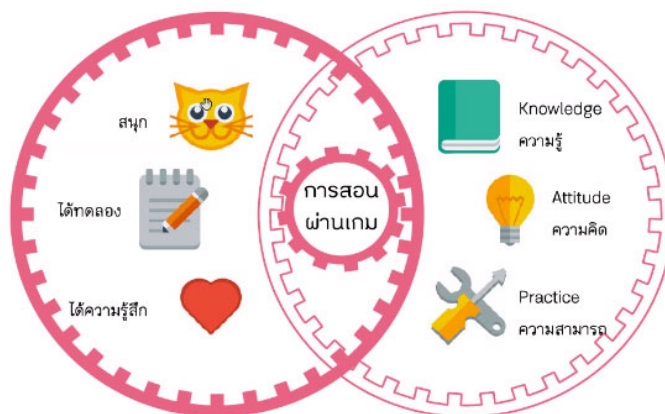


Figure 5-E Deschooling Games' educational model (Source: Deschooling Games).

The team proceeded to visualise their philosophy on games and education in a model (see figure 5-E). In the left circle, the icon of the cat symbolises the fun that games represent as well as the fact that games can encourage people to engage with one another and try something new. The notepad icon signifies that games can simulate real life situations and allow people to go deep into their roles. The heart represents the idea that games enable people to understand others better and empathise with them. In the right circle, the letters 'K.A.P.' stand for *Knowledge*, *Attitude* and *Practice*. In this context, 'knowledge' refers to the ability to combine information and make shortcuts. 'attitude' means changing perspectives after learning something new. 'Practice' refers

to honing skills and judgements, which can not only be achieved in a physical sense, but also through learning. Using this philosophy, Deschooling Games provides game design workshops to educators and organisations that wish to improve their teams and are looking into doing the same for students as well.

Structure

At the time of the interview in summer 2017, Deschooling Games consisted of a multi-disciplinary team with three core members. The first is an activist and university lecturer in Economics who uses games to explain economic principles in his classes. He also organises workshops on design thinking. The second member is a training facilitator and runs his own separate company. The third is responsible for both the game and graphic design and also has his own separate design team. All three members are involved in the initiative part-time. Volunteers are often enlisted to help facilitate their sessions (see figure 5-F).

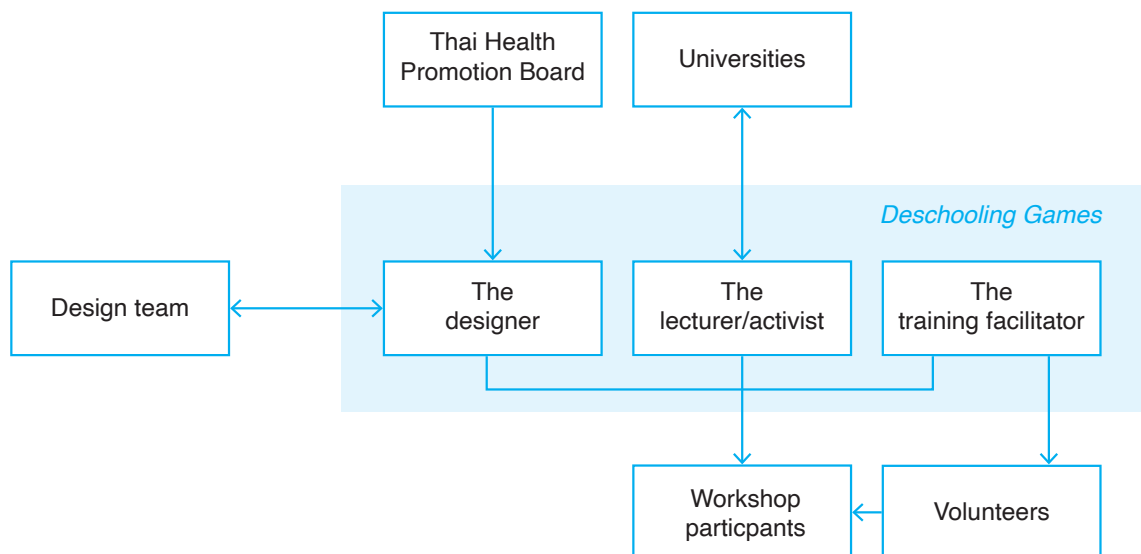


Figure 5-F Structure of Deschooling Games in 2017.

As the structure of the Deschooling Games team is similar to a joint venture, it does not have a strong hierarchy. The core team emphasises the sharing of their respective skills and ideas. Therefore, the collective does not have an official leader; the team member who brings in a project will usually be the one in the lead of that project. For example, the lecturer will be in charge if a project comes in from his academic network, whereas the designer was in charge in a recent project where they co-partnered with

the Thai Health Promotion board, as he was their main contact. The volunteers are usually recruited by the training facilitator. As he is the one who will usually facilitate the workshops, he has a wide network of university students who are willing to help out during the team's activities.

"Games are tangible things that people can understand, that is the key thing"

– One of the core team members

Process

When Deschooling Games works on a project, their clients are not necessarily looking to develop a game, but they want to improve the people in their teams. Therefore, the actual goal is not the game itself, but the fact that the people who join the workshops improve their game designing skills, which they then can use as tools or new ways to teach. The workshops that Deschooling Games organise for their clients' teams typically revolve around a certain simulated problem, providing an opportunity to understand the topic in a different way by letting the participants design the games themselves. Oftentimes, hundreds of ideas will be generated during the process, but only one will be chosen to be developed into an actual game. For example, during a workshop for a nursing school, one team of participants designed a game where the objective was to guess nursing vocabulary.



Figure 5-G Students from the Royal University of Sisaket participating in a Deschooling Games workshop (Source: Deschooling Games Facebook page).

In the beginning, there was no formalised structure to guide the game design process, which the team found did not achieve the desired end result: the making of a game. The team therefore developed their workshop format significantly throughout the first year and settled on organising workshops of one and a half day. The first half day is just play, whereas the second half focuses the topic. The last half day is used to make the game itself and test it. Similarly, the team did not have a template or primary idea for the content in the initial phase, telling the participants that "you can do what you want".

In some cases, the content does not have to be made as their clients already have firm content in place. However, when working with the general public, the content can be anything, making the team realise that they had to take a more structured approach. For example, in a project with the topic of promoting a smoke-free school, the team first discussed with the client what type of content they would like. They then developed the content before giving the workshop. In this project, the team came up with two models: one aimed at primary students and one for the more advanced students. The primary students only dealt with situations about smoke and cigarettes being bad and causing diseases, whereas the more advanced students took a more analytical approach to the topic.

Current status and/or outcome(s)

The Deschooling Games team has been expanding their activities, giving workshops at various universities throughout Thailand and are also looking to expand their team by recruiting people who could teach others to facilitate games.

5.3 CROSSs

As a social architecture agency, CROSSs often works in rural areas of Thailand on a wide range of projects, from the redesign of interior spaces to city-wide urban renewal. Aside from being architects, they often take on different roles within their projects, such as connectors and facilitators.

Interviewee profiles

- The project director and founder of the agency, who has a background in architecture
- One of the architects, who is also a coordinator at the Community Architects Network (CAN)

History and context

Founded in 2009, CROSSs started out as a volunteer group and has developed into a team of four architects and one designer, formalising their initiative into a professional agency in 2016. Characteristic of their approach is the usage of participatory design in their projects as they believe that it creates deeper and more meaningful solutions than just design itself. This resulted in an approach in which they combine physicality together with the design of social relations. This philosophy is also reflected in their logo; instead of a 'traditional' cross that is usually made up of two lines, the CROSSs logo has three (see figure 5-H). By having another line cross the other two, new kinds of spaces are shaped. It is the spaces that the line crosses what the CROSSs team is interested in.



Figure 5-H The CROSSs logo.

In terms of activities during a given project, the proportion of time that CROSSs spends on 'traditional' design is around 50-50 to 70-30, with 70% not doing traditional design.

Although the team does not mind doing design, due to time and budget constraints, they would rather focus on the social part, as they believe this to be the most valuable for their clients. Even if the opportunity would arise to do a 'pure' commercial project, they would still try to incorporate some participatory processes with the client.

CROSSs utilises their participatory approach in different ways, on a variety of projects. The scale ranges from very modest, such as the redesign of the MaD²⁴ (pronounced as "MaDee") co-creation space in Bangkok, where they left a miniature model in the space itself, so that the actual users could suggest improvements by changing the model, to a large-scale city-wide project in the town of Chumsaeng, where the team identified and addresses local issues together with the inhabitants, local government and a multitude of other stakeholders (see figure 5-I).



Figure 5-I Two examples of projects by CROSSs. Left: The miniature model of the MaD Co-creation space that visitors could interact with themselves. Right: A co-creation workshop at the city-wide project of Co-creation Chumsaeng (Source: CROSSs Powerpoint presentation slides).

Structure

The CROSSs core team consists of four architects and one visual communication designer. However, during their projects, their roles are flexible and not strictly defined. For example, the graphic designer does not only do visual communication, but can also join in during discussions or in the participatory process. There are many other members who will occasionally come in and help, depending on the scale of the project.

²⁴ Not related to the MaD (Make a Difference) organisation in Hong Kong.

Process

The CROSSs team usually take the time to build trust with the people who are involved in (co)designing as they prefer working and talking together with people rather than commanding or directing the solution straight away, which is more the traditional designer's approach. The team perceive their skill not to be designing per se, but to be among the people, talking and sharing. Through the participatory process the stakeholders might be able to come up with a solution themselves, instead of the solution being provided to them by CROSSs. Another role the team sees themselves in is that of an ambassador that can inspire and make everyone understand each other, before the act of designing together.

Oftentimes, there will automatically be a workshop, discussion or time that people have to spend together, due to the participatory approach that underlies all activities that CROSSs engages in. In addition, the team will also use other tools, such as (stakeholder) mapping, scale models, video, graphic design as well as construct physical spaces and structures, depending on the outcomes of the participatory process.

Current status and/or outcome(s)

CROSSs is currently working on a variety of participatory design projects in different parts of Thailand.

5.4 Pom Mahakan

Built against the wall of a historical fort, the village of Pom Mahakan consisted of a small community living in wooden houses, located in a prime location near the Grand Royal Palace in the middle of urban Bangkok. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has been trying to demolish the village since the 1960s and its residents have been resisting ever since. The community has contacted various outsiders, such as academics, designers, architects and others who are sympathetic to their cause, as well as the government itself, to co-create a solution for the current situation. The direction they were pursuing is that of a 'living heritage museum' which may convince the government to keep what is left of the village intact. Unfortunately, the villagers' efforts were in vain, as during the writing of this thesis the village was demolished in its entirety and all remaining residents evicted.



Figure 5-J The village of Pom Mahakan (Image source: Author).

Interviewee profiles

Four stakeholders were interviewed regarding their involvement with Pom Mahakan:

- A local social entrepreneur who is actively involved with various communities in the neighbourhood, such as Pom Mahakan.
- A designer who participated in the first Mahakan co-creation workshop.
- An architect, lecturer and board member of the Association of Siamese Architects (ASA) who has been involved with the village since 2004.
- An architect who worked with the villagers on assignment by the ASA.

History and context

The struggle of the villagers of Pom Mahakan against the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) lasted several decades. The villagers claim to have been descended from those who have settled on the land in the middle of the 19th century (Bristol, 2009). The BMA, however, disputed this claim, regarded the villagers as illegal occupants of public property and intended to demolish the village to build a park instead. Since the beginning of the eviction threats by the BMA in 1994, many groups have come to aid the villagers, from human rights groups and university professors in the past, to the last group of community architects and designers. Initially, the villagers accepted monetary compensation from the BMA to relocate. However, when they found out that their new homes would be far away from the city and that the government at that time did not have a good relocation plan, they realised that the deal was not fair to them. The villagers tried to work out a solution by themselves, keeping others out. When a human rights team came over to help, the villagers realised that

they were not alone anymore, which empowered them to adopt a more strategic approach. Although their initial strategy was to focus on human rights, ten years later the villagers collaborated with a university to study what the area could be. The research report, which was over 480 pages, suggested that the village should be a living museum, sustaining both the houses and the people. However, the government at the time was removed because due to a corruption case and the report was never mentioned again. The last team used the findings of this research as a departure point to continue the negotiations with the BMA regarding the future of the village.

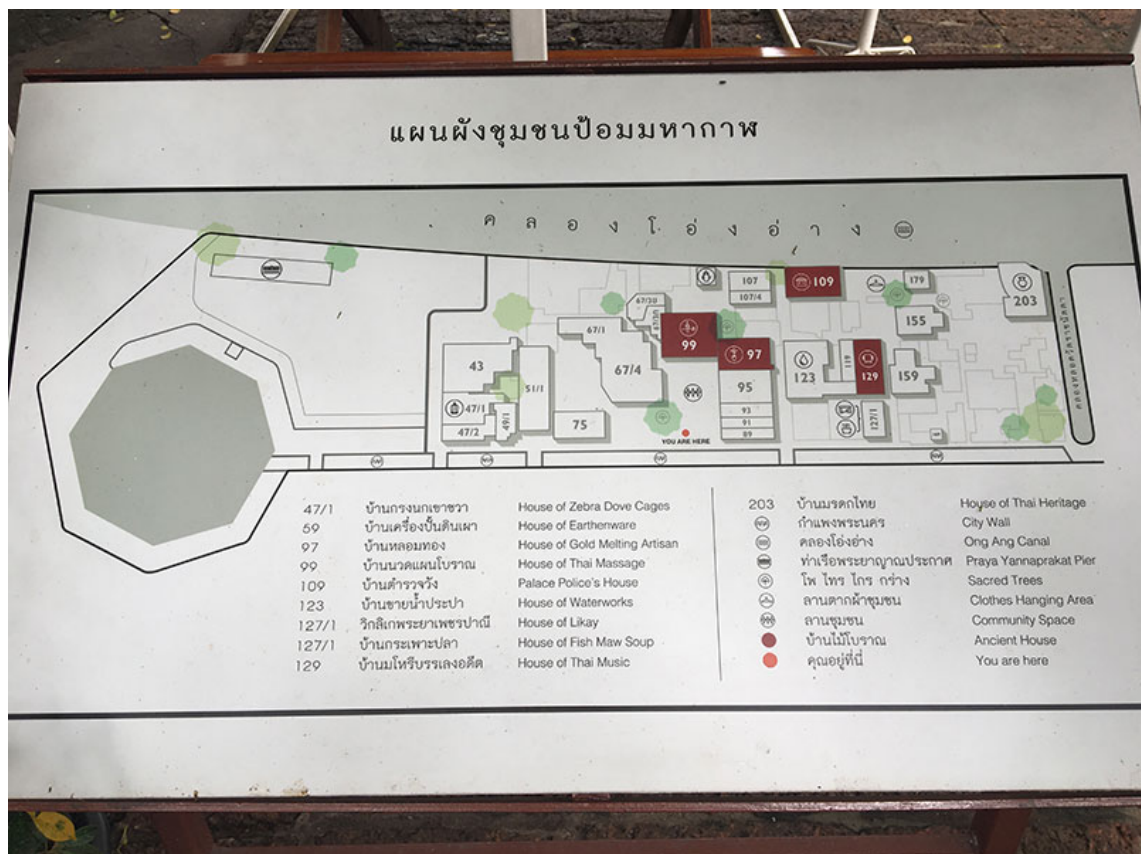


Figure 5-K A map of the Pom Mahakan living museum, situated in the village
(Image source: Author)

Structure

The group that was involved in the final stage of the village's existence (the 'Mahakan team') revolved around the social entrepreneur, who helped the villagers to interact with the BMA representatives as an intermediary, as well as coordinate the various other groups of community architects (among others, CROSSs), designers and

volunteers who were active in the village. Even though the Mahakan team acted as intermediaries and catalysts to organise activities for the village, the villagers were the ones who made all the final decisions. The ASA collaborated with the Mahakan team, but was also an independent actor, acting on its own accord.

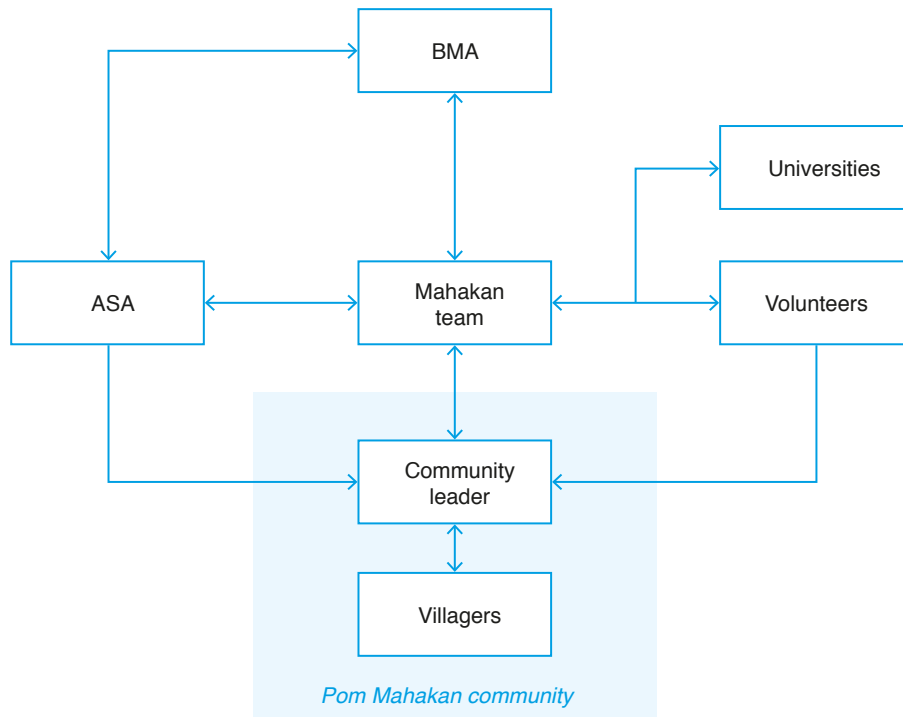


Figure 5-L Structure of the last team involved with Pom Mahakan.

Process

After a major eviction by the BMA in September 2016, during which 12 of the 57 remaining houses were destroyed, public outrage and awareness regarding the plight of the villagers of Pom Mahakan increased. The eviction prompted the Mahakan team to think of ways to gain more awareness in order to prevent the government from demolishing even more houses. The team decided to organise a two-day co-creation workshop in September 2016 in which they brought various partners who were working with the community together, such as community architects, but also outsiders. The objective of *Co-create Mahakan* event was to connect the various groups and to collectively create a new Pom Mahakan, along with the villagers. Although not a first, the method of co-creation was proven successful earlier in Thailand and was therefore deemed by the team as a suitable approach for Pom Mahakan. During the event, the participants were divided into six groups, which included villagers as well. The groups

focused on the houses themselves, public space, museums, economic aspects, long-term sustainability, children and youth, and there was one group that dealt with the relation of Pom Mahakan with the other communities. In the following three months, visualisations of the ideas that were developed during the co-creation event were developed and in December 2016 the team had a proposal to present to the government. However, the passing of the King in October had put a stop on the entire process and even put the BMA's eviction plans on hold.

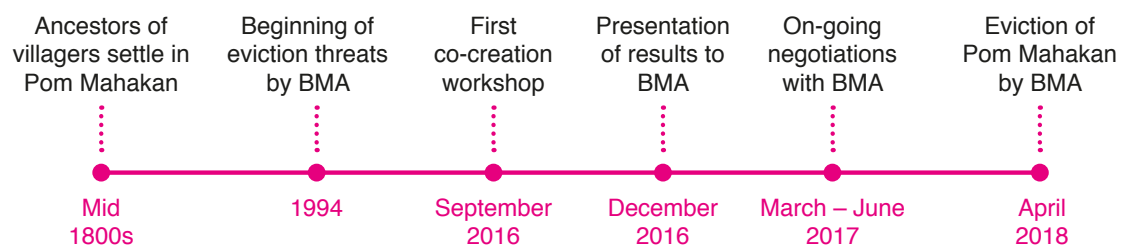
The Mahakan team approached Thammasat University for advice on how to solve the issue. In March 2017, the university's vice president (rector) came down himself and joined a second co-creation session, in which they looked into the legal aspects. They came up with a proposal based on a legal standpoint. This addressed a major constraint of the BMA, who kept repeating that the village had to be demolished because of the law. As the new legal proposal countered this argument, the negotiations with the government continued for another three months. The Mahakan team continued to bring in other parties, such as the ASA and other university professors who could help demonstrate how important the community was, from both an anthropological and an architectural standpoint.



Figure 5-M Village meeting with members from the Mahakan team and CROSSs (bottom left), discussing mapping activities (Image source: Author).

A core team was set up by the entrepreneur, who brought in people from the military, the secretary of the Governor of Bangkok and key people from the national government to join. Fifteen meetings with were organised with this team, which set two objectives. The first objective was to gain insight into the physical aspect: what do we need to keep, why and how important is it to keep it. The second objective was the management of the people. The ASA played a key role in this process by using the *VERNADOC*²⁵ methodology to meticulously document all the houses in the village. The result was that the BMA agreed to keep 18 of the 30 houses. However, this meant that the remainder would need to be destroyed. At the time of the interviews, the team was still negotiating with the government about the relocation of the people living in the remaining 12 houses. Complicating the matter was the fact that most of the inhabitants of the houses already gave up, with only four houses wishing to remain in the community.

Timeline



Current status and/or outcome(s)

On 25 April 2018, the BMA ordered the remaining residents to leave the village. The villagers, now staying in temporary accommodation in Bangkok, were raising funds to rebuild the Pom Mahakan community on a new plot of land in one of the suburbs (Pratchatai, 2018). In May 2018, the BMA announced that it would be spending 69 Million baht (£1,6 Million) on the renovation of the Mahakan fort and the development of a temporary park on the site (Saksornchai, 2018).

²⁵ The VERNADOC methodology utilises basic techniques to document vernacular architecture. For more information, see vernadoc.com.



Figure 5-N The clearing of the village by the BMA (Image source: www.khaosodenglish.com).

5.5 Bangkok Chinatown

The neighbourhood of *Talat Noi* is part of Bangkok's Chinatown area and borders the *Charoenkrung* district. The *Bangkok Chinatown* initiative predates Co-create Charoenkrung and was initiated in 2012 by a local architect, along with four of his colleagues. Similar to its neighbouring initiative, local residents were brought together in the rejuvenation process, which utilises various design methods, such as co-creation and prototyping.

Interviewee profile

The initiator of the Bangkok Chinatown project, an architect who was born and raised in the area.

History and context

The Bangkok Chinatown initiative was launched around 2012 due to the initiator's personal commitment to the neighbourhood and the upcoming transportation projects of the government, which was planning to extend the MRT metro line to go through

Chinatown towards the western side of Bangkok. At the time, the local residents were not aware how much their situation would change after the metro would open, focusing mostly on the potential economic benefits that the increased traffic to the neighbourhood would bring. However, the Bangkok Chinatown team sensed that there was an underlying issue that the community was concerned with, which was the local (Chinese) culture, such as traditional worshipping ceremonies, that are still held together during Chinese festivals. The team approached the Thai Health Promotion Board, which also funded TCDC's *Co-create Charoenkrung* project, for funding. As the Thai Health organisation's vision is to transform Bangkok into a healthy city with a good quality of life, Bangkok Chinatown collaborated with a university professor on how to realise this vision. A major challenge that the team had to overcome was that Chinatown currently not a healthy city at all, due to the density of houses and population and the lack of green space.



Figure 5-O The 18th century So Heng Tai mansion in Talat Noi. One of the last remaining traditional Chinese dwellings in Bangkok (Image source: Author).

Structure

The Bangkok Chinatown team consists of five architects, which includes the founder, and a sociologist, who acts as the project leader. Various stakeholders, such as neighbourhood committees, the local district and local entrepreneurs are also involved in its activities. As the initiative needs to arrange the funding for each individual project separately, they accomplish their aim of urban renewal by doing one project at the time.

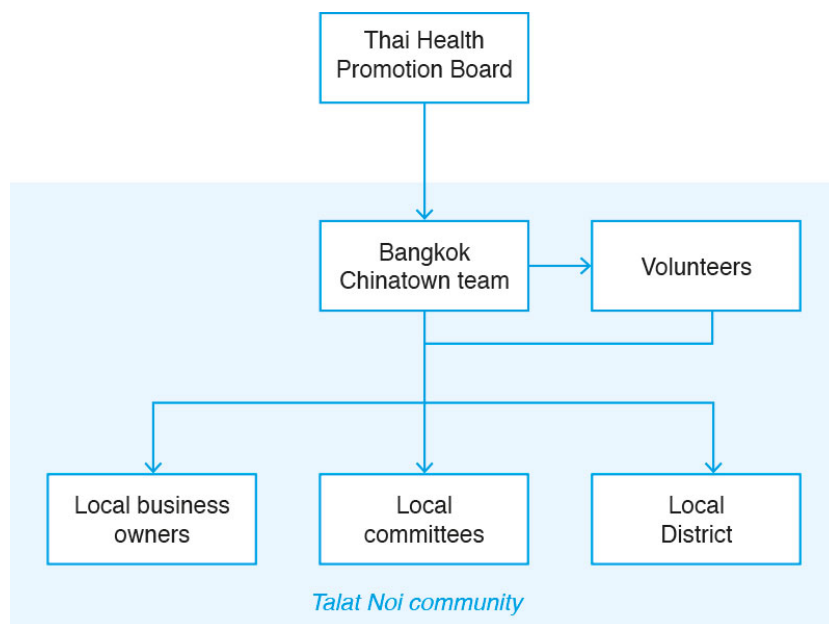


Figure 5-P Structure of the Bangkok Chinatown initiative.

Process

In its first year, the Bangkok Chinatown team reached out to the people around the Chinatown district, such as neighbourhood committees, shop owners and companies located in the area, trying find active citizens who were concerned about these issues to brainstorm together on how Chinatown could be a healthy neighbourhood. The team organised a cultural event with the community, where they asked top-level community members, such as goldsmiths and textile merchants, to share their ideas on how to handle economic, social and community issues. As Chinese people in Thailand tend to mistrust the government and often perceive themselves as second-class citizens, they prefer to focus on their own businesses and are less concerned about the social dimension. Therefore, the main conclusion that the team drew in the first year is that

they needed to build trust between the stakeholders and decided that social and cultural events might be tools that could facilitate this approach.

In the second year, the team decided to focus on the Talat Noi district, as it is an old community which largely maintained its traditional Chinese culture and was therefore not as much 'touched' as its neighbouring *Yaowarat* district, which has undergone relatively more changes. Furthermore, since the founder is originally from the Talat Noi area, he is familiar with both the area and the community. The team noticed that some of the residents of Talat Noi had started moving out. The lack of parking in the area made it unsuitable for new businesses, who needed parking space. Some of the businesses had therefore started to move out of the area, since the government did nothing to address their problems. Despite the fact that many residents would want their children to stay in the area, even though their businesses relocated already, the children themselves prefer to live outside of the area after they grow up, due to the cramped and less sanitary conditions in old neighbourhoods such as Talat Noi. After discussing with the community members, the Bangkok Chinatown team therefore decided to shift their concept from 'Healthy District' to 'Lively District', where residents would have a good quality of life with many social events where people could get to know each other.

Another shift took place in the level of the participants that were engaged. In the second year, the team organised many projects aimed at a grassroots level, in contrast to the first year, when they mostly engaged with the top tiers of the community. Some of the projects were directly related to the Bangkok Chinatown team's goals, whereas others were not. The various projects, however, helped to build trust between the people in the community. For example, in one of the projects a local pier was repurposed into a public space where waste from Chinese restaurants could be converted into biofuel. The team also organised workshops where local people are taught how to properly renovate old shrines, in order to preserve their original character. A magazine was set up, which is published several times a year, to keep the community up to date on what projects are being organised in the neighbourhood.

From 2015 onwards, the number of foreign tourists visiting the Talat Noi area increased threefold. An important tool that the Bangkok Chinatown team developed to address this development was a local map, which was not meant for the tourists themselves, but for the local residents. A problem that the local community frequently faced was the fact that tourists coming into the area often lost their way due to the non-

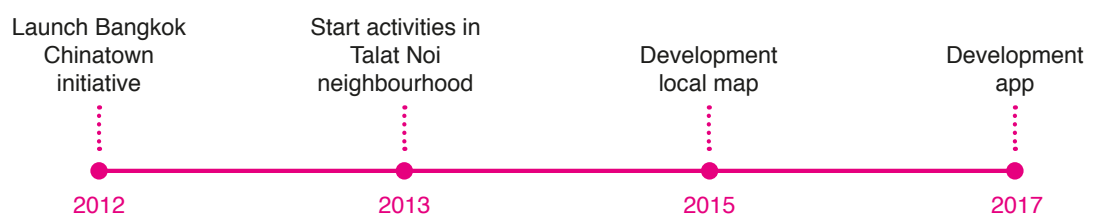
grid-like structure of the neighbourhood. When the tourists turned to the residents for help, they were unable to provide them with directions as they could not communicate well enough in English. Therefore, the community asked the Bangkok Chinatown team to develop signboards and a map in order to facilitate the communication between the local residents and visitors from outside (see figure 5-Q).

Through all the activities they organise, the team managed to gather a group of active residents from Talat Noi who shared a vision to push the community to the future, whom they meet up with once or twice a month. The residents have also started a social club themselves.



Figure 5-Q Map of the Talat Noi area developed by the Bangkok Chinatown initiative (Source: Bangkok Chinatown).

Timeline



Current status and/or outcome(s)

The Bangkok Chinatown has developed a master plan on how to rejuvenate the area and constantly balances the goals that they have set together with the neighbourhood committees on one hand, with addressing issues that funders are interested in. They therefore have shifted their attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN in order to be taken seriously by policy-makers. The team is also working on an app to minimise the costs of printing physical maps and expanding the availability of the map to a wider audience.

5.6 The Rambutan

Consisting of two partners who are graphic designers, *The Rambutan* aims to promote graphic design as a means to raise awareness for social issues. They organise workshops and events for graphic design students to show them the possibilities of graphic design as a means for social activism.

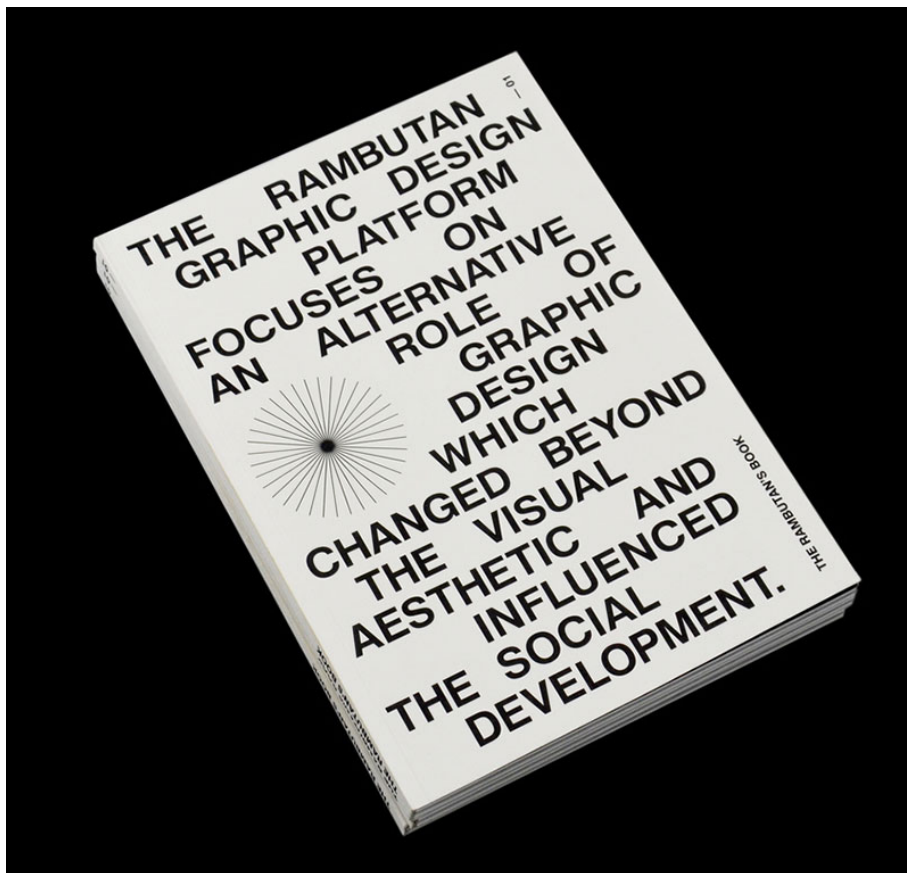


Figure 5-R The Rambutan book, featuring students' work from the workshops.

Interviewee profiles

Both members of The Rambutan team agreed to be interviewed:

- A visual artist who studied art in Thailand and graphic design in the Czech Republic.
- A designer who studied graphic design and information design in The Netherlands.

History and context

The Rambutan evolved from one of the members' graduation project. Having both studied graphic design in Europe, the initiators were interested in the role of graphic design for purposes other than decoration or commercial purposes, rather than its traditional role in Thailand. In their perception, Thai designers are situated at the very end of the process, unable to initiate anything. One of the team members studied the history of Thai graphic design, which is relatively short, only going back around 30 to 40 years. Before this period, there were no graphic designers to speak of, only low-skilled craftsmen who did billboards and signs. At a certain point the team realised that the problem originated from the education system. As the graphic design industry in Thailand is relatively small, upon graduation one would work for several years and become a university lecturer to teach one's juniors. Moreover, what the teachers teach to their students is nothing new. The cycle is repeated again and again, becoming a never-ending loop.

At first, the team wanted to start a social engagement project, but they felt that they needed to deal with education first to create more awareness. They therefore organised workshops where they promoted the role of graphic design to university students in order to broaden their vision. The Rambutan has been active since 2016 and have organised four workshops so far. In September 2017, the team organised the first-ever Bangkok Art Book fair in collaboration with Citycity, a local gallery, which included a workshop where participants were tasked to make their own art books that could be presented at the fair.



Figure 5-S The Bangkok Art Book Fair at Bangkok Citycity Gallery (Image source: Bangkok Citycity Gallery website).

Structure

Aside from The Rambutan, the team have their own graphic design agency, Studio 150. In the beginning, the activities of The Rambutan were funded by the team members themselves. However, the finances from Studio 150 and The Rambutan are completely separate. Later, they also received funding from hosting organisations, such as TCDC. For the workshop that they organised for the Bangkok Art Book Fair they were sponsored by a printing and a paper company and, in addition, asked the participants for a small fee.

Process

Most of the workshops that The Rambutan team organises are with graphic design students. The workshop structure usually follows a format in which the team will first try to show design students the potential of graphic design as a powerful tool for action, by presenting case studies from other countries or works executed by themselves. The team will then assign the students a topic, such as cold weather conditions, a recurring

problem in some of the rural areas of Thailand that is problematic for those who cannot protect themselves properly. The students will then work in groups and present their ideas at the end of the day.

The Rambutan organises two types of workshop: organised by a university or an open call. In the first instance, the participants will be only from one university, in the second, students from different universities will join the workshop. If there are too many applicants in an open call the team tries to select applicants from different universities, in order to have different perspectives. It allows the students to get to know and learn from each other as each university has a different approach to design.

Current status and/or outcome(s)

After the successful first edition of the Bangkok Art Book Fair, the team have organised the second edition, along with an accompanying book workshop by The Rambutan.

Chapter 6 / Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia is a federation of thirteen states, eleven of which are located on the peninsular mainland and an additional two on the island of Borneo (Malaysian Investment Development Authority, 2019). Out of a population of 32,6 million inhabitants, around 1,8 million live in the capital Kuala Lumpur (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018).

Although much smaller in size compared to Hong Kong and Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur shares similar urban issues, such as traffic congestion (Dudman, 2014), a lack of city planning (Ravindran, 2017), urban poverty (Siwar et al., 2016), flooding and air pollution (DBKL, 2019).

Most government-supported design and social innovation projects are funded by the organisation Think City, a subsidiary of the Malaysian government's strategic investment fund Khazanah. Think City is one of the Kuala Lumpur case studies and will be discussed in section 6.5. In 2018, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) has launched its own MSI social innovation fund which involves utilising outreach programmes to contact grassroots initiatives in order to be able to scale them up. As the initiative is still in its early stages at the time of writing, little concrete information is known regarding the exact workings of the programme.

The five case studies from Kuala Lumpur will be described in the following sections.

6.1 Earth Heir

Earth Heir is a social enterprise that aims to preserve and promote traditional Malaysian arts and crafts. Cooperating with a network of Malaysian artisans, the company sells 100% handmade products, such as luxury bags, clothing and accessories, and home products to a wide variety of clients, including companies, tourists, ex-pats and Malaysians living abroad that are interested in craft.

Being a social enterprise run by an entrepreneur, Earth Heir might appear to be a different type of organisation compared to the other cases in this thesis, which arguably could be more easily categorised as 'social innovation'. However, in the context of this thesis, social enterprises are considered to be a type of social innovation (see also

section 2.1.3). Furthermore, some of the other initiatives described, such as DOMAT and Enable Foundation, are registered social enterprises, whereas initiatives such as Mahakan team, had aspirations to become one, even though in the Thai context, this would be difficult). The main difference with the other initiatives would appear to be that Earth Heir is not primarily led by design(ers), both in terms of its management and its activities. However, the inclusion of this case demonstrates that the decision to use design in a social innovation process is not necessarily made by designers, nor necessarily needs to include an explicit co-creation component (see also p.190). Here, design manifests itself not only in the features of the products, but also in the careful constructing of social relations with artisans (see also p.231).

Interviewee profile

The founder and CEO of Earth Heir agreed to be interviewed for this study. She has extensive experience in both the financial and non-profit/developmental sector and has returned to Malaysia after spending over fifteen years abroad.

History and context

Earth Heir was started in 2013 after its founder returned to Malaysia, having alternated for several years between working in finance to earn money and working for non-profits or development agencies to make a difference. Her initial motivation to launch the company was to find a means to combine both activities into one. The first three years of Earth Heir's existence was characterised by difficulty and struggles as it was run by the founder alone, who used her life savings to finance the business. However, in its fourth year of operation the company had expanded to four full-time staff, built up a network of over 100 artisans and managed to develop a clear vision and direction of what it wants to achieve: Earth Heir aims to have all its products completely made in Malaysia to lessen its carbon footprint and to support the local traditional skills, which are in danger of disappearing completely.



Figure 6-A Sample of products by Earth Heir. From top left: *Ghanaian basket*, *Galaxy necklace*, notebook cover, *Mah Meri bookmark*, *Iban warrior hat* and *Umbrella cushion* (Image source: www.earthheir.com).

Structure

The team at Earth Heir currently consists of four people:

- The founder/CEO, handles business development, products design and strategy.
- The COO/CFO, responsible for the operational and financial aspects.
- One employee specialising in *fashion revolution*, which is global movement raising awareness on ethical fashion.
- One employee in charge of retail, managing the shop and inventory, community building and organising craft workshops with artisans.

In addition, there are four shareholders in the company, the founder/CEO, the COO/CFO, a friend of the founder and the founder's sister. Earth Heir currently does not receive any funding whatsoever. It has received one grant in 2015 by the British Council, who awarded the company RM 30.000 seed money²⁶ of which the majority was spent on the renovation of the studio that Earth Heir uses as their office space and retail shop. At the moment, the business is completely financed by its own revenue, but the CEO is negotiating with investors in order to be able to expand the business.

²⁶ Around £5,600 (March 2019)

Process

From the beginning, the CEO of Earth Heir has invested in the social relationships with artisans. By attending craft fairs, travelling and physically meeting artisans all over Malaysia, who put them in touch with other artisans in the area, Earth Heir has slowly built up an extensive network. The focus in the past few years was mainly on building and exposing the brand, working with companies, raising awareness among consumers regarding the importance of knowing who made their products and why it is important to realise the value of handmade products. However, the company's attention has lately been shifting towards the area of design. Initially, some of the products were designed by the artisans themselves, with minor adjustments by Earth Heir. The improvements, however, are made from either a practical perspective or due to client feedback. The CEO indicated that she would like to move from this 'reactionary' type of design to a more 'preconceived' type of design, in which there is more of a design thinking process, rather than making random changes when required.



Figure 6-B Earth Heir's signature *Nelly* bag, named after the artisan who made it (Image source: www.earthheir.com)

Current status and/or outcome(s)

Earth Heir is currently aiming to address and expand their client base, in particular towards Japan, due to Japanese clients' fondness of artisanal products. The company is also looking to hire more staff, such as a full-time graphic designer for their communication design, a community manager who could exclusively work with the artisans, developing and maintaining the relationships as well as business development and marketing staff to acquire new clients.

6.2 POW Ideas: Pocket Park

POW Ideas is an agency run by two architects who are interested in landscape architecture and light art. The *Pocket Park* consists of a small park and a public terraced platform, located on the premises of Art Printing Works (APW), a former printing factory that has been converted into a creative hub, housing a co-working space and food and beverage outlets.

Interviewee profile

The interviewee, one of the two partners in the company, is a trained architect from a social housing background, specialising in adaptive use and social architecture. Spending a significant amount of time working overseas, he built houses for slums, designed houses for bushfire victims and physically remodelled houses for communities. After his return to Malaysia, he was trying to find a means to apply what he had learned from his experiences.



Figure 6-C The APW creative space (Image source: Author).

History and context

The company was founded in 2015 by the interviewee and his creative partner, who met when they were working at the same social enterprise. Although the partners operate using a social mind-set, POW Ideas was never meant to be solely a *social* design agency. Around 80% of the projects consist of (commercial) architecture and interiors and 20% landscape and art installations. In addition, they organise social activities and bear in mind how these could have a positive contribution to the community or environment. An example of this are the *Powow* sessions, which were initiated by POW Ideas to stimulate discourse within the Malaysian design scene.

In these series of public talks, local designers share their thoughts and ideas on certain design topics that interest them, such as shoe design or food design. POW Ideas has also worked on several projects with Khazanah, a government body, which aims to make Kuala Lumpur a better place in terms of public infrastructure and funds many projects involving creativity and social innovation.

Structure

The Pocket Park project was initiated by the owner of APW and funded by Khazanah, via its subsidiary Think City. POW Ideas were contracted as the designers of the park. In addition, there were multiple contractors involved in the building of the park.

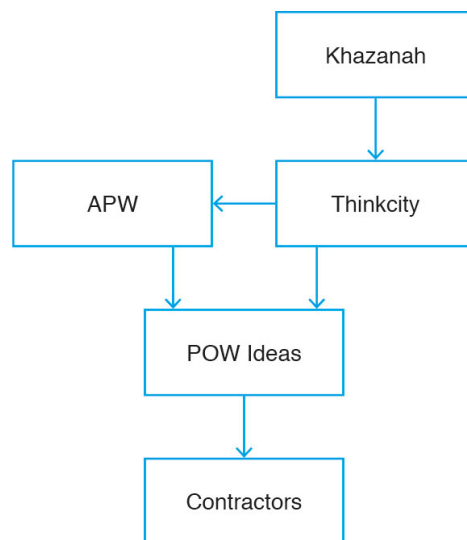


Figure 6-D The structure of the Pocket Park project.

Process

The owner of APW, knowing that the agency specialises in landscape architecture and public art, approached POW Ideas to design the Pocket Park. He felt it would be something that the agency would be interested in as it would involve a combination of art, nature and the curating of public spaces. Furthermore, POW Ideas' office is located on the APW grounds as well.

APW set out their requirements in terms of budget, timeline and what they wanted out of the project. Their underlying motivation was to attract more people to the neighbourhood. A park was considered to be desirable as there were very few public parks built in Kuala Lumpur in recent times. An additional challenge was that no one had ever converted a factory into a park in Malaysia before, since industrial buildings

did not seem to have any perceived value. Think City allowed POW Ideas to set their own aims and objectives, which was then reviewed and monitored by their own team of architects. In general, all projects funded by Think City must be within one-kilometre radius from Masjid Jamek, a mosque which is located in the centre of Kuala Lumpur. For the Pocket Park an exception was made as it was one of the first projects they funded, and the conversion of an industrial area was a first in Malaysia.

Aside from the park, a public space was constructed in the form of a platform, which can also function as a stage and seating area. An interactive light sculpture, initially created by POW Ideas for the iLight Marina Bay event in Singapore, was installed as a permanent feature on the stage. POW Ideas believes that through the addition of these features and making the park accessible to the general public, value is created.



Figure 6-E The Pocket Park at APW with the light sculpture on top of the red platform
(Image source: Author)

Current status and/or outcome(s)

In the evenings and during events, the park is often fully utilised. It is also regularly used by food trucks as well as the various F&B outlets in the compound, who will set their tables there. APW takes on an active role of promoting and organising events to activate the space. Various spin-off projects have since taken place in Kuala Lumpur by others interested in urban renewal.

6.3 3nity Design

3nity Design is a leading branding and visual communication consulting agency in Malaysia, emphasising social responsibility in both its commercial and non-profit work. The company actively tries to involve clients in the creative process and has a policy of avoiding waste of any kind, such as time, resources or materials.

Interviewee profile

The interviewee is the founder and one of the three partners in the agency. He has a background in graphic design and has recently been focusing on education, community and social innovation projects.

History and context

The three partners are former colleagues who started the agency in 1996 out of the desire to make a difference, intending to use design as a means to improve, transform and inspire the lives of people, instead of focusing on generating profit. With social innovation an integral part of its services, the agency is one of the few in Southeast Asia. 3nity has been working on small community projects since its inception, starting on a small scale. For example, the book, *God Loves Gay*, explores issues surrounding Christian morality and homosexuality in Malaysia and Singapore. Some of the projects have become recurring events, such as *Man and God*, a spiritual initiative that explores the relationship between mankind and God from the perspectives of different religions and cultures. Through a process of collaboration with local artists, a series of artworks is created which are exhibited in different cities around the world. Only in recent years the company has been able to engage their corporate clients in social projects, by shifting the clients' attitude from making their company *look* good towards actually *doing* good.

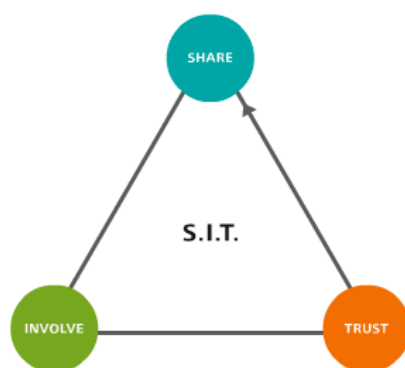


Figure 6-F The *God Loves Gay* book and an artwork from one of the *Man and God* exhibitions (Image source: www.3nitydesign.com)

Process

The agency strives to maintain a balance of 70% corporate work and 30% pro-bono, charity or social innovation projects, although sometimes the latter will make up over 40% of its activities. Seen by clients not only as designers, 3nity also creates content to give their clients' brands substance. In order to achieve this, 3nity developed the Share-Involve-Trust (S.I.T.) methodology to stimulate creativity and build a relationship with their clients (see figure 6-G).

To build and sustain a committed relationship, let's **S.I.T.** together. This three ingredients will help us achieve the brief's objective together.



SHARE

mutual exchange of information, ideas, knowledge and experience
increase understanding and minimize miscommunication

INVOLVE

active participation in discussion, brainstorming of ideas and solutions
create shared visions of the possible solutions and outcomes

TRUST

confidence in the working relationship based on mutual understanding of each other's expectation and expertise
produce highly focused result with minimal wasted resources

Figure 6-G The S.I.T. approach by 3nity Design (Image source: www.3nitydesign.com)

The social projects that 3nity is involved in are mostly self-funded, although the agency is moving into the position that corporate clients can be convinced to participate. Some clients agree that there is a problem and that they can make a change. Other clients have a budget for corporate social responsibility (CSR) and are becoming aware that instead of donating money, it might be more valuable to create something tangible and sustainable. They might consider social activities even though these are not directly connected to their business model. 3nity shares the projects that it feels to be successful and sustainable on their website, in the hope that other might learn from it and to contribute to social innovation within their own industry.

6.4 Heartware: Water Warriors & Mukim Pasangan

Integrated watershed management is the practice of using integrated strategies to manage land, water and other resources in a particular area for ecological, social and economic purposes (Wang et al., 2016). *Heartware* is a community-based approach which originated in Japan and has been applied in two integrated watershed management projects initiated by the University of Malaya (UM). The *Water Warriors Living Lab* is an initiative that aims to rejuvenate the central lake *Tasek Varsity*, located on the university's campus grounds. The *Mukim Pasangan* project aims to bring back shared values to a community living upstream of the Selangor river in order to conserve the ecosystem. For more information regarding the theoretical background, history and context of the two projects, see Mohamad et al. (2015) and Mohamad et al. (2018).

Interviewee profiles

Two academic staff from UM, involved in both of the Heartware projects and co-authors of the academic articles, were interviewed:

- A senior lecturer and researcher who is the project leader for both initiatives. Her background is the development of science, technology and innovation, environment protection and sustainable development.
- A research officer who is involved in both projects and is one of the co-founders of the Water Warriors Living Lab. His background is in applied geology and environmental management.

History and context

The initial idea of using the Heartware approach in a Malaysian context was conceived during a project where Japanese and Malaysian universities (including UM) collaborated to explore whether there was a difference between ‘mainstream’ and Asian-based integrated watershed management in terms of cultural norms. The Heartware approach was introduced by one of the Japanese main project leaders, a professor who had earlier explored the idea that Heartware, a community-based approach, might be a key success factors of lake conservation. However, there were no academic sources which described the approach as it originated from a practitioner’s point of view.

The UM project leader is currently developing the concept from a more academic perspective. She describes Heartware as a complex concept that operates on multiple dimensions, which entails building long-term resilience between stakeholders when dealing with the intangible aspects of the innovation process, requiring many types of negotiations. For example, the different perspectives and values of the community, the private sector and the government on sustainable lake management. A successful Heartware approach is being able to deal with these issues in a constructive manner for a long period of time. A house is often used as an analogy for the Heartware approach. The design, hardware or policies make up the roof. However, the foundation and the walls are made up of Heartware: the willingness of the community to continue the effort. Although the roof might change over time, the desire to sustain the initiative is built on human interactions.

The team from UM decided to explore how community-shared values, one of the dimensions of Heartware, could inspire and sustain activity in the community in terms of sustainable innovation. This resulted in the launch of the Water Warriors Living Lab initiative, which aimed to revive the campus lake using the help of the community at the university. Simultaneously, the team engaged in a similar project in Mukim Pasangan, a community located in the downstream area of the Selangor River, famous for its firefly tourism, where they established the shared values and cultural significance of the area together with the community and set up the Young Rangers, an environmental club for local youth.

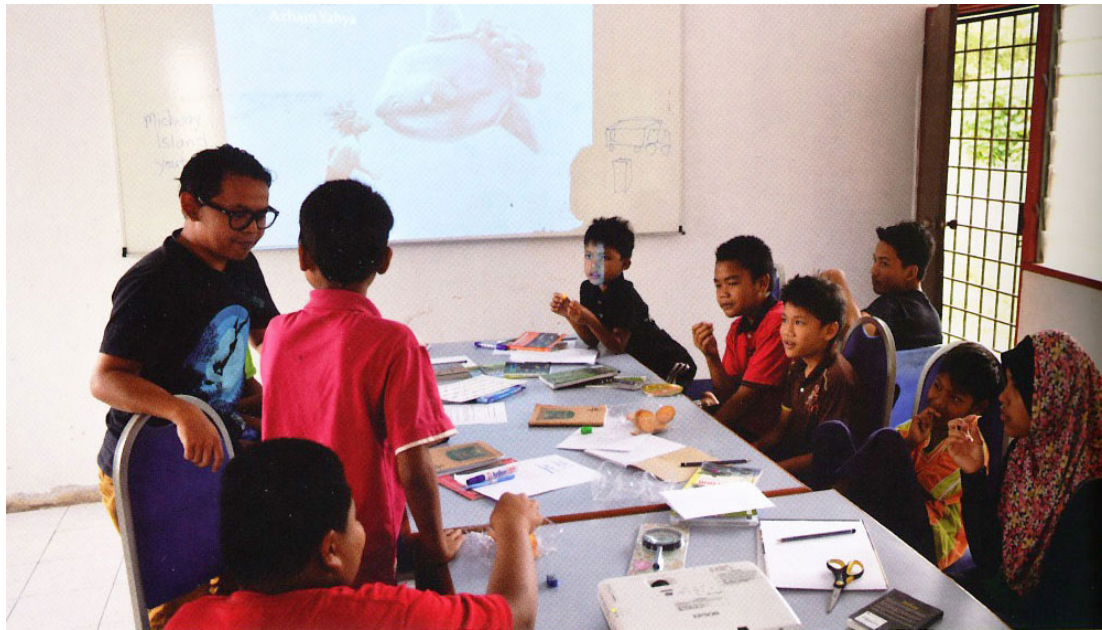


Figure 6-H A workshop with the Young Rangers (Kelab Alami KAWA) from Mukim Pasangan (Image source: Kelab Alami KAWA Facebook page)

Structure

In the Water Warriors Living lab project, several stakeholders are involved to rejuvenate and maintain the campus lake:

- Water Warriors focuses on environmental education. Their activities are centred around the lake area and include water quality monitoring with children, giving talks and organising walks, among others.
- The Department of Development maintains the lake's infrastructure, such as the landscaping.
- The Sport Centre focuses on sport education, for example kayaking on the lake.
- The Deputy Vice Chancellor of UM funded the project based on the team's initial presentation and is actively involved due to personal reasons.
- Volunteers from the campus community help to clear the rubbish and do waste assessment to determine what its origins are.

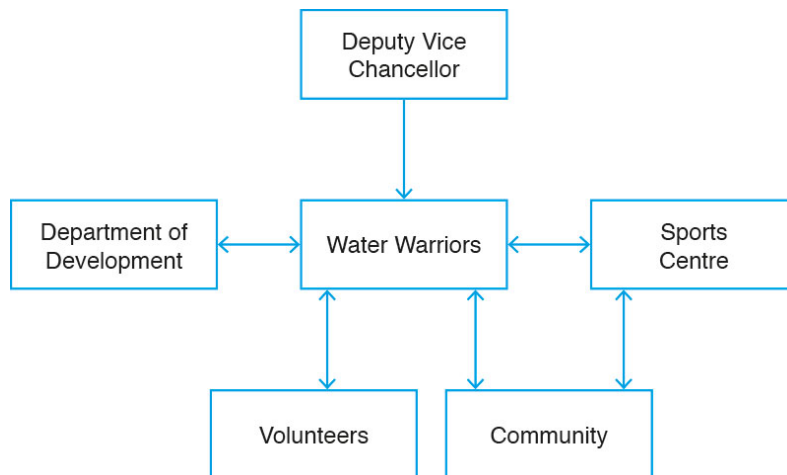


Figure 6-I Structure of the Water Warriors Living Lab.

In the Mukim Pasangan project, the stakeholders are:

- The team from UM, which was the same team who set up Water Warriors
- The youth environment club (Kelab Alami KAWA)
- The children's parents
- The village community

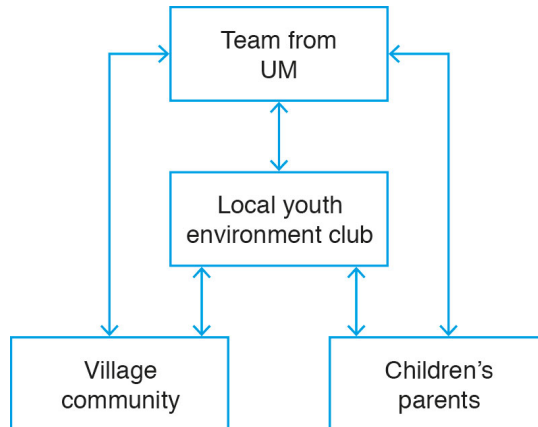


Figure 6-J Structure of the Mukim Pasangan initiative.

Process

When the Water Warriors team started in 2013, the lake was in a bad condition, containing blue-green algae, which is perceived as the worst variety of algae. The lake was not considered as a place for recreation anymore; the community had already forgotten that the lake once had this function. The team did research on the lake's history and the shared values of the community and developed a video in order to communicate the meaning of the lake to the community. Within one year, the team

connected with relevant stakeholders within the campus and managed to convince the higher management by using Heartware as an advocacy tool.



Figure 6-K Left: The original state of the lake. Right: The Vice Chancellor on the lake after the rejuvenation (Image source: Water Warriors website).

The Mukim Pasangan project was initiated around the same time. The team conducted research on shared values in the community in the upstream part of river and published a paper which recorded their findings (Mohamad et al., 2015). However, they felt that it would not be proper to leave the community after the field research had been completed. The team decided to publish a coffee table book about the community, work with the local mosque and launch an environmental club for the local youth between aged 7 to 17 years old. The children were taught to become local nature guides and young scientists, learning about the local habitat and engage in conservation work, such as replanting trees and cleaning up the river. In this context, the Heartware approach entailed communicating in non-scientific terms when discussing scientific concepts, such as water quality parameters, listen to what the villagers' problems are and taking concrete action instead of merely talking. For example, by setting a good example by picking up rubbish in the village.

One dimension of Heartware that was relevant in this context is (re)establishing the meaning of a place to the community. One of the methods to achieve this is to bring back the memory of the water bodies to the community. Water Warriors reframed the lake as the heart of the campus and made an effort to organise social activities that were conducted on or around the lake in the past. In the Mukim Pasangan project, the community had to be reminded that the on-going pollution of the river meant that the fireflies, who bring significant economic benefits to the area, are in danger of disappearing forever. By compiling and bringing back good memories of the lake or

river, imagination will be brought back as well, which in turn will inspire the community to be innovative to conservation efforts.

Another dimension was the importance of relationships. For example, in the Water Warriors initiative, the team's advice to reduce the number of ducks that were introduced back in the lake was not received well by some of the stakeholders in the community, who had grown fond of the ducks' presence. The team had to use a 'Heartware approach' by sitting down and talk to those involved to come to a solution that would not disturb the social relationships that had painstakingly been built.

Current status and/or outcome(s)

The Water Warriors initiative as well as the Mukim Pasangan community project are currently still on-going.

6.5 Think City: Lorong Bandar 13

The renovation of Lorong Bandar 13, a small alley located in the centre of Kuala Lumpur, is a pilot project by Think City, a subsidiary of the government organisation Khazanah, which aims to create more liveable cities through funding and developing various urban renewal projects. Showcasing several *activity* spaces, the alley serves as a showcase for potential rejuvenation of other similar alleys in the city.

Interviewee profiles

Three staff members of Think City were present at the interview. The respondents were from different teams and had different responsibilities in the project. Two were originally trained as architects.

History and context

Think City is a government initiative that specialises in urban renewal through community-focused projects. Originally from George Town, Penang, it also operates in other cities in Malaysia, such as the capital Kuala Lumpur. The organisation funds and implements urban rejuvenation programmes in collaboration with various stakeholders, such as local communities and governments, institutions and private organisations, focusing on historic city centres. Most of the initiatives Think City works on can be

categorised in five themes: Space Activation, Public Realm Improvements, Content and Culture Curation, Capacity Building and Research & Advocacy.



Figure 6-L Different ends of the alley. On the left image a loading area for trucks and on the right image the community garden space (Images source: Author).

The decision to renovate Lorong Bandar 13 was influenced by motivations that were both policy and organically-driven. At a policy level, several key issues were already identified in downtown Kuala Lumpur by Think City that were thought to contribute to the degeneration of the area, such as homelessness. At the same time, due to the close proximity of the alley (next to Think City's office in Kuala Lumpur), the staff were aware of the problems surrounding the alley by walking around and talking to the people in the community. Although Think City cannot solve the overarching issue of homelessness in downtown Kuala Lumpur, it can address it to a certain extent by focusing on a specific problem, in this case the hygiene issues caused by homeless drug addicts in Lorong Bandar 13.

Structure

Think City is a subsidiary of Khazanah, a strategic investment fund of the Malaysian government and is funded by its sister organisation Yayasan Hasanah (Hasanah

Foundation). Think City’s branch in Kuala Lumpur consists of two teams, the *KL Team* and the *Urban Solutions team*, who work alongside each other. In addition, the teams will engage with local stakeholders, such as Kuala Lumpur’s municipal authority (DBKL), the local community and in this instance, the waste management department.

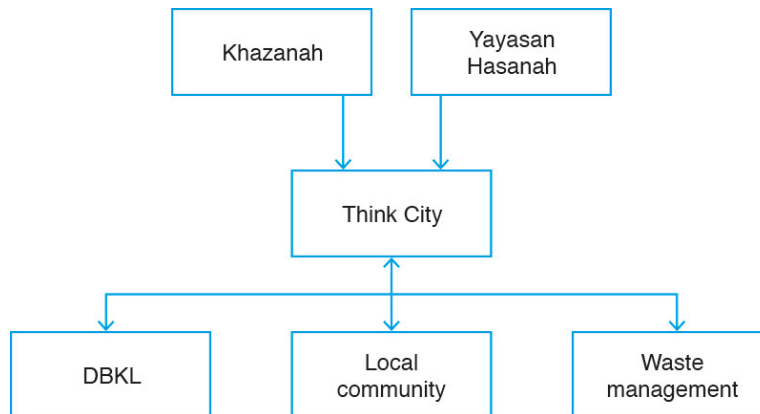


Figure 6-M The structure of the Lorong Bandar 13 project.

Process

The KL Team’s core activities are community-based. It is responsible for two types of activities: the implementation of physical projects, such as the upgrading of the Lorong Bandar 13 alley, and space activation, which entails the organisation of exhibitions of performances in the space. The Urban Solutions team conducts the research work that will form the background for the *geographic team*, which in this case is the KL team. Examples include baseline analysis, site analysis and cultural mapping. Based on these insights, the Urban Solutions team will develop a framework and action plan that will be passed on to the KL team for implementation. In addition, the Urban Solutions team will also function as a backup for the KL team for the technical aspects of the project. Towards the end of the project the documentation and reports will be sent back to the Urban Solutions team for (impact) evaluation.

Think City uses different tools to engage with the local community, such as visioning workshops, during which the team will propose some ideas or scenarios to inspire the community, who might not be aware that certain options are possible. For example, the team proposed a waste disposal area and discussed with the local residents whether this addressed their issues or needs. Aside from formal engagements such as the visioning workshops, Think City also builds informal

relationships to earn trust and increase a sense of ownership of the area among the community.



Figure 6-N Recreational area in the middle of the alley featuring a notice board, seating and and sports area (Images source: Author).

Current status and/or outcome(s)

For Think City, the renovation of Lorong Bandar 13 was a test to determine whether this type of intervention would work. If the project is evaluated positively, the alley would be upgraded permanently and a proper law or regulation devised in collaboration with DBKL. Think City is currently involved with several public realm improvement and preservation projects and is in the process of slowly establishing a working relationship with the municipal council, who is aware of the issues, but might not have the technological capacity to carry out a baseline study or cultural mapping. Think City aims for the on-going collaboration with DBKL to result in the construction of guidelines which can be used both by citizens and the council to initiate and implement these types of urban improvement projects by themselves.

Chapter 7 / Context-specific themes

This chapter will discuss themes that were mostly particular to one of the respective cities. In Hong Kong, the lack of physical space and urban poverty were often mentioned by respondents as affecting their operations. Practitioners in Bangkok reported issues surrounding the attitude of the military government as well as the effects of social hierarchy. In Kuala Lumpur, institutional racism, censorship were circumstances that some initiatives had to consider. In addition, an example of the limitations of western approaches manifested itself was recounted by one of the Malaysian respondents.

7.1 Context-specific themes: Hong Kong

Two issues in particular, the lack of physical space and urban poverty, were reported by respondents in Hong Kong to have influenced how they approached, perceived and/or sustained the initiatives or organisations they initiated or were involved in.

7.1.1 The lack of physical space

The Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong is currently ranked as the fourth most densely populated country in the world (United Nations, 2017). However, with a total land area of 1,111 km², the majority of the population is concentrated on 267 km² (24%) of the total available land area (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2018). This uneven urban distribution is particularly evident in the Kowloon area, occupying a mere 46,9 km² of land, yet with an average population density estimated around 48,060 persons per km² (Census and Statistics Department, 2016). With a significantly lower average floor-space per person compared to other developed countries, residential overcrowding is a serious problem and appears to be the norm rather than the exception (Jayantha & Hui, 2012).

It is also a concern for design and social innovation initiatives, such as DOMAT and SoCO's home modification project, which focuses on creating furniture for low-income families who live in sub-divided housing. According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department's most recent estimate, around 3.8% of private domestic buildings in Hong Kong (excluding village houses) are considered as sub-divided units, comprising 87,600 households or 199,900 persons (Census and Statistics Department,

2016). Its origins are attributed to the imbalance between the supply and demand for housing, due to the limited areas made available for residential areas by government legislation in an environment in which land is already scarce. This, in turn, leads to extraordinarily high housing prices and the phenomenon of sub-dividing apartments (Dwan, Sawicki, & Wong, 2013). The environment for those who reside in sub-divided housing are often far from ideal. Apart from issues with building safety and environmental hygiene (Chung, 2014), the cramped living conditions and noise during the night time can affect the residents' psychological and emotional well-being negatively, often in the form of insomnia, mood swings and anxiety (Chow, 2017). These reports are consistent to the description of the environment that DOMAT finds their clients in:

"If you walk into the house, the first thing you see is it's very small and there's a lot of people in there. So, you have a bed, like a double bed... a bunk bed which takes up a big percentage of the room and then around there there'll be shelves, like a folding table, maybe a lot of stuff hanging from the windows or the ceiling. It's just quite a chaotic environment and usually the children don't have anywhere dedicated for them to do their homework. And a lot of the time the buildings are older buildings, older tenement buildings in the poorer neighbourhoods, like Sham Shui Po, Cheung Sha Wan. Because the landlord is not really interested in giving quality housing, they'll just do very basic renovations and they'll just do the minimum upkeep their building in order to keep renting the rooms."

Issues surrounding the lack of space even follow Hong Kong residents in death. Even though traditionally local people preferred being buried and were strongly against cremation, years of intensive promotion by the Hong Kong government have caused residents to accept cremation as well. However, the average waiting time for a niche in a cheap public columbarium can be up to three to four years. An increasing amount of people therefore choose to be buried in mainland China or the US instead (Chan, 2018). However, one of the design mentors involved in the Fine Dying initiative learned by talking to the cemetery staff, that cremation is still a complex issue in Hong Kong:

"We found out that if you put the ashes in the garden, you will have a plaque in the cemetery, but if you put them in the sea you will get a digital link (laughs)."

Imagine... [...] If you're open enough you think 'ash is ash', but you still want to have something solid [which] your relatives can go and visit every year. I think there are some hidden truths. You can't just see from the data how many people prefer the sea, how many people prefer the ground. [...] You really need to go into details, talk to people. [...] If you want to make it work it's even more difficult, because you need to drive the different parties to understand what to do and try to execute, even as an experiment or test. So, it's not an easy thing."

Another consequence of the lack of physical space is noticeable in the extraordinary high cost of housing. Almost half of the available rental accommodation is priced at more than HK\$20,000 a month²⁷, amounting to 70% of the median household income in Hong Kong (Lam & Liu, 2018). This also poses a serious challenge to the daily operation of design and social innovation initiatives. For Form Society, which does not receive any kind of funding, the high rental cost of their space was reported as one of the most difficult aspects of sustaining their initiative. One of the team members remarked:

"[...] rent in Hong Kong is crazy. Of course, once you start up something you have to think of how to survive immediately [...] Maybe in foreign countries [...] they don't have to think about it because they have a lot of resources, like space, so they can focus on refining and going further with their ideas. But in Hong Kong you have to think about how to survive yourself. That's why we don't have time to develop a deeper message or idea to the public. That is a common issue for people in Hong Kong, especially when working on this kind of project"

Play Depot also experienced difficulties in their ambitions to move their initiative, stating that:

"[the playground] project is finished, but we are looking forward to continue it. One of the things that this project doesn't have is a permanent space. I think that's a big problem for us, because land is very scarce in Hong Kong. For the longer term, we are looking for a relatively permanent space"

²⁷ Around £2,000 (March 2019)

7.1.2 Urban poverty

Closely intertwined with the shortage of space is the issue of urban poverty. It is estimated that approximately one out of five Hong Kong residents can be considered poor. Moreover, the three poorest districts, Sham Shui Po, Kwun Tong and Kwai Tsing, where almost 25% of the residents fall below the poverty line, are all located in the Kowloon area (Census and Statistics Department, 2017). Aside from income, deprivation and social exclusion can also be used as indicators of poverty. A study conducted by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service found both deprivation and social exclusion occur in almost one-fifth of the population as well. The numbers for certain disadvantaged groups, such as the elderly, recipients of social welfare (CSSA) and families with disabled persons, are even higher and can range from 25% to over 50% (Wong & Saunders, 2012).

Goodseed is one of the initiatives that was launched by the HKSAR government to combat poverty and social exclusion. Over the course of three years, the programme has funded 41 teams, enabling them to start implementing their proposed projects. However, the assistant programme manager feels that there is still much work to be done, stating:

"[...] most of our initiatives are on the preventive side. Obviously, poverty is a really complex issue, especially in Hong Kong. I would not rule out the impact of any of the initiatives, but because [the ideas] are still very green, [...] they need more time to validate or evolve. I would say our program is more upstream... More to test innovative ideas, rather than having a solid solution. 'This idea would definitely help to alleviate...', I would not say that. But I would say if we have one hundred seeds planted, at least we would have one growing into a flower. That would be amazing enough."

The underlying motivation of DOMAT's home modification project could also be characterised as an attempt to address one of the root causes of urban poverty. According to one of the founders of DOMAT, their partner organisation SoCO is particularly interested in helping the children of the low-income families:

"[...] For them, if the children don't have a good study environment at home it's difficult for them to perform at well at school. And if they don't do well at school

[and] they're not getting good results, it's hard for them to get a good job in the future. So, it's like, they basically get stuck in a poverty cycle and in the future they themselves will have to be living in the same conditions. So, if you can help the children it can have a long-term benefit for [the families]."

In terms of the perception of low-income communities, Wong & Lam (2005) argue that the focus should not only be on the needs of these communities, but also on the assets that they possess, such as the resources, skills and the abilities of the residents.

Vacant buildings could be used for creative industries or services could be launched that employ the elderly or unemployed, facilitating the creation of social capital in the neighbourhood. Form Society, which is located in the Sham Shui Po, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Hong Kong, is an initiative whose ambition is to do exactly that. One of the partners remarked that:

"[...] I want to collaborate with some local social organisations, like the homeless organisation in Sham Shui Po. [...] They told me that some of the homeless are also craftsmen and also repair electronics. I think that's quite good for us if we can invite them to come here to do a repair service, especially for the local people. [...] I came up with a lot of ideas, such as coupons. People can buy them and then stick them in their shops. [...] Local people can take those coupons and come here to do repairs for free. Those coupons would be very precious for the donor, so the elderly or people in need can take those coupons and repair what the need to repair."

7.2 Context-specific themes: Bangkok

In Bangkok, specific factors influencing design and social innovation that were mentioned by multiple interviewees included the attitude of the military government towards social innovation and effects of social hierarchy when engaging with stakeholders.

7.2.1 The military government

The current military junta was installed after a coup on 22 May 2014 and was initially welcomed by the general public, as it restored order after the large demonstrations

against the former civilian Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. Previously, the Pheu Thai party, backed by rural voters, and the Democratic Party (DP), supported by the royalist elite and the military, were the major players in Thai politics. However, after ruling the country for over four years, the military government has changed this landscape in a fundamental way by standing above everyone, including all political parties (Ebbighausen, 2018). The regime has maintained a firm hold on Thailand's political system; it holds a majority in parliament and one-third of cabinet ministers has a military background. Moreover, it has embedded itself in almost all (public) institutions, with most senior positions taken up by military staff (Panarat & Tanakasempipat, 2017). Several interviewees have shared their experiences in relation to the military government. The comments have been anonymised, due to their sensitive nature.

When asked how to keep motivating people when a project is temporarily halted due to issues with government policy, one respondent stated:

"It's really hard during this time because of the politicians and the military government. They have their vision, they have their projects in their mind. So, they want to push."

A high-impact project initiated by the military government itself is the Chao Phraya river promenade, a fourteen-kilometre long footbridge that is to be constructed along both banks of the Chao Phraya river in central Bangkok. The project has been deemed controversial by many, due to the negative impact on the various communities who live along the river (Wancharoen, 2015; Rujivanarom, 2018). Various activists and urban architects have criticised the government for not assessing the full impact or considering other alternatives. Furthermore, the process lacked transparency from the beginning and no stakeholders were consulted (Chandran, 2018). This headstrong attitude echoes the sentiments of one of the respondents, who stated:

"In an elected government people can have their voice heard, because they represent the people. But if a military government doesn't have a way out, they can just ignore it and they don't care. They do not have to listen."

The same respondent also noted that the military government's attitude ironically also seems to strengthen grassroots citizen's resolve to pursue social innovation, giving the cases of Pom Mahakan and the Chao Phraya river as an example, even though they themselves were not involved either of the two initiatives.

"They're tearing a lot of historical communities down and I think that's the reason it drives people together. The architecture community comes in and they say it's not okay for the government to do what they want. Those who live in the space is the public and nobody owns anything. It's a tension that drives everyone. [...] If you noticed the river, the government tried to propose this new riverfront, it sucks so bad, they didn't even research anything. So, the people are organising their community, the Chao Praya river, to propose something back to the government. It's so difficult to fight with this military government. But I think it's good, it's a good tension and it's a good driver to bring the people together."

A respondent who was involved in the Pom Mahakan initiative shared similar thoughts about the government's agenda:

"I would say it's bureaucracy, it's arrogance. It's arrogance from the government. If they accept the people to stay, they cannot do other projects. Other people will say, 'Hey, we can be as Pom Mahakan'. If Pom Mahakan can stay, we can as well. I think it's not about the rationale or any academic thing. It's about arrogance, it's a very big problem."

7.2.2 Social hierarchy

Most respondents in Bangkok were either influenced by or had an opinion about social hierarchy in the context of the design and social innovation process. The most common definition of social hierarchy is that it comprises of an implicit or explicit ordering of individuals or groups on a social scale (Fiske, 1992; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). In particular, the structural approach to social hierarchy, which assumes that individuals are differentiated on the quality of their social positions (Gould, 2002), is the framework that is prevalent in Thai society. Social hierarchy in Thailand has its roots in the 15th century feudal *sakdina* system, which ranked individuals according to the size of the

land that they owned (*sakdi* = power and *na* = rice field) and determined their rights, wealth, political power and public responsibilities (Boyle, 1998; Kitiyadisai, 2005). Although modern Thais still constantly assess each other on their relative status in the social hierarchy, it is no longer solely based on objective (social) structures, but can incorporate a variety of subjective contextual and situational factors. For example, wealth, seniority or urbanity (Vorng, 2011).

It should be emphasised that in contrast with the western perspective, which tends to view social hierarchy as an intimidating force instead of a type of relationship (Fiske, 1992), Thais do not share this association and generally have a more neutral attitude towards social hierarchy (Mulder, 1996). Furthermore, the fluid nature of Thai interpersonal social relations, with social status shifting according to the situation, is difficult to combine with the fixed and rigid notions of social hierarchy that are common in the west (Vorng, 2011).

The influence of social hierarchy in design and social innovation practice in Thailand can manifest itself on different levels and contexts and was acknowledged by several respondents to be a fundamental aspect of Thai society. A conference paper written by the author together with the principal supervisor (Tjahja & Yee, 2018), was presented at the DRS2018: Catalyst conference in Limerick, Ireland, indicating four areas in which social hierarchy interacted with design and social innovation:

1. The negative effects of social hierarchy on the co-creation process.

In four out of the six initiatives, respondents needed to modify the co-creation process in order to negate the negative effects of social hierarchy. The design manager from Co-create Charoenkrung observed that during the workshops social hierarchy affected the participation of some stakeholders:

"[...] In the second session we mixed the stakeholders: in one group we had people from the government, private sector students, people from the community. When you mix [groups] it's difficult to make sure that the kids will say something or that the government will participate. In Thailand, the age difference is important and some people are higher in hierarchy. The smaller one will not... themselves sometimes. We spend a lot of time designing tools to make sure that everyone participates."

The founder of the Bangkok Chinatown initiative experienced similar issues when organising meetings where different types of stakeholders are present:

“[...] We try to create many levels of meeting. [In] some groups we try to focus on high hierarchy people or the upper class. [...] These kinds of people will join the first and last meeting to see the end-product and to give the ideas in the beginning. [...] Sometimes when they come to workshops [however], their opinions dominate the opinions of the community members. Sometimes [the community members] don't want to talk in front of the people they respect. When we need to hold big workshops, like fifty people, we try to separate the groups: community members, organisations, high-ranking people, so they can give their opinions within their groups. After that, we bring their ideas together and do the conclusions in the meeting.”

The architects at CROSSs try to change the dynamics of social hierarchy when conducting sessions with villagers by reconfiguring the space:

“Something we discovered is that we leave some culture over there. For example, one time at a meeting everyone was facing the front. Then we said 'No, no, no, we don't talk in this kind of space, let's share in a circle, sit around so everyone can see everyone's face'. The mayor sat with us in the circle at the same level as the teachers and the students. I think they realised that the space changed the way people communicate and the hierarchy inside. We did this two or three times and when we came back they always sat in a circle.”

2. The necessity of leveraging on existing social hierarchy

The influence of key actors high in the social hierarchy, both positive and negative, was mentioned by several respondents. One of the respondents involved with the village of Pom Mahakan elaborated on the necessity of those higher in hierarchy to support the causes brought forward by those who are positioned lower:

“I think we still need hierarchy. In fact, there's many cases of protests of small people that are not successful, unless the higher hierarchy joins with them. [...] The elder sister of the King works at the Fine Art Department [...] I talked with her

about Pom Mahakan and she said 'If there's no people there, it's not a community'. I have a picture of her and me when she visited my booth [at a conference], so the BMA knows [that they should] be careful <laughs>. [The princess] might not be able to help, but we can 'refer' to her."

Connecting directly to the head of the community was also found to be beneficial. Co-create Charoenkrung's design manager mentioned that when engaging with the various local communities in the neighbourhood that:

"My strategy is that you have to go with the head of the community, because if something improves in the community people will love [the head of the community], so they'll like that."

A similar insight was shared by the architects from CROSSs regarding the influence of the village head:

"[...] When the head says to go in one direction, people under him are ready to go with him. It makes the movement much easier. When the head is smart, when he listens to other people and makes good decisions, it will flow much easier."

However, in the case of Pom Mahakan, authoritative leadership can also have a downside. The entrepreneur in charge of the Mahakan co-creation team recounted:

"In Pom Mahakan the leader is very strong. Strong in the sense of not collaborating. [...] If there's someone who doesn't listen to the leader, that will be someone who will [leave the village]. It's good and it's bad, in terms of that. The objective of the co-creation session last time was to decentralise the leader. We suppressed the leader outside and we talked only to the community members and we asked them 'What are your needs, not from the leader, but from you?'. We didn't want the leader to be present at the meeting. Because if he's present no one will speak up."

One of the architects involved held a similar view of the leader, elaborating that:

“In my opinion, he should learn to listen to others. I tried to tell him not to force anyone who doesn't want to be here. He overrules everyone, only he can talk to the outsiders who come here. The sympathy from the outside comes from the story he tells. But the facts are not the same, I found out by myself. [...] He will learn that not only he is important, the power of the people is important. BMA can break the power of the people, because they support [the remaining] half of the people who want to go out. They can [thereby] reduce the power of the community. If the leader doesn't change his opinion, he cannot keep anyone with him. The game is over.”

3. The importance of understanding social hierarchy in the Thai government

In particular the influence and position of supportive key government officials was reported to be essential for the successful operation and sustaining of initiatives. TCDC's policy manager recalled that when encountering resistance from local authorities when trying to arrange the logistics of the Co-create Charoenkrung project, she had to make use of her knowledge of the government hierarchy:

“[...] I had to do something that I don't like to do, I had to do some name dropping of some big names in the government. And then they said 'Okay'. That's sad, that's sad. To put it in a very good way, they have no idea. But I had to say 'This guy and that guy will come and see it, what if...' I had to become a bad cop to do this. That's why [a] top-down [approach] would be beneficial.”

4. The fluidity of social hierarchy

Two respondents attested that their position and role in the social hierarchy was dynamic, changing according to the situation, supporting the notion put forward by Vorng (2011). For example, a university dean who was involved with Deschooling Games, explained the different roles that he can assume within his faculty and the importance of communication:

“[...] for this [participatory] project we all sit together and do it together, we draft the ideas together, we plan things together. But when it comes to negotiations,

I'm the one who takes the lead. I don't know whether this is a problem or not, you know what I mean? I think it's a matter of separating the roles, we communicate with each other. [...] Because at this faculty we believe in process and learning community, this gap between the boss and the staff is quite narrow. It doesn't mean that it doesn't exist, we do have it and we acknowledge it. But we [also] acknowledge that we play different roles in different contexts in different times."

One of the respondents volunteering with Deschooling Games commented on the different attitudes he has to social hierarchy, comparing the situation at work as an engineer and when he is designing games with the initiative:

"At work, I'm not interested in hierarchy. [...] When I'm wrong, I'm wrong, it's solved directly. But for my role as a designer [for Deschooling Games], I always keep my profile low [although] I'm still not interested in hierarchy. When interacting with people [however], it does affect me. Sometimes when I interact with people who are older than me during the game [sessions], I will be more polite. I'm always polite, but for older people I will be more polite, to have a better relation. In Thailand hierarchy is important."

As observed by Mulder (1996), Thais often accept social hierarchy as their reality instead of something negative. For example, the dean who collaborated with Deschooling Games remarked that:

"[...] It depends on the culture of the organisation that you want to build on as well. If you believe in learning together, you have to learn from reality. We're not based on ideology. The agreement [that social hierarchy is a bad thing] might come from too much ideology and they try to argue that everything should be all flat and horizontal, which I think will not work – that is not real."

Referring to a village context, the architects from CROSSs agree with this statement, but only to a certain extent:

"Hierarchy is not a bad thing. A lot of times it's very useful in some types of work. But I think if people are so stuck with hierarchy that the villagers are afraid or too

shy to discuss problems with the mayor, that's a problem. So sometimes recalibrating the hierarchy is important for a space to share in a more open manner. Sometimes they need to be horizontal for people to listen and to speak out."

One of the designers from The Rambutan regards social hierarchy as something that can be overcome with proper education, stating that:

"I also believe that even though in society we have different hierarchies, but when you say something that makes sense, it makes sense for all, even if they're higher in hierarchy. So, I'm not really concerned about this. But I cannot deny that it happens, especially in Thailand."

The full paper has been included in this thesis as Appendix D.

7.3 Context-specific themes: Kuala Lumpur

In Kuala Lumpur, two stakeholders voiced concerns in relation to (institutional) racism. In addition, censorship by the Malaysian government and the institutionalisation of the social innovation process were also mentioned.

7.3.1 Institutional racism

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, consisting of three main ethnic groups. The Malays are Muslim and traditionally based in rural areas, dominating both the agricultural and bureaucratic sectors of society. The Chinese and Indians are mostly based in urban areas, often active in the business sector and managed to progress socially and politically to a greater extent when compared to the Malay population (Davidson, 1998).

Contrary to the positive economic development that Malaysia has been undergoing in the previous decades, the Chinese and Indian ethnic minority groups in the country are growing increasingly negative in their perception of citizenship. This can in part be attributed to the fact that they feel to be treated unequally by the government, which emphasises the social and political superiority of the *bumiputra* (literally: sons of the earth), the dominant Malay ethnic group. Malaysian citizens of

Chinese and Indian descent are therefore to some extent denied citizenship rights through institutional and social discrimination. This unequal distribution of political and social rights among Malaysia's ethnic groups is reflected in the underrepresentation of Chinese and Indian citizens in the higher levels of civil service and professional management (Pietsch & Clark, 2014).

The creation of this particular societal structure, in which Malays are favoured over the other ethnicities, often through affirmative action, can be traced back to British colonial rule. By guaranteeing free education and positions in the colonial bureaucracy for Malays, the British exploited the existing divides between the ethnic groups and laid the groundwork that influenced the attitude and activities of the Malaysian government after independence (Wu, 2009). Two periods in the post-colonial history of Malaysia are relevant in this context. The race riots in 1969 led to the entrenchment of the Malay ethnic group in the political system and in government institutions. The 1980s saw a process of islamisation of these institutions and the popularisation of the concept of Malaysia as an Islamic state. These events, respectively, led to the creation of an ideological stream based on ethnicity and another focusing on religion. Although the two discourses might differ, they both arguably originate from the same idea of indigeneity of the Malay ethnic group (Ting, 2009).

The sentiment of preferential treatment of the bumiputra was underlined by one of the respondents, who is ethnic Chinese. When asked about whether he encountered any limitations during his practice, he stated that:

[...] they [the bumiputra] get all the big jobs. Like, government companies prefer that you have bumiputra status. If you don't, the chances of you getting a job are less, or none. [...] But we don't have many government agencies as our clients anyways, because we're not a native company. We're native in a way, but in Malaysia our status is not native.

Similarly, another respondent of Indian descent, when asked the question whether there were any aspects of their practice that were influenced by the local Malaysian context, mentioned that:

I'm Malaysian, but I'm not muslim [...] No one has ever told me that they don't want to work with us because we're not a bumiputra company, but that's

something that is out there. Do we not get some orders because we're not bumiputra? We don't know. That's something that's specifically Malaysian. That there could be some amount of discrimination that could be going on in terms of procurement if we're not the right colour, I haven't explicitly experienced that. But then, there could be people out there who decide not to work with us for whatever reason. Sometimes that's in the back of my head, thinking whether we're disadvantaged because we're not the right kind of people.

7.3.2 Censorship

Although the freedom of speech and expression is enshrined in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, the parliament has the ability to place restrictions on these rights for a wide range of reasons, such as national security, public order and morality. However, due to the subjective wording and interpretation of these concepts, there are many ways in which the parliament can limit individual liberties of Malaysian citizens when deemed necessary (Davidson, 1998).

One respondent reported several experiences involving censorship when organising projects and exhibitions that touch upon issues that are considered as controversial or sensitive by the government, such as homosexuality or religion. For example, the respondent was worried about undercover government agents who would scrutinise the content of the discussions during the event that he organised. In another exhibition, held at a renowned gallery, the respondent was instructed by government officials to either change the name of the exhibition or cancel it altogether as it was deemed to be potentially controversial in terms of religious content. The consequences for engaging with 'taboo' subject matter can be far reaching as illustrated by the respondent:

"In the recent biennale, seven works have been taken out. That's because of the sensitivities. They will blacklist you. Sometimes your company will get affected. Some of the clients who are friendly [with] the authorities may take [their business] back, with your involvement in controversial... to them it's controversial. The client is basically doing self-censorship. I don't think the government will go to the client. It's just the client who wants to be more careful."

7.3.3 Limitations of western models

Although the failure of western frameworks to take the local context into is not something that is unique to Malaysia, it is described here as a context-specific theme as it was a significant issue in one of the Kuala Lumpur cases. The project leader at the University of Malaya recounts her drive to institutionalise the initiative due to her western mindset at the time:

"I was always thinking of institutionalisation. [...] So, when the opportunity came [...] at that time I was like 'Okay, this is an opportunity for institutionalisation. We could be a centre, we will have full-time staff working with us. [...] [So], there was an institutional capture. [But] the volunteers were disillusioned [...], they didn't like the bureaucracy, they wanted to leave. That was a critical time, we really lost the momentum. And I was like: 'Maybe institutionalisation is not the end of it all. We shouldn't aim for institutionalisation, we should be aiming for a flexible arrangement'. That was my experience of applying what I learned in a western context. I don't know [whether the Heartware approach, see p.251] is something that works outside of the Asian context. Some of our resilient volunteers are those who are thinking that they are doing this for God. And there is no higher KPI for that. If we have a snag, they will say 'It's a part of the challenge doing God's work'. How can you analyse that in a western context, right? But Malaysia is very religion-oriented, it's a different cultural context."

The team from Co-create Charoenkrung also encountered the limitations of western frameworks regarding their perception of public space (see also section 10.1.3).

The issues discussed in this chapter reaffirm the potential impact of the local context on social innovation practice. Context can affect the motivations, drivers and conditions in a variety of complex ways, thereby influencing the outcome or survival of initiatives. It therefore becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the dominant position that (design) ideas, methods and approaches can somehow be transferred to situations and contexts that in many ways different than the ones they originated in.

Chapter 8 /

Perceptions of Design and Social Innovation

Design and social innovation is often presented, both by academics and practitioners, as an approach which can address a variety of complex issues (see section 2.2.1). However, many of its supposed strengths have been challenged in the on-going discourse of this literature, questioning its effectiveness (see section 2.2.1.3). Furthermore, the findings from the field study indicate that how design and social innovation is framed does not always coincide with how it is perceived, as different actors appear to have different perceptions on both design and design and social innovation, not all of them positive.

Therefore, this chapter consists of three parts: the first part will contrast how design and social innovation is framed (see section 2.2.1) with how it is actually perceived, supported by examples from the field study. The second part will summarise the experiences from the respondents from the previous section into three main issues. In the last part, four recommendations are proposed that aim to reposition design and social innovation, based on the findings from the previous two sections.

8.1 How design and social innovation is perceived

Most accounts in academic discourse are concerned with either the framing of design in social innovation practice or the framing of design and social innovation as an academic discipline. However, surprisingly little is known on how design and design and social innovation are viewed by those outside of the academic field, even though Margolin & Margolin (2002) have called for designers to start considering how they are being perceived by the public and potential funders.

The shortcomings of a perspective solely focused on framing, without considering the perceptions of the other actors involved, can be illustrated by the case study of Pom Mahakan (see section 5.4), as it is an example of an initiative that adopted a design and social innovation approach, but nonetheless failed. Several workshops and gatherings were organised in which design thinking, co-creation and participatory mapping were applied, resulting in proposals and prototypes that were presented to the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA). In a way, the outcome of these activities could

be framed as a success, since it generated a significant amount of media exposure and awareness among the general public. It involved a significant number of (design) experts whose usage of design methods and organisation of co-creation activities empowered the local community. However, if the story of Pom Mahakan is followed further, it emerges that despite of all the effort and time invested throughout the years by a multitude of stakeholders, the BMA nonetheless razed the entire village to the ground. Despite all the efforts, the team working with the villagers of Pom Mahakan, were ultimately unsuccessful in changing the BMA's perspective, which significantly challenges the argument that design is able to solve even the most complex problems. Furthermore, in this situation, decisions made by designers can have serious consequences. One of the architects who was involved in the co-creation activities summarised this fittingly:

"What I learned from Pom Mahakan is that it's so real. [...] I normally don't work with communities in a crisis. [...] It's dangerous, you know. It's not a game. As an academic, you don't lose anything, but others are put at risk by what you're doing, [by] what you're saying. It's a lot of pressure, so normally I don't try to use any crisis as a playground for academics."

The following sections will discuss perspectives on both design and design and social innovation from different actors that were shared by respondents.

8.1.1 The 'non-design' practitioner's perception of design social innovation

Despite the fact that design and social innovation propagates that design is for everyone, most accounts still begin from a design perspective, with many of the case studies either initiated by designers or by organisations with design affiliations, such as universities. As noted by Kimbell (2011), designers are usually assumed to be the main agents in a design thinking approach and the same could be said for design and social innovation. However, this does not need to be the case: three of the interviewees were not trained as designers, but were nevertheless responsible for introducing or managing design in their initiative or organisation.

Coming from a pluralistic background which includes investment banking and non-profit organisations, the founder of Earth Heir indicated that she was struggling to

take her company to a higher level and believes the design would be the key to achieve this:

“I really really think that design is a catalyst. Otherwise, how do you raise the value of a product? It is by design. It's design that's going to give you aesthetics value and quality. [...] If you have a really great product, it's well-designed, looks beautiful, functions well, they don't even care whether it's machine or handmade, they'll be happy to buy it. To get to that level, the steps that you need to take are definitely on design.”

She added that design also can serve as a way to differentiate the brand from the increasing competition that the company is facing, stating that:

“From the beginning I tried to focus on design, but it was just small things like changing the colour scheme or the patterns a little bit. But what happened after four years is that we're no longer the only group that's doing this. [...] What's the difference between this Earth Heir bag and this bag which costs only 1/3 the amount? People can't tell the difference. [...] We're going to lose out in our market share, people are not going to bother buying our products. That's the real reason we're starting to look at design in a big way now.”

The assistant programme manager from the Goodseed initiative, who has a background in psychology and social services, is in charge of coordinating the programme, including the trainers who teach design to the students participating in the programme. When asked about his opinion of the concept of design thinking and whether his background in social science was beneficial, he replied that:

“[...] by the time I entered the program I heard about design thinking. I would say that I was familiar with the concept, because it was similar to what I've learned in social science and counselling – the person-centred approach. [...] So, it wasn't something new to me. Maybe some terms are new, but the ideology behind it is similar. [...] If you employ the design thinking approach, it can be an entirely business thing. But when we apply design thinking in a social setting, we have to

have a social mind. With my social science background [and] with the design thinking approach and methodology... it's complementary, I think."

The entrepreneur who played a pivotal role in the negotiations with the villagers of Pom Mahakan and the local government was originally trained as an engineer. Regarding his motivation to introduce a design/co-creation approach to the community of Pom Mahakan, he mentioned:

Because I know what we miss, the local capabilities. [...] Although I wanted to bring in everyone, I needed to prioritise the ones who can help the community first. [...] After you select the right people, let them do it, don't intervene, go with the flow and let them talk, spend time and there's going to be some outcome... [...] The result is very open, we don't have anything in mind... [...] We accept everything, almost everything. We need new ideas.

The notion that designers are no longer the sole owners of the creative process has been discussed extensively (Kimbell, 2011; Manzini, 2015; Cairns, 2017). However, accounts of the role 'non-design' practitioners in the design and social innovation process is usually limited to their participation in co-creation activities or them having to 'learn' design thinking. The examples show that this is not necessarily the case as there are numerous other ways in which practitioners perceive and employ design in their initiatives, sometimes on a meta-level.

Earth Heir's activities with Malaysian artisans could be characterised as social innovation. However, there is no design thinking approach involved and co-creation is limited to the addition of certain design features to the artisans' products by the Earth Heir team. In this context, design is mainly viewed as a way to differentiate the company from its competitors. Goodseed's assistant programme manager is responsible for coordinating the programme, including its design aspects. Although he was not officially trained in design thinking, he perceives it to be similar to the approach he was taught as a social scientist. The design thinking approach appears to be less unique than is propagated in the discourse, which was also noted by Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla & Çetinkaya (2013). The entrepreneur who brought together various external professionals to aid the villages of Pom Mahakan did not directly

engage in any design activities himself, but utilised his knowledge and network to bring in the right people to move the initiative forward.

These accounts demonstrate that practitioners who do not have a design background can assume other roles in initiatives, rather than be limited to being workshop participants or ‘students’ of design methods. Instead, their contribution is significantly more substantial, varied and diverse than previously described.

8.1.2 The government’s perception of design and social innovation

The (local) government and its policies towards social innovation can be an important, in some cases essential, factor in the success or failure of an initiative. This section will feature respondents from Goodseed, Co-create Charoenkrung and Lorong Bandar 13, projects that were initiated by the respective governments of Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia, as well as practitioners sharing their experiences interacting with the (local) authorities. Goodseed’s assistant programme manager elaborated on the reason why design was included in the programme, explaining that:

“Back in the day, JC.DISI, the Jockey Club Design Institute for Social Innovation, co-developed the Goodseed program with [the Institute for Entrepreneurship]. [...] JC.DISI advocated design thinking, they used this as a tool to drive different projects. They thought it was a good tool and with the experience of the Institute they combined these two to drive social innovation and entrepreneurship development. [...] Somehow the design part and the technology part were injected in the program in the very beginning. Every time we do a capacity building program, like the training, we will stimulate the participants to use this as a tool to generate ideas.”

Even though TCDC is a government organisation itself, several respondents experienced considerable difficulty when dealing with other government bodies when pushing their agenda of urban renewal. The policy manager characterised her relationship with other government departments during the Co-create Charoenkrung project as follows:

“We have to connect with local authorities. This is a pain, sorry. This is a pain for me. We had to connect with the district authority, with the police, my gosh... the

pain. [...] I had to present to them many, many times. In my case, the gatekeepers were property owners and the authorities. They don't have a clue of what we're doing, because the idea [of a creative district] is new. [...] We went to the district authorities every month to give them an update. Every time we went to see them it was as if they've never heard anything before. At the last meeting, I asked them permission to put up the signage. They said that they were not authorised to set up any signs. And I said "What? You've been listening to us for at least six months, you attended our workshops, everything". They just don't want to do more work."

This sentiment is echoed by the design manager of Co-create Charoenkrung, who commented on her dealings with the local government:

"In Thailand the government doesn't want to work. If you're doing something good, they think you want them to work more. The perception is like that. For example, if we want to make something happen, they will not like it, because it adds more work for them. But at the end of the day, when it's successful, they want to take the credit. They don't want to participate or be involved, but they want to take the credit. [...] I think they probably have no idea. They don't understand how they'll benefit from this, they don't understand what participatory design is about, they don't understand the outcome."

In Malaysia, one of the partners of POW Ideas found the local council difficult to work with during the Green Pocket Park project, reiterating other respondents' experiences:

"Their requirements are quite difficult to meet. You have fire regulations, you have council regulations, setbacks. That limits the usage of the spaces quite dramatically. They're not the most supportive of these sorts of things. For them, if you don't change that's better, just keep it as it is. Why should I change it? Because changing is more work for them."

The project manager who is currently in charge of continuing the projects that have been prototyped during Co-create Charoenkrung makes a similar point:

“I think the challenge is dealing with the municipality, like Bang Rak district or BMA. It has a policy of development. Bangkok is huge and this is just one area, if we make Charoenkrung a green district, what benefit will there be for them to give us the permission to do what we propose? It's not very easy.”

Think City, also a government organisation, has a milder opinion of the local council in Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) as one of the architects remarks:

“They've been really supportive. Even though there were hurdles in their own system in order to help us, support for budget, regulations, approvals and permits were in their own limited system, but they tried hard to work around it so they could help us. [...] they have a hard time to allocate a budget for doing the whole laneway project. I just met the guy from DBKL and he is improvising the contract now with the contractor so that it's easier to do this kind of job. So, they are improving their system and their work so it's a lot easier afterwards.”

In addition, the project manager highlighted the exemplary function of the area, noting that:

“[...] the ministry of Digital Economy would also like to develop the area to be centre of innovation and do a sandbox area that has to deal with law and restrictions in which anything can be prototyped that cannot be done outside. [...] Right now, we only try to do activities or prototyping to show them that this can really benefit the community, the locals and I think if there's enough activities it will be enough to convince them that they should do something.”

The director of Play Depot noted the importance of tangible results to inform future policy stating:

“This is also something that we hope to achieve through the project as well, to give the message to the government back and tell them 'See, these kinds of projects really work in the community and it can also create impact and change in the community'. When they can see the figures, the attendance, the feedback

from the community, when they see the media coverage, check our website and Facebook. This is the proof of it and it can change the policy in the long term.”

In a similar fashion, Think City used their project as a pilot study to show to the local municipality the possibilities of design and social innovation and formulate the relevant regulations together, with one of the team members commenting that:

“[...] there were limitations, but the local council has been really supportive, even though there were some hurdles in their own system. [...] They didn't have anything related to the laneway yet [...] This was Think City and DBKL together testing out what is the best intervention in the laneway. So that's why we did Lorong Bandar 13 as a test to see whether this type of intervention works or not. Only then we go towards a permanent upgrade together with the proper law or regulation with it.”

POW Ideas also mentioned the Kuala Lumpur's city council's need for tangible results:

“The council doesn't come from a design background. When you talk to them about design, they don't understand the value unless you can prove it to them. The only way to show them what value this has for the city is by doing it and then showing them, 'Hey, look what we've done. Look at the great impact' and then they'll go like 'Oh, I see it now'.”

In Hong Kong, the executive director of Play Depot tried to influence the perception of the local government by presenting his initiative as a best practice example:

“This is also something that we hope to achieve through the project as well, to give the message to the government back and tell them 'See, these kinds of projects really work in the community and it can also create impact and change in the community'. When they can see the figures, the attendance, the feedback from the community, when they see the media coverage, check our website and Facebook. This is the proof and it can change the policy in the long term. [...] If we do it right, we can demonstrate a good example for them.”

However, multiple respondents have also pointed out that the government often pursues its own interests. Whether or not it is in favour of social innovation depends on the impact that the initiative will generate. One of the interviewees involved in the Fine Dying project stated that:

“Government policies need to run for many years, so they’re hard to change. So, they have their own interests, they have their own agenda of their policies. There’s also funding associations such as the Jockey Club who like to see results. If they cannot get a result, they can also not get any funding as well. So, every project needs to have a great result. <laughs>. Yes, but if you have a small idea you will not pass.”

The initiator of the Bangkok Chinatown project observed that:

“[The government] have their vision, they have their projects in their mind. [...] Maybe [Bangkok Chinatown] is not their top priority, but they still listen to us. They have their own interests. They set up the priorities for their work from the start. If you want to be one of their top priorities, your project has to have impact, really high impact, on a national scale. But this project is not high impact, but it has impact in another way, in how we can manage the city.”

On the same note, the design manager of the neighbouring Co-create Charoenkrung initiative elaborated on why she thinks that the opening of the Chao Phraya riverfront, next to the new TCDC building is unlikely:

“The riverfront is never gonna happen, I think. One of the problems is that Co-create Charoenkrung is not a talk of the town project. If it was, maybe.”

The team from CROSSs appreciates the involvement of the local city council during one of their projects, but had expected more in terms of financial support, stating:

“The local government is also in one of the teams. To be honest, they should have spent [money] to do good for their own city, but they don’t. They give permission, but I think that’s too easy. We haven’t tried to ask them directly. [...]”

They are happy about [the project] and they provide support for transportation, moving big things, [...] but they could have supported it with funding. If they have the vision and if they played a good political role, they would know that supporting this, making the change visible, would be good for them. I think the community should do it and not us.”

The design manager from Co-create Charoenkrung also reported the lack of support from the government to be a limitation during the project, but also acknowledged that it is not always possible for them to help:

“Even though there's some people in the government that are really into the project, they can't do much. They can only do things within their authority and their authority is sometimes really small. They can give you contacts, they can come to the sessions every time, they'll do promotion. Things like that they can do, but when it comes to big scale things, like setting up signage or making sure a road will be clear on a certain day, it's difficult. I think in Thailand it's difficult [...] There are so many people you have to talk to if you just want to put a sign on the pavement. We are making this so complicated.”

The role of the government in design and social innovation can be described as substantial as well as complex. Government bodies that are facilitating and implementing design and social innovation projects, such as Goodseed, TCDC and Think City, have been launched with design embedded in their organisations and therefore, perhaps unsurprisingly, employ design thinking and/or co-creation approaches to social innovation. Respondents from both within and outside of the public sector have encountered difficulties in terms of aligning mutual interests, with either the government or individual civil servants often pursuing their own agendas. In addition, tangible results and high impact projects are underlined as factors contributing to achieving priority and visibility with the government.

8.1.3 The (larger) community's perception of design and social innovation

Apart from reports in the media and descriptions from universities or institutions, the perception of local communities or the general public on design and social innovation is largely unknown, as it is rarely reported in academic literature. One of the few

exceptions was noted by Hillgren et al. (2011), who received a negative response to their initiative from local trade unions and experienced difficulties with power relations within the participants' families. The possibility that communities' perception of design and design and social innovation might be quite different than the academic or practitioner point of view became evident during the field study.

Several respondents mentioned the image problem that the design profession has in their respective countries. The design manager of the Co-create Charoenkrung project, who is also a design lecturer, elaborated on the perception that the general public has in Thailand about design:

"I will also teach high school kids and make sure that if they want to be a designer, they will have a set of thinking that is important for a designer to have. Not just styling – what you're doing is changing the quality of life of the people. [...] you have to say this to little kids, so that they understand their role as a designer. Oh, design in Thailand [...] if you say 'I'm a designer' they'll think that you design clothes, like a fashion designer. They don't understand other types of design."

However, she adds that this view of design might also be due to the lack of effort by the local designers themselves:

"I think the role of design is to guide society, but we don't do that. Maybe because of that, they think we just do this styling thing, or fashion, or copy things. So, we didn't do our job well. That's why we're undervalued."

The designers at The Rambutan are also critical of the state of affairs regarding Thai design, which they attribute to the local cultural practices:

"So, if we look at European design, we see that it's related to their history and their living conditions. Here, people just take things [from abroad]. So, we're still wondering: 'What is Thai design?' When you say that you want to have a Thai design, then you just put some traditional element in your design. A Thai aspect can be reflected through materials or a way of thinking, it can be anything, but for them it's just a visual element to put in the design. Just aesthetics, nothing

deeper. That's why the biggest problem is the attitude. We just superficially adapt, not anything deeper. Maybe not everywhere, but in some situations it happens. It's not just design, it happens with everything."

A designer who was involved in the Pom Mahakan community expressed the same feeling when discussing local start-up companies and social innovation:

"These days start-ups adopt ideas from the west and try to localise it. But I don't see really great ideas yet in terms of creative solutions. [...] it's not just for social, but in general. Mostly they just adapt from the west – our culture is very adaptable. Anything that we believe is good, we adapt it, copy it, make money and that's it. And we think it's good. But in the long term I don't think it's sustainable."

In addition to their social graphic design activities, The Rambutan team also organises the annual Bangkok Art Book Fair. The fact that graphic designers, whose skills should only be limited to making layouts, could actually organise a book fair, was met with disbelief by the media. One of the members recounted that:

"[...] we were interviewed by a magazine and they asked us 'You're graphic designers, how can you initiate a book fair? Where did the content come from? When you make a book, who did the content for you?'. They still don't understand that we can manage [to do this ourselves]."

The founder of SI.DLab pointed out that in Hong Kong, the design profession is not held in high regard:

"There were so many media people wondering why people who have really good academic results want to be a doctor, but no one wants to be a creative, philosopher or doing architecture. [...] There's a lot of young people being pushed down not to be a designer or creative writer. I think being an architect is okay, but still there is so much social status attached to the professions."

In addition to reporting a similar limited perception of design by the general public, she added that designers often do not have a good reputation and design itself is perceived to be something expensive:

"[...] when they first meet us, they think that we're all designers. They think that we're going to rip them off and make the project very expensive. Or bossing them around what they need to do. That actually shows what the public thinks of designers in Hong Kong, how the design community has been. I don't think they intend to do that, but I think in general people in Hong Kong have this perception of designers. [...] they always think that we're going to make a really pretty poster for them <laughs>. And then they'll say that they cannot afford you. Then you can see how much they know about the design world. It takes time to get them to really understand. That's also why we're so keen on involving them, to really get them to see what we're doing and how we're doing it."

The team in charge of the Co-Create Charoenkrung initiative also observed a discrepancy in the team's intentions and how it is perceived by the community. The design manager remarked when asked about restrictions or limitations during the process:

"One problem that we're facing is with the adaptation of the shop-houses. I think the designs are too cool. Somehow it doesn't communicate to the community and they feel that they're not a part of this. I think that's our weakest point"

The policy manager, who was interviewed on a separate occasion, reiterated this idea when talking about the motivation of TCDC's relocation from Emporium Mall to the Charoenkrung neighbourhood:

"[TCDC's space in Emporium mall] is too creative, design, too nice, too difficult for [normal people] to understand, not connected to their daily lives. [...] one of the downsides of a nicely designed [space] like this is that it keeps some people away from our centre. They often think that it's for designers, or you have to be cool and hip to come to this place. You have to understand that Emporium has a high image, that's kind of a negative image for [the past] ten years, that design is

something like high-value, untouchable. We try to change our perspective and attitude.”

The perception of design being out of touch with ordinary people in Thailand also extends to graphic design, as illustrated by the members of The Rambutan initiative:

“Here, people still perceive graphic design as something luxurious. Graphic design is expensive in people's perception, something really far from their daily life. So, we think if graphic design wants to create a role for itself in Thailand, we need to engage more with society than normal, then everyone can relate to design.”

Aside from the community's ambivalent view on design, the social aspect of design and social innovation can also be undervalued. CROSSs reported difficulties demonstrating the value of their work to the community, as one of the team members noted:

“We love this work and we see that it has value. We want to try to shift it to do this professionally, because people always see this as volunteer work. If we are able, we would like to shift it so we can make it sustainable working on these kinds of projects. We know for the next half year what projects are waiting for us, but not in the long-term.”

Similar to the experiences of Amaral et al. (2014), who found that farmers appreciated the designed products more if they had to pay for them, the architects at DOMAT also observed that paying for a service effects the perceived value:

“If there's a client who's paying for a service then they'll lay value on the service more. Say, we have a separate funding to sustain our work we have to take more effort in our service to the client. We always felt that when a client is paying directly, they have more attachment to the service. That's interesting.”

Even though Form Society is not receiving funding of any kind, they do take into account how it would affect the public's perception, as one of the team members noted:

“Funders will tell you that you can't charge people, but of course the funder has paid for me [the organisation] already. But the public has to know that this comes with a price. They have to respect the craftsmen and the people who create this kind of project.”

Aside from a critical – or in some instances even negative – image of design and designers by the general public, design and social innovation initiatives can experience reluctance or outright resistance from the local community that it is trying to help. The Think City team recalled the community in Penang resisting to the projects that they were proposing in the city:

“People always are going to have issues, especially when it comes to doing something that's in the public realm that's shared by everyone. [...] Especially in Penang, people are very proud of their cultural heritage, they have a sense of ownership of the place, so they have a lot to say [about] what you do to their city in any kind of development.”

Likewise, in Kuala Lumpur, during the implementation of the Lorong Bandar 13 project, Think City faced resistance from local residents and had to adopt a nuanced approach:

“Some of [the residents] have been monopolising the laneway as their parking spaces. Those are the people who definitely resist. But then again, we need to let them know that these are public spaces. They need to understand that. This whole process is also to understand how they will react if we do this kind of intervention. They know it's not their place, but since no one claims the area they just use it. That's where these interventions are supposed to shape the behaviour and gain feedback at the same time. It's not so much on changing people's mentality, but also trying to allow people to look at the space differently and it can be used, I guess.”

The team from the University of Malaya have had negative experiences when interacting with the local villagers while setting up the Young Rangers environmental club in Mukim Pasangan community. One of the research officers recalls:

"[...] the villagers spread rumours that I came to take the kids to sell their organs, something like that. The numbers of kids [that participated in the programme] became less. That's common in Malaysia, they really don't trust people, they just spread rumours, [but] they don't want to talk to me."

The project leader shared her experiences with the same community, elaborating on their unwilling involvement in village politics:

"[...] In the beginning there's no problem, but after a while people are asking 'Why are they doing this?'. That is the difficult part. The village politics are divided between the opposition and the existing government and [we get] things like: 'Why are you focusing so much on this guy and not on the other group?' or 'There's already another group doing this initiative, why don't you support them?'. [...] You need to know the pulse of the community in order to keep the innovation running. But that is a bit less structured. You can do policies, you can create new programmes, but in a community it's a bit different. We try to go with the flow."

Resistance from, in particular, old communities appears to be more implicit and tends to take the shape of conservatism. The creation of the pocket park at the ground of the former APW printing factory by POW Ideas was not immediately met with enthusiasm, as one of the partners recalls:

"Public response initially was not the best, I would say. Bangsar is an old community, they've been here for 100 years. If any form of change happens, they freak out, similar to the council. They freak out quite easily. Initially they were like 'Oh, this is going to take up too much of my space in my housing area down the road'. 'We don't really support these kinds of things, why can't you just leave the factory a factory?'. But then after you build it, they're like 'Oh my gosh, I love this place'. I guess when you're working with younger people it's easier. Local communities are a bit more stuck in their ways until you prove it to them, that's the way they roll. The younger ones are more like 'Let's try, no harm in trying'."

Ironically, the conservative attitude of the local residents has been beneficial for the Bangkok Chinatown initiative, as their aim is to preserve the neighbourhood's traditional character. The initiator commented:

"That's the good thing about the Chinese people in Thailand, they are so conservative <laughs>. They don't want to change anything. That's why we started to realise that we needed to tackle all these issues."

Design and social innovation initiatives can also be met with indifference. The policy manager of Co-create Charoenkrung expressed her frustration regarding the unwillingness of some of the communities in the neighbourhood to participate in the co-creation process:

"One sad thing, we put up some posters 'Are you an insider or an outsider?' [of the neighbourhood] The number of insiders was less than outsiders. The people in the area have nothing to do with this, they're not interested in these kinds of initiatives. But tourists, outsiders, creatives and designers, they're so into these kinds of activities. [...] Communities, like the muslim and other local communities, I think the activities and planning that we are doing are not connected to their everyday life. Because they're workers, nothing benefits them."

Co-create Charoenkrung's design manager noticed the apprehensive attitude of the local communities and discussed the issues surrounding ensuring citizen's participation in the project:

"[...] entrepreneurs, owners of hotels and galleries, they don't mind. But for the [local] people, they're a bit more sceptical [about] what the change could do, what's going to happen. We paid them 500 baht to participate in the workshops, that was a big controversy. They have to spend at least 2 or 3 hours with us, I think that's quite a lot. I never worked with social projects before and I was thinking 'Why are we paying them? We're just accumulating bad habits for them'. But then this professor that I worked with said: 'They're working people, you know. If they sacrifice their time, they can't work. So, you have to pay them'. We

had to rent a space to do the workshops and it's expensive. If nobody would come, the whole thing would collapse.”

Participation in the co-creation activities at Pom Mahakan village was also not a given. One of the designers who worked with the local community commented:

“I know it's hard, working with the community is very hard. The last time they did the workshop they asked the muslim people to come, but only one showed up. Normally, the community will not participate in any event unless they get money as an incentive. Every time they'll give them 100 baht, but this time they didn't, so only one came.”

Fortunately, not all accounts of community participation in design and social innovation have been negative. The initiator of the Bangkok Chinatown project explains how they changed the perception of the residents in the Talat Noi neighbourhood and managed to create enthusiasm for the initiative's activities:

“We gained a good reputation within a community. What was a success in the second year was that we found a group of active citizens in Talat Noi that had a vision, a dream to push the community to the future in many aspects, like economic, physical... We collected [the citizens] from the activities. Because when people come and talk to us, [it] means that they have an intention or interest in a certain issue. So, we try to grab those people. [...] The community started to get interested in this topic, because they saw the opportunities from the tourists that came to Talat Noi. [The residents] experienced that sometimes when tourists come here, they didn't get much [information] about the place because they didn't have a guide. They just come around, visit, take photos and go back. [The residents] want to communicate [with the tourists].”

One of the partners of Form Society in Hong Kong, also emphasised the importance of building good relationships with the community, giving the example of a pop-up ‘mobile bike market’ that she organises occasionally at various locations:

“That's why every time I design the location of the [bike] market, I will go to that area and talk to the shop owners [...] I will tell them that I'm doing the event, maybe they can join and we will clean it up and make friendship with them. [We] talk to them, [to] know their concerns about the event. [...] So, you have to talk to them and have a connection with them, or maybe negotiate with them. Instead of just doing a pop-up and [then] they'll call the police. So, we have to talk to them, not anonymously, to tell them that we're going to do something like this: 'If you feel interested, you can join us and play together.' Fun is a main method to join people together.”

As with the government, practitioners have stressed the significance of producing tangible results when working with communities. The founder of Bangkok Chinatown stated:

We would like to have an end-product [...] we need the real thing that motivates the community. We don't want to waste the power of the community. [...] What's tough is that if you've worked for so long and you don't have a successful project that could be a case or showcase, people don't want to continue. So, we need to make a small or big success, so we need to push anyway to make it happen. [...]

Co-create Charoenkrung's design manager underlined the value of the real scale prototypes that were commissioned for the project:

“It's always like this in the Thai context, when you do an urban planning project, it ends up like a beautiful perspective and people will say 'I like it, I like it' and everybody likes it. But it never changes from the design on paper into tangible stuff, because of the policy thing. If you want to change the urban, you have to do a lot of research, you have to gather a lot of money, maybe 100 million baht to do a bridge. When nobody invests, it just stays on paper. For us, when we scale down to 1:1 prototyping, it kind of shifts the way the people think about urban design in Thailand. [...] It's very risky if you involve a lot of people and there's no outcome. But with Co-create Charoenkrung you can see this is the change that happened within a year, this is an outcome, so they can do it too.”

The architects from Think City had similar experiences with the community when executing the Lorong Bandar 13 project:

“[The community] needs to see it first. Only then they'll know what they're getting. People won't see things on paper as much as we as designers can see... or how a plan can translate into 3-D. How it looks like, how it feels like, what is a ten-metre-wide compared to three-metre-wide space. We as designers can feel it, but the community can't.”

The media plays a special role in the design and social innovation process, as they are in the position to influence public perception and expectations in relation to the initiative. The executive director of Play Depot underlined the significance of clear communication:

“We have to be very careful when we speak to the media because we have to deliver the right message. [Play Depot] is not about a nice event in the weekend for parents and kids, but some media do take this message very easily and then it loses the message behind that. When some of the audience saw this coverage and come to our events, they have very different expectations. We can actually differentiate what kind of message they have got from which coverage or report. When we talk to them, we somehow can tell their intentions and expectations when they come over. I think that's very interesting as well, whether [the media] can get the message right is something we have learned from this.”

One of the founders of the architectural agency DOMAT also has his reservations about the media to some extent, noting that:

“Because there's a lot of interest in the home medication project a lot of media will contact us. [...] To some extent there's a curiosity about the families living in subdivided homes. You sometimes kind of get the impression that people just want to... it's kind of like tourism. Like the curiosity of visiting their houses. Sometimes people have approached us and it's hard to gauge their intentions of what their interest in the project is.”

The assumption that design is inherently good is not always shared by the general public. Particularly in Hong Kong and Thailand, it is viewed in a relatively narrow and superficial way. Design can be perceived as something expensive, luxurious and out of reach for ordinary citizens. Designers are reported to have a low social status and are undervalued or regarded with suspicion. Initiatives in all three cities have experienced different types resistance from local communities when trying to implement design and social innovation projects, ranging from residents refusing to participate or unwilling to accept change, to villagers spreading malicious rumours about the practitioners working on the project. In some cases, community participation had to be encouraged by financial compensation, as residents regarded it as having to sacrifice time that they could have spent earning money.

Communication was reported to play an important role in the perception of the initiative by community and the outside world. Explaining why, how and what the initiative was doing what it does, helped practitioners gain the trust, support and enthusiasm of local residents. Control over communication channels was noted by several respondents, in particular in relation to the role of the media in influencing public opinion. Caution was advised regarding the message that is communicated, as in some cases it is not easy to judge the media's underlying motivations.

Again, the production of tangible results was imperative: it inspired and rallied communities behind the initiative and enabled the community to visualise the proposed changes to their neighbourhood. Practitioners warned against not producing any outcome after the social innovation process, as this would be detrimental for the motivation of the participating citizens.

8.1.4 The design industry's perception of design and social innovation

Design that deviates from 'traditional' commercial design is not always welcomed by 'traditional' (commercial) designers. In Hong Kong and Bangkok, practitioners have experienced resistance from the established design industry. The founder of SI.DLab is critical about the design industry in Hong Kong:

"I think the biggest problem for me in Hong Kong is the resistance of the design world. Instead of supporting us, they are challenging what we do. They don't think what we do is design. [...] If I go back to England or Scandinavia, it's very different – I don't need to do it from scratch. But at the same time here we are

given the opportunity to really do something quite informative. [...] But the most difficult thing is the design community in Hong Kong. That's why we're worried [...] that we don't know who to work with next time. There's not many people... designers in Hong Kong who are willing to work with us and understand what we are doing or open-minded enough to get into new areas of design."

The team members of The Rambutan encountered the effects of the local design industry's negative attitude towards design and social innovation during the workshops they organise for design students:

"Some of the students who participated in the workshops... after they've joined, they feel like they've broadened their vision, see the power [of graphic design] [...] some of them continue their graduation project [...] focusing more on the social. After the workshop [students] asked us, 'Can we do this kind of stuff as well? Because our teacher in university will not allow us to do things like this'. We were quite surprised, I said to them: 'Why not? Just try'. [...] It really depends on their teacher. [The students] have their own ideas, but if their teachers don't let them do it, they can't do it. That's the problem. Because the graphic design teachers are mostly from the advertising field, not really graphic design, a different language. [...] That's why they don't see the possibilities of graphic design for the social."

Elaborating on what established designers think design and social innovation practice, they mention:

"But it's also difficult sometimes. Their voice is louder, when they say something to the public, it shapes public perception. The public totally believes them because their voice is bigger. [...] Maybe because they teach in the university. When you become a professor, you become more reliable to the public. People will call you 'master'. So, when you say anything to local people who don't know design they'll believe [the professor]. That's hierarchy as well, because they are professors. Even clients will call you 'master'. [The public] doesn't know about the quality of the work, they only know the name, so it depends who's speaking. Everything is linked with education, that's why we choose to fix this problem first."

The local design industries in Hong Kong and Bangkok do not seem to support design and social innovation initiatives. Practitioners report to be challenged or opposed by established designers, whose status and influence promulgate a narrowly defined version of design, which does not include initiatives that deal with the social.

8.2 Design and social innovation's image problem

Drawing upon the findings from the field study, the previous section highlighted the discrepancy that exists between the framing of design and design and social innovation in academic discourse and its actual perception by various groups of stakeholders, the broader community and society. The image that is currently presented of design and social innovation is oftentimes design-centric and uncritical, reiterating its perceived strengths while neglecting potential weaknesses and shortcomings. The fixation on design thinking and co-creation does not do justice to the numerous ways in which design and social innovation is practised in the field and ignores the diverse roles that practitioners with a non-design background play in the process. The inclusion of design in the social innovation process is rarely questioned, whereas evidence that design methods are effective is scant. Furthermore, the findings point to three main issues: the negative perception of design(ers), resistance to design and social innovation initiatives and the role of power relations and politics.

8.2.1 The negative perception of design(ers)

In all three cities, the practitioners' experiences show that both design and design and social innovation were not always regarded in a positive light. There is a lack of knowledge of what designers actually do and preconceptions about design and designers are still commonly encountered by practitioners. In addition, the understanding of design and design and social innovation can be quite narrow, even among designers themselves.

The findings echo one of the few studies conducted on the public perception of designers. In the first large-scale study of its kind, Smith & Whitfield (2005) found that the general public in Australia was unfamiliar with most design occupations, except that of 'interior designer'. Furthermore, the public had a tendency to perceive most types of designer as 'semi-professionals' or 'skilled-workers', with only 'graphic designer' and 'industrial designer' largely perceived as 'professionals'. The authors note that the

differences found between the design professions in terms of familiarity was not based on insight into what designers actually do, but on the public's 'impression' of what they do. A more recent study by Kaygan (2017) conducted in Turkey, shows that little has changed. Industrial designers participating in her study reported that their work was being perceived as 'arty' by non-design professionals, who are not aware of and do not recognise the work that designers do. The perception among their non-designer peers, including their superiors, therefore was that designers were mainly "making things good-looking, beautiful and pretty".

The negative perception of design and designers can have significant impact on how design and social innovation initiatives is perceived by the general public, which in turn can influence their willingness to support or participate in them. Interestingly, there is a notable difference between how *design* was perceived and how *designers* were perceived. Particularly in Bangkok, design is seen as something luxurious and out of reach for ordinary Thai people, which can be problematic when trying to involve 'ordinary' citizens who might feel that design is not something that they can identify with. Designers, on the other hand, are seen as relatively low-skilled, passive and only concerned with aesthetics, which is remarkably different to designers' own perception of themselves as being visionaries, strategists and changemakers. Designers practising in the design and social innovation space therefore enter the field double-handicapped: their work domain is seen as something only meant for the elite members of society, whereas they themselves are looked-down upon as professionals.

8.2.2 Resistance to design and social innovation initiatives

In the best case scenario, key players such as the (local) government are supportive of what practitioners are trying to achieve, or in some cases, are the initiators of design and social innovation initiatives. However, practitioners have also reported both passive and active resistance by various parties, including the government, but also the community and the design industry, each of whom can have their own interests.

In some cases, directly or indirectly working for the government can be an advantage, as it allows practitioners to manoeuvre more easily within the government spheres, enabling them to work more effectively. This was, for example, the case with Lorong Bandar 13, where Think City managed to establish a good working relationship with the municipality DBKL, resulting in the exploration of policies that would benefit similar future initiatives. In contrast, negotiating with other government branches can

also be challenging, which was the case with TCDC's Co-create Charoenkrung project. In their dealings with (fellow) civil servants, interviewees noted a general lack of awareness of what design is or can do, an unwillingness to increase workload, a tendency to avoid risk and a general 'what's in it for me?' attitude. Comparable experiences were recounted in all three countries by practitioners who worked with their respective (local) governments.

Similar to government officials, members of the community often do not understand what an initiative is trying to achieve and what the benefit will be for them, resulting in an indifferent stance towards it, at best. In the worst case, residents can object to the proposed interventions, particularly in older conservative neighbourhoods. The resistance by the design community is of a different nature, as they do not acknowledge design and social innovation as a valid design discipline or activity, they refuse to support it.

The findings show that the point made by Kiem (2011), who highlighted design and social innovation's inability to recognise the political dimensions and structures in which an initiative is embedded, is still valid. This includes understanding who/what is responsible for the current status quo as well as who/what has the power to change it. Too often, designers, and other practitioners active in the social innovation space, tend to underestimate the agency of other stakeholders. The findings demonstrate that various stakeholders can exert considerable power over initiatives, even by their non-participation. Again, perception plays a crucial role herein, not only in terms of how design or the designer is perceived by other stakeholders, but also how the initiative is perceived as a whole. The notion put forward by (Akama et al., 2019) that design(ers) in social innovation are never completely neutral, but inherently contain some bias, can also be extended to *the perception* of design(ers) by others. Far from the state of *tabula rasa* that is often suggested in literature, stakeholders and other actors often pursue their own interests and might have preconceptions and biases about design(ers), which can result in unfavourable consequences for the initiative.

8.2.3 The role of power relations and politics

Both within the framing and the perception of design and social innovation, implicit power relations are embedded. By framing the discipline in a certain way, whether consciously or not, a particular image is promoted to participants, stakeholders and the general public. Following the argument of Von Busch & Palmås (2016), instead of

asking the *idealist* question ‘what if?’ questions, they suggest that design and social innovation should be more concerned with asking *realist* questions: ‘who and whom?’ questions, as in: ‘who is being used by whom?’. The authors point out that it is worth questioning whose perspective is dominant in the process, noting that “someone’s utopia is always doomed to be someone else’s dystopia”.

Design and social innovation’s failure to acknowledge the political dimension of social relations therefore makes Kiem (2011) doubt its ability to challenge the existing establishment. He further argues that designers, researchers and all those who are active within the social innovation space have to consider the political agency of their practice. Likewise, a loss of agency by the designer was reported in a collaborative project by Gaudio, Franzato & De Oliveira (2016), where the partner had their own undeclared agenda, manifesting itself through the indirect use of power. Furthermore, the partner experienced difficulty in participating due to their lack of familiarity with the design process. The case demonstrated that although partnerships have the potential to create synergies in skills and resources by sharing agency among collaborators, it can also result in a loss of agency, which in this case was the designer. In other words, the delegation of agency to a partner who knows the local context, has access and a network can be beneficial, but it also entails a delegation of power over the actors, activities, and ultimately, the design process.

The failure of social design to progress from an object-centred approach to a social-centred one is characterised as problematic by Janzer & Weinstein (2014). They argue that object-centred methodologies, such as the human-centred approach favoured in social design (see p.31), are not suitable to achieve social change as the social aspects, such as pervasive power structures, will remain in an immaterial space and will therefore not be addressed.

All of the above arguments are also relevant in the context of this thesis, as it is important to note that even though the usage of the term ‘design and social innovation’ has become increasingly common, it is mainly used in academic circles; most practitioners do not designate their work as such or are unaware of the term. Some do not even consider their work to be ‘design’ at all. Therefore, the labelling of their practice as such also implies a certain appropriation and power relationship. The selection of the case studies for this thesis has involved a process of determining whether or not an initiative ‘fulfils the criteria’ to ‘qualify’ as an example of design and social innovation. It is acknowledged that an element of power is present in several

aspects of this thesis. However, the underlying motivations are to further develop design and social innovation theory and practice, by identifying and legitimising practitioners' work, whose valuable experiences and insights might otherwise be lost.

The significance of power relations was also evident in several of the case studies, occurring between different actors and on different levels. Examples are the influence of social hierarchy (p.178), the attitude of the government towards social innovation (p.192), the ambiguous intentions of the media (p.207) and resistance of the local community (p.197).

In situations outside of academic and institutional contexts, power relations, politics and the individual interests of stakeholders or even actors outside of the direct environment of the initiative, should to be identified as such, their effects recognised, and appropriate strategies incorporated into the approach.

8.3 Repositioning design and social innovation

In the following section, four recommendations are made with the intention to advocate a broader and deeper understanding of design and social innovation practice and are meant to address the issues that were discussed in the previous section. Perception plays a role in all these issues in one way or another, which is also reflected in the recommendations. The first two recommendations suggest shifts in focus for design and social innovation as a practice, which are aimed to alter the perception of other actors. The third and fourth recommendation address design and social innovation's lack of self-awareness and self-reflection, which are more related to the perception of the field itself by both academics and practitioners.

1. Managing communication to shape perceptions and expectations

The ability to manage the communication surrounding their initiatives in an appropriate manner was brought up by several of the interviewees, as it can either support or hinder initiatives' efforts, influencing or sometimes even determining their eventual outcome and impact. For example, by controlling the message conveyed to the media (p.207). Communication is also paramount when interacting with the community. The project leader from the University of Malaya experienced this during the Mukim Pasangan project, underlining the importance of communication in the Heartware approach:

“Another area of Heartware that we're experimenting with is communication [...] that connects to the heart of the people [...] When you talk about sustainability or conservation, there's a lot of scientific information that has to be communicated, so people can understand why the innovation has to take place. But you can't use your scientific cap that you use to talk to fellow scientists in order to change behaviour, or to make people continue to support the innovation. Especially when we talk about village communities.”

Think City actively engages and communicates with local residents in order to clarify their intentions:

“There's a lot of discussion and engagement, just trying to get them to understand what we're doing, that we're not gaining any profit from this, we're doing it for the greater good of the community.”

Co-create Charoenkrung's design manager also emphasised the importance of communication when connecting to stakeholders, such as building owners, to allow a prototyping event to be organised at their premises:

“[...] you have to make sure that people understand what you are doing. [...] I think the understanding of different stakeholders limited us. If they don't understand, they don't agree with us. It takes a lot of time. [...] [The property owners] don't understand, so they don't want to invest in it [...] It's the first time that things like that happen and they don't want to risk their properties.”

Likewise, the policy manager highlighted the importance of communication to manage expectations during the *test day*, Co-create Charoenkrung's final event at the riverfront behind their new building:

“I think communication is the key. You have to clearly communicate what the objectives of the projects are from the start. [...] People have to understand it's a test day, it's prototype testing. So, they understand when they walk into the space that they're part of the play, the testing.”

The architects from CROSSs explained that spreading leaflets to explain what they are doing to the community was important for them during a project where they were designing new accommodation for a slum community who were relocated by the government. In addition to increasing efficiency, it also helped gain support and awareness for their activities:

“There's a hundred something houses, but there's a thousand more, so we need a way to communicate efficiently. We cannot have a meeting every time and start from zero, explaining everything. By having this kind of leaflet, pictures trying to explain the situation, this way we can find the solution together. We give the leaflet to many houses and we find that later it's easier to work with them. [...] If they wouldn't understand the situation and we're the first to come in and say 'There's a problem, you need to change', they'll say 'Why do I need to follow you? You are an outsider, I don't even know you and you tell me I have to change'. They need to start by realising the situation that they're facing.”

In addition, the CROSSs team found that using the existing social hierarchy to their advantage by addressing the head of the community (see also p.178) was beneficial for communicating their intentions:

“We have a project with the market close here. We always try to bring the big guy down to the space of the market and sit down in the circle so people can share. Because if the message goes through many steps, the message changes. [Because when] this guy, before he tells something to that guy, modifies [the message] a bit to make it nicer or something, [then] the message is not 100%. That's when the structure is not beneficial working towards fixing the problem or understanding.”

One of the founders of DOMAT encountered issues when communication between stakeholders in the home modification project was not optimal, leading to ambiguity:

“[...] recently we had a few cases which have not gone so well and we kind of realised that for the family it's very difficult to know with whom to communicate. So, if the family has an issue, then do they communicate with SoCO? Do they

communicate with us? Or even in one case they've been communicating directly with the furniture manufacturer. It's not clear whose role... who's responsible for which part of the implementation process."

Local communities, and in some cases other stakeholders, are usually unaware of the concept of (design and) social innovation. It is therefore the initiative's responsibility to properly communicate their intentions to those who will be most likely impacted by their intervention, who need to understand what is going to happen and why, in order for them to support the initiative. Good communication is also essential to manage expectations and to prevent ambiguity. Moreover, the perception of initiatives can be shaped by other actors who are not directly involved in the process, such as social and traditional media.

2. Working towards the production of tangible results

Producing a tangible outcome of the design and social innovation process was necessary for two stakeholder groups: the government and the community. Several respondents noted that civil servants often need to be shown tangible results to be convinced that a certain approach or intervention has potential before they are willing to support it. In some cases, there also appeared to be a certain element of prestige associated to the cooperation of government officials, as they will prefer to back projects with high impact, particularly if they can be associated with it in a positive way.

For the community, having a tangible outcome is essential for their continued interest in the project. As participating in the initiative's activities can mean a significant time investment for local residents, not seeing their efforts being repaid by some kind of concrete result, can be demotivating. Furthermore, for both civil servants and community members, who often do not have a design background, visualising proposed concepts can prove to be a challenge, particularly in 3D. For example, in the case of Co-Creato Charoenkrung, the 1:1 scale prototypes created by TCDC were particularly useful for convincing both the community and the government, as they made the plans and sketches, which might not have much meaning for non-designers, come to life and materialise in a real world setting.

The preference for tangible results and implementations, rather than reports and presentations was also found in a study by Wang, Bryan-Kinns & Ji (2016) who co-created together with the rural Kam community in China. The researchers note that co-

creation generally tends to focus on the act of creating rather than the production of tangible outcomes. However, in their experience local people tended to grow tired by the research process, entailing multiple rounds of interviews, observations and evaluations, if this did not lead to results that are clear and concrete.

The call by Björgvinsson et al., (2012) for designers, to shift from designing things (objects) in favour of designing Things (socio-material assemblies), should therefore also include things (objects) as one of their required outcomes, looping back to its origins, in a way. In several of the contexts studied in this research, the creation of Things as agonistic public platforms for actors to engage with one another, is too fragile to maintain without an outcome in the shape of something tangible.

3. Acknowledging the broad diversity of design and social innovation practices

The comments from the three interviewees who do not have a design background, but are nonetheless actively incorporating design in one way or another in their work (see section 8.1.1), have illustrated that there are many more ways that design and social innovation is practised that deviate from the prescribed models of teaching design thinking and co-creating with non-design-trained stakeholders.

In the contexts of Earth Heir, Pom Mahakan and Goodseed, design (in general, not only design thinking) is perceived more as an organisational resource, rather than a cognitive style, the latter being the most common interpretation in design and social innovation. The founder of Earth Heir believes that design could be used to give her an extra edge over her competitors. The entrepreneur who supports Pom Mahakan decided to introduce designers and architects to the villagers, because he believed that is what was needed to realise their vision of a living museum. The Goodseed initiative stands somewhere in the middle; the assistant programme manager uses design as an organisational resource, whereas design thinking is taught as a cognitive style to its participants. Design and social innovation appears to utilise all three approaches to design thinking. Furthermore, all three practitioners have the decision power over whether and/or how design is utilised in the process, reiterating the notion that designers are not necessarily the ones in charge of the design and social innovation process.

Even in the case that design practitioners are in the lead, this does not mean that the emphasis is on design per se. An example is given by one of the architects from

CROSSs when asked what the proportion of design vs non-design activities their agency engages in on average:

“Around 50-50 to 70-30. 70 of not doing traditional design. We would be happy to do more design, but because of the time and budget constraints... we don't want to do a project quickly by delivering the design and neglecting the social part [...]”

How could design and social innovation be studied in a meaningful way, then, which can take into account its large variety of manifestations? An approach based on the practice-based orientation suggested by Kimbell (2012), might be a step into the right direction. In this orientation, design is perceived as a situated local accomplishment, which eliminates dualisms between subject/object, nature/culture and body/mind. Here, practices are interpreted as configurations of minds, bodies, objects, discourses, knowledges, structures, processes and agency, which can be routinised and institutionalised. It eliminates the need to focus on design(erly) thinking, thereby decentring the designer as the main agent of design activity. By adopting Activity Theory as a method for data collection, which centres on generated activities and their context instead of the people involved, this study has attempted to achieve the same goal.

4. Understanding the limitations of a design approach

The unfortunate demise of the Pom Mahakan community (see section 8.1) has demonstrated that the efforts of design and social innovation can be ultimately thwarted by a city council with their own, conflicting vision of the area. One of the architects who worked with the villagers of Pom Mahakan is also a member of ASA, the Association of Siamese Architects, an organisation which is held in high regard. She noted the importance of understanding your position in the whole and maintaining a neutral stance when representing the association, stating:

“We should not take sides with anyone. We must tell the facts. We can only say 'BMA, please don't demolish these buildings, because it's the last community behind the city wall. You will lose an asset'. [...] the people, we can't help that much. It should be other organisations who do that, like human rights. [...] because I work under the name of ASA, sympathy has a limit. Even if I care

about the people, I try to find the truth through our participation. [...] During the meeting with the people and the BMA, the data is sometimes true, sometimes not. It's biased. I try to understand the situation and understand both sides, even if we don't succeed in keeping the people in their own houses. I think we have a positive perception from the BMA because they trust ASA. Because we aim not to take the side of the people. [...] ASA might be the key actor, because we've been in between the BMA and the people for a long time. If the human rights organisations come, they'll [side] with the people against the BMA. We want to stand in the middle and discuss what [the village] should be.

Thorpe & Gamman (2011) underline that 'wicked' design challenges often involve co-design processes with diverse actors who have their own respective agendas. As these practices consist of the integration of individual and collective agencies of these actors, both the processes and products of (co)design can inevitably be subject to compromise. The authors emphasise that they do not perceive this as a weakness of co-design in design and social innovation, but a condition. Consequently, instead of being *responsible* for realising social objectives through design, they can only be *responsive*, which they perceive is good enough.

Likewise, Koskinen & Hush (2016) assert that most mainstream initiatives are examples of *utopian social design*, which projects an utopian vision of how society should be. Designers working on these types of projects often focus on improving situations while not being aware of the larger structures that have created these conditions. Molecular social design, on the other hand, aims at achieving the best result possible given certain conditions, without claiming social change on a large scale.

Several respondents acknowledge the responsive component of their work, but hold different views on its meaningfulness. On one end of the spectrum, Think City tries to frame their impact in a constructive manner:

"[...] we can say that we are trying to solve a specific issue based on the overarching issue. Let's say homelessness is the overarching issue, definitely we cannot solve this as the Think City organisation. But a specific problem that's caused from the homelessness being there, let's say defecation [on the street], hygiene issues, we are solving a specific problem caused by an overarching

issue in the laneways. Not eradicating the whole thing, but at the same time we need to find solutions to all these bigger issues.”

The founder of DOMAT, however, is less optimistic regarding the work he has achieved with the home modification project so far:

“In some cases [...] you need to be honest and say: 'that's not a design issue'. In fact, in terms of the home modification project as a whole, it's a borderline design issue. [...] what we're doing is a sticking-plaster-solution for the family living there. The main issue is the housing issue in Hong Kong in general. [...] By working on this project, are we helping to sustain it in the long run? [...] So, I guess there's some doubt in what we're doing, whether our approach is really the best thing. Because ultimately the issue is more fundamental, why the [subdivided] houses exist in the first place. Why the inequality exists in society. I think [...] there's a limit to what design can achieve. Beyond that it becomes more an issue of advocacy or policy change.”

Doubt regarding the effectiveness of DOMAT's approach also extends to the scale of their operations:

“[...] we've worked with 100 families now. The difficulty is when we look at the scale of the situation. According to the government statistics there's maybe more than 80.000 families living in subdivided homes in Hong Kong and depending who you talk to, some people say that's a quite conservative estimate as well. When you actually look at the scale of the impact that we had [...] we've helped less than 0,1% of those potential families. The process itself has been quite time-consuming and quite intensive. So, if you think in terms of scale, the project hasn't had a big scale in terms of helping the actual amount of families.”

There are limits of what design can achieve within a certain context, timeframe or scale. A critical evaluation of what is realistically possible to achieve using a design approach, what impact it will generate, on what scale and for whom, should be conducted at the beginning of the process together with the stakeholders involved. Periodical checks can ensure that the initiative is still on the right track or perhaps

needs to change its approach. Such evaluations would need to incorporate the managing of communication to shape perceptions of the various actors that can influence the process (see also point #1).

Furthermore, many practitioners expressed a desire to change existing policy through the presentation of their initiatives as success cases, which is exemplified by the emphasis in academic literature on successful implementations and respondents' focus on producing tangible results. However, design and social innovation initiatives are mostly molecular in nature, and as noted by Koskinen & Hush (2016), they are therefore positioned relatively distant from government and policy. Instances of (bottom-up) initiatives actually achieving policy change are rare and might currently still be a step too far. Therefore, a more realistic approach would be to aim for influencing policy in favour of the field of social innovation itself, in terms of legislation, funding or resources, rather than trying to address an underlying, larger and more complex issue directly. For example, instead of attempting to eradicate poverty itself, design practitioners and researchers should direct their efforts more towards influencing policies that facilitate the rise of social innovation initiatives that can combat poverty. The efforts of academics and practitioners to produce successful cases and concrete results are still valid, except that they would be aimed at reaching a more feasible goal.

Chapter 9 /

The Designer's Identity Crisis

In design and social innovation, the inclusion of non-designer co-creators or co-designers in the creative process has become common practice. However, the emancipation of the role of the 'user', who is now regarded as the context expert, does not automatically mean that they are considered as complete equals to the designer (see also section 2.2.2.1). Despite the shift in responsibilities, moving to a more facilitating and/or coordinating role, the designer's position as a creative catalyst and expert in the field, positioned above the other participants in the process, has remained relatively undisputed in academic discourse. Although this perception appears to have been carried over to design and social innovation practice as well, design practitioners still struggle with the fact that their professional design authority, and therefore identity, is being challenged.

The first section of this chapter will discuss the respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding the role of the designer within their respective contexts. The second will offer an explanation why designers might feel that their position in the process is under threat. The third section builds on the respondents' observations, together with insights and recommendations from the previous chapters, and propose a new persona for the designer will be proposed that will be resilient enough to keep up in a field of practice that is changing rapidly.

9.1 Perceptions on the role of the designer

In section 2.2.2.2, design education was noted to already contain many of the weaknesses that are present in design and social innovation practice. The Thai respondents, in particular, mentioned the influence of the local design education system. Co-create Charoenkrung's design manager stated that:

"I want to improve design education. I want to be a design professor. I want my students to understand their role. Other people might not understand, but we have to understand what is our role, what is the impact that we should aim to create."

The Rambutan team found that design education was one of the challenges that they had to overcome, as one of the members noted:

“And then at one point we saw that the problem came from the education system. We have a very small graphic design society here, so if you graduate you work for several years and you become a teacher in a university to teach your juniors. So, this becomes a loop. [...] For me, our challenge is how to deal with university teachers. Every time after the workshop the students are full of energy, they really want to do something. But when it's time for their graduation project they always come back to me and say: 'They don't allow me to do this'. I even talked to some of the university teachers, they still don't understand what we're doing and how design can do something with society.”

Some of the default designer roles in design and social innovation (see also section 2.2.2.1), such as the designer as an expert, are also shared by the respondents. When asked what the role of the designer within his initiative is, one of DOMAT's founders replied:

“As architects we're trained to design knowledge or to problem-solve, directing, analytically or critically, situations. We look at a house, we have fresh eyes, and maybe a social worker didn't have the key to the situation. Sometimes it can be a design, like a physical design proposal. Other times it can be less tangible, like for the home modification project the difference of helping, renovating the house, painting the walls or doing something which is actually within the walls. Just having this kind of critical analysis.”

Co-create Charoenkrung's policy manager stated in response to a similar question that:

“Everyone is a creative citizen, but not everyone is a designer. You have to hire a professional designer to do their job, you have to hire a built environment designer and other designers, graphic designers, multimedia designers, if your answer falls in that area.”

The respondents from Think City view their professional input as architects as complimentary to the community's skills and knowledge:

"[The architects at Think City are] the expert citizens, we get the chance to have some sort of professional skills, which in this case is architecture. But in order to work for community projects, we need to work together with citizen experts, which are the people of the area. They know the area more than us, as much as we think that our design is the best. But then it's from our own perspective, which is quite foreign to the place. If we combine these two expertises, ours and their expertise of the area, the process will be more successful."

The perception of the designer as facilitator was shared by the design manager of Co-create Charoenkrung:

"Facilitator would be the answer. We should make sure that everybody is equal and has a chance to participate and have a chance to participate, without others saying it's bullshit."

Similarly, CROSSs emphasised their supporting role as architects, facilitating the design capabilities of citizens:

"From the role of architects as a designer it's how do we enable people to design. It might not be the best supreme design, but it will work for them and they understand why the house looks like this. People make the models and they talk about it, because they understand it."

It is interesting to note that all respondents who (partially) subscribe to this view have a design or architectural background, whereas those who have a non-design background, might not necessarily agree. Goodseed's assistant programme manager, for example, hails from a social science background. His perception of designers leans considerably less towards the perception of designers' uniqueness, noting:

"Well, they're obviously trained to think alternatively. That's their value when we talk about innovation. I think that's how they can contribute and [it's] what I

treasure most. They can really think creatively and see something in an unusual way. [...] I think everyone should be equal, with not much emphasis put on the designer. Because design thinking is one approach, but people from the business field have another approach. With two different approaches seeing the same problem or issue, there may be some sparks or fireworks. That's how we work together as a team, that's the co-creation process. The collision of two ideas, two mind-sets. [Designers] should contribute equally."

The perception that designers are 'one of many' professionals that can be involved in social innovation was also implied by the entrepreneur leading the efforts at Pom Mahakan, who also demonstrated that the role of facilitator between stakeholders is not necessarily limited to designers:

"For each group we decided to work with specific people. [...] What groups we have and what competencies we need for that group and fill that in. [...] For example, when we think about a living museum, we need to engage with a designer, [...] who can design a theme. If you talk about public space, you need to engage with community architects. For each group we decided to work with specific people. [...] We also try to facilitate the discussion in the groups by letting everyone be heard."

Some respondents with a design background still highlighted designers' special capabilities, but subscribed to a more modest view of the (graphic) designer's role. One of the members of The Rambutan noted:

"I think design is just one discipline, but we have this skill. To make something better, it's what design can do. Engineering can do the stuff, but sometimes they miss some points. We're not claiming that we can change the world, but we just contribute some skills to society. Graphic design can provide some proper information, create awareness. I think awareness is an important thing, it can lead to another expertise to fix the problem. It's not just creating awareness, it's just the beginning, we can be part of a team with other experts and do it together. I think [the way] a graphic designer looks at a problem is different than people from other backgrounds. It's not only in the making, but also the thinking process."

But it depends on the project. What happens now, if you're in a multidisciplinary team, you'll be the one making the logo or the presentation. But we can deal with communication, we can make the team communicate smoothly.”

Some design-trained respondents were even firmer in their criticism. SI.DLab’s founder stated that their projects are challenging many preconceptions in Hong Kong, such as the fact that design should look finished, polished and that the designer is the only one who knows design. In addition, she asserted that:

“Social design has been a big trend in Hong Kong design, but when you see a lot of the projects, designers have almost 100% control over what's happening [...] they're actually building a wall between design and others – a lot of projects don't actually work in the end. For example, if you think that you're making an environmental-friendly product, but at the end it doesn't work... there's others, outside of the design world, who have been working on environmental issues, from social scientists to material scientists, real activists... Who are designers? How you can just say, 'I'm the one who knows best'? [...] If you really analyse a lot of products or projects in Hong Kong, or even in the world, by designers or social projects, a lot of them fail really badly, because they don't respect others. There are so many other people doing amazing things and I think it's time for designers to reframe what our role is. Do we really know so much? We don't.”

Regarding how the designer’s role should be reframed in design and social innovation, she commented:

“I don't think that designers should be just facilitators, because as facilitators we [designers] will lose our status, almost like becoming nothing. But something like enabler, in which we would have a more active role, we are driving things to happen, but we're not leading or the only one leading. [...] That for me is a change in role, but also mind-set. It's really about putting ourselves down as citizens and listening to other citizens. And, of course, we have a skill, we're designers, we have a special skill, but we don't know everything.”

Some respondents envisioned roles for designers in social innovation that were less emphasised in academic discourse, or in some cases, not mentioned at all. In some cases, this role coincides with their own motivations for working in this particular space. Co-create Charoenkrung's design manager emphasised the business side of social innovation:

"I also want designers to be entrepreneurs. We can design something that costs a lot, and no one will buy it. For social innovation that's important because those people don't have any money."

Other respondents noted that within one project they fulfil several roles simultaneously. The founder of Bangkok Chinatown commented:

"It depends on the situation. I'm a team member of the project, but I'm also a community member and I'm also in the committee who works with the local district office. I have many roles that I need to play. Sometimes I'm the son of my mother, when we discuss during the meetings [because] she's a committee member in the project team. When I go back home maybe I'll get complaints: 'Why are you working slowly?', 'I don't know, mum' <laughs>."

Assuming different roles depending on the context was also mentioned by one of the partners from Form society:

"[Within Form Society] different people have different roles. That's good, we don't have to overlap. Of course, I and my partner [in her own design agency] will have much more overlap than [when] working in different organisations because we are both designers. Of course, sometimes he works in design, so I will do marketing and admin. And sometimes I will do the design and he will do other stuff, to separate the tasks so it will not overlap, otherwise it's mad."

One of the members from the Rambutan views his role as graphic designer as someone who can create awareness, both within and outside of the design community, stating:

"I want to make other channels for graphic design, like other possibilities other than a commercial approach. [...] It's not just for us, but for others as well to see the possibilities. Many of my graphic design friends want to do something else, but they don't know how to do it. They don't have any time or money. I tried to tell them that you don't need to do anything big, you can do something small to see the potential first and then show it to others, get funding and make it bigger or proper. They want to use graphic design to solve the problem directly, but sometimes it's impossible."

Elaborating on the reasons why The Rambutan wished to launch an art book fair in Bangkok (which is now an annually recurring event) one of the team members discussed the difficulties to publish books as an independent, explaining that:

"These kinds of projects are content-based, they have to do research and some of it will be social at some point. But it will never be published, because you don't know where it can be published, where to sell the books. Many artists or designers have something so say, they have an idea, but don't know how to present it and they give up. But at an art book fair, they can sell it and they can survive. It's kind of a holistic solution to make the cycle whole again. [...] At last the thirty participants in the fair can present their message to the audience, most of them are designers or artists, they see can see the possibilities, they [themselves] can do this next year as well. The book fair itself creates a lot of conversations, people talk to each other, 'Hmm, maybe we can do something together'. That's our purpose as well, to make some kind of collaboration."

Leaving a legacy that would benefit others in the design industry, was also mentioned by one of the partners in 3nity design, who remarked in relation to the socially-minded projects the agency was doing:

"Hopefully we can build enough success cases. In the future, the younger generation of designers can enjoy that. We never wanted to do it as part of our own belief, but I'm sure that there's younger creative people who believe in that as well, it's just that they may not know the method. Once we did this and we feel that it's possible to sustain it, then we'll share it. That's how we sort of run our

business here, we have our methodologies and we publish this on our website so that people can download that as well. That to me, again, is a little social innovation project we do within our industry.”

The notion of designers creating awareness for a cause through their work, which might serve as an inspiration for the local community in the Talat Noi area, as voiced out by one of the architects from Bangkok Chinatown:

“After we published our map [of Talat Noi], the work we did on social media, the exhibits, [the general public] knows much [more] about Talat Noi. There is a group of French designers around here who started to refurbish old buildings, like galleries, cafes or something else. But if people in the community start to sense opportunities, or for the second generation who take over the family business, we predict there will be a big change five years after this.”

Raising awareness was also noted as being important by one of the architects working with Pom Mahakan, who mentioned that the work they did with the community was picked up by the media, making it difficult for the local authorities (BMA) to evict the villagers:

“It helped. Before [the BMA] didn't even want to talk to the [villagers] doing any protest. But because there were so many people helping, so many other partners. [...] journalists wrote articles, so many schools helped the Pom Mahakan community. We gained a reputation from the media, so the BMA started to think 'okay, how are we going to stop all these rumours?' Unless they did something diplomatic, invite them and let them be a part of the plan. It's a kind of power play isn't it?”

Many of the respondents emphasised the importance of social relationships during their work (see also p.251). In particular, the building of trust and/or friendships with partners or other stakeholders. When discussing a particular project, the architects from CROSSs mentioned that they perceive the building of trust as one of their main activities during the design process:

“[...] we wanted to design social relations and physicality together. We took a lot of time to build trust with the people who are involved in designing.”

Similarly, the projects that are organised by team from Bangkok Chinatown in the local community in Talat Noi are not always about their initiative as the founder commented:

“Some [projects] are directly related to our work, some are not, but it helped to build the trust between the people.”

The owner of Earth Heir views their relationship with local artisans as one of the most important aspects of their business:

“If we don't have these relationships, [the artisans] don't have to make the stuff for us. People think 'Oh, artisans are poor, so if I give them business why don't that want to work with me?'. But that's not how artisans think, they have to like you. They're not machines, they're people. It's not just ordering something and getting a machine to make it. You're dealing with humans and their emotions and their personalities and stuff. If you don't manage those relationships, you're jeopardising your production and your brand as well.”

The same goes for the stakeholders that are involved in the initiative, as the policy manager of Co-create Charoenkrung noted about the collaboration between the partners during the project:

“This proves that five people can do it if you plan well and befriend your partners. I can say that at the end of the project we became good friends with Thammasat and Shma, because we worked together from the start.”

The project director of the Water Warriors initiative, which focused on the rejuvenation of the lake on the grounds of University of Malaya, also noted the importance of the creation of trust between the different stakeholders:

“We built the relationship for one year in the case of the lake. When we can bring the students to meet the people up there... once they meet, we don't even have

to be around, then the trust is there. But of course, we can't generalise this, it really depends on the personality of those on top."

In some instances, the community and social relations are perceived as more important than the design activities themselves (which also influences the designer's role, as noted by the architects from CROSSs:

"We're happy working and talking with people, we're not too happy commanding or directing the solution straight away, if you compare it to a more general designer's perspective. We feel that it's more valuable and it seems to be better. We like designing, but our skill is not designing from the table, our skill is to be with people, talking, sharing. We're not the people to give the solutions, but through the participatory process the stakeholders can discuss and maybe the solution will arise. [...] I think our role at the beginning of the project is design the process that brings people together. Open a space for sharing: What's the question? Not pointing at someone and saying 'Answer the question', but open the discussion between people."

Similarly to the case studies discussed by Warwick & Young (2016) and Warwick (2017), the architects from CROSSs stress that the building of trust should occur before the design process:

"I think it became a culture for us that we don't go into design from the start, but we discuss the value, aspirations and the meaning of you being here and the relationships between you, your friends, colleagues and what the conflicts, if we can discuss about it. All these things can be translated, but if you start at the space, the physical thing, from the start, we cannot go deep into that."

The notion that designers in social design projects strive to have 100% control of the project, asserted by the founder of SI.DLab, was also mentioned by other design-trained respondents, who reported feeling uncomfortable in situations in which they lacked control. When asked about their role as mentors for the design students working on the Fine Dying project, one of the designers from Milk Design who was present at the sessions noted:

"I was just... observing [the students]. I didn't really get involved at all. That's already quite different [from traditional design]. I can't really have a say or [have] control. [...] We have to trust that the people are doing their job, and that they're doing their best, and that's how the project runs. But I think the feeling of not being in control is more [due to] ourselves. [The people] are actually doing their best, it's just our own feeling [as designers] that we're not that involved, we observe and do nothing at this stage. That's kind of irritating <laughs>."

The architects at CROSSs also admitted struggling with the issue of control during a certain project, noting:

"Especially when you work with people and you're not on the control side. If you're a designer you try to cut the things away that are not secure, you make clear what will happen. But when you work with people you allow many factors to vibrate and affect each other. In this case, we were unable to work with that."

One of the partners in Form Society felt better moving from designing sustainable products towards the organising of social community events, such as an occasional pop-up mobile bike market. Not only because she felt that it was more effective in getting her message across, but also because the latter allowed her to have more control over the process, commenting that:

"[When organising the mobile bike market] everything is under my control, like the poster, the communication with different groups. When we design a product, we can't control where people can buy it, or maybe I can't control the logistics, I can't control everything."

Designers appear to be experiencing difficulties with the new status quo in which non-designers are slowly chipping away at methods, skills and knowledge that previously were only theirs to use or know. Even "when everyone designs", as stated by Manzini (2015), there still appears to be a need to distinguish between those who have had a design education from those who did not. Several of the respondents who were design-trained emphasised the importance of being in control of the process, or the uncertainty they face when perceived control is lacking. Furthermore, the many

proposals of new roles and designations, all of which imply a special position of some sort for the designer, point towards a desire for validation – that designers are still needed in the social innovation process.

9.2 The designer's position under threat

Insights taken from practice theory, in particular the notion of professionalism viewed from this perspective, could contribute to an explanation of the insecurity designers might experience regarding their role in design and social innovation. The concept of professionalism is described by Schinkel & Noordegraaf (2011) as internally organising a profession while externally protecting its practices from outside influences. As professional work is characterised as being hard to define, standardise and measure, but holds significant value to clients, collective self-control by peers is important. At the same time, because of the time and effort to master required skills, the profession needs to be shielded from outsiders, legitimising the special status of professionals. The authors' discussion of the notion of professionalism viewed through the lens of practice theory is particularly useful.

Although there are several approaches within practice theory, the work of Bourdieu (1977) is perhaps the most influential. Aiming to overcome dualities such as structure vs agency, structuralism vs constructivism, determinism vs freedom or macro vs micro, Bourdieu explains practice through the interaction of three main concepts: *field*, *habitus* and *capital*. Social interactions take place in their respective social spaces, which are further subdivided in social *fields*, which are governed by specific rules and power relations. The notion of *habitus* refers to the tendency of people to behave in similar ways in similar situations (Walther, 2014). To go deeper into the concepts of field and habitus and how they interrelate goes beyond of the scope of the thesis. Bourdieu's notion of *capital*, however, is relevant to this discussion. According to Bourdieu (1986), there are four types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. These capitals are related, as each one can be converted into the other. For example, economic capital (money) can be converted into social capital (social relationships).

Schinkel & Noordegraaf (2011) argue that professionalism could be perceived as symbolic capital, a special type of capital which functions as a symbolic representation of another form of capital. In this case, professionalism is a status that actually based

on cultural capital. Professionalism as symbolic capital also entails that it is scarce, due to the fact that access to it is restricted, with a socially constructed difference between those who possess it and those who do not. This manifests itself in, for example, the relationships between a professional and a semi- or non-professional. The widening of professional capital dilutes its scarcity and impacts future professional work, reducing the status of professionals to be the same as any other person.

This scenario can be superimposed onto the situation designers find themselves in within the field of social innovation. Emancipatory methods such as co-creation and co-design have transferred the symbolic capital of professionalism from designers to non-designers, thereby reducing its scarcity and lowering the status of designers. In turn, designers are desperately trying to reinvent themselves and stay relevant. Whether this will be successful depends on whether designers are able to adapt to situations where they are no longer in control nor considered as special.

9.3 The *sociable designer*

The fear that designers are relegated to a position in which they are deemed replaceable is perhaps best illustrated by the concern voiced by Manzini (2015), that designers should not become trapped in a purely facilitating role, in which their main task as ‘post-it designers’ would be pasting post-its at workshops that contain stakeholder’s views. The roles of the designer as the sole author and the designer as the creative mastermind have become untenable, as both have been increasingly fulfilled by other actors; a tendency which is inevitable in design and social innovation. In academic discourse, several roles have been suggested for designers in social innovation (see section 2.2.2) However, rather than defining yet another role, the aim of this section is to arrive at a broader designer persona, defined by three core characteristics that will prove beneficial when working in the social innovation space.

1. Focusing on *being* social rather than *doing* social

The significance of maintaining good social relations with partners, stakeholders and other actors has been underscored in different contexts (see also pp.230 & **Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Bookmark not defined.**) The emphasis here is on a different interpretation of the term ‘social’. Not in terms of the cause that designers are working towards, rather that designers

themselves need to be social: communicating honestly and effectively, while building and sustaining both relationships and trust.

2. Assuming the role(s) that deliver the promise(s)

Designers, as any other practitioners, can assume different roles in a design and social innovation project or process. However, design and social innovation is not a neutral concept. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the perception of design and designers is subject to a significant amount of variation. Which role the designer should assume, therefore depends on the perception that stakeholders or actors have of the designer's involvement and the expectations that are tied to it. No particular role is 'worse' or 'better' than another role. A designer could be in a completely facilitating role in the morning, pasting post-its during a lively workshop with enthusiastic neighbourhood residents. In the afternoon, the same designer might be working on a design prototype requested by the local government, assuming a design expert role, while in the evening the designer joins some elderly community members to sing karaoke, just being herself. What is important, is that the designer communicates about what they (intend to) do, delivers what is expected of them (preferably a tangible outcome), and assumes the corresponding role accordingly.

3. Valuing and engaging with other ways of knowing and doing

One of the criticisms that has been haunting designers in social innovation is their reluctance to learn from other fields of knowledge or practice. Even after several authors have suggested that designers broaden their perspectives, proposing roles such as the *t-shaped designer* (Brown & Wyatt, 2010), the *maternalistic* and *fraternalistic designer* (Thorpe & Gamman, 2011), little progress appears to have been made in this regard. Design education and the fear of de-professionalisation may have influenced this conservative attitude towards other disciplines. Seeing that designers have a plethora of roles to choose from, they should not be doubtful what their role is in design and social innovation. Instead, they should be prepared to fully accept the equality of actors and stakeholders with a non-design background. Not only as 'contextual' experts, but also recognise their perspectives, approaches and methods as equally valid and, whenever possible, learn from them.

The *sociable* designer, who is both *social* and *able*, is someone who successfully and effortlessly manoeuvres within the social innovation space is one that is well-liked and well-known in the community she works in. In addition to organising workshops, events and activities in the neighbourhood that help strengthen the initiative, she often spends leisure time with the residents, chatting or participating in local sports activities. She is able to assume different roles, depending on what is needed of her at that specific moment. Some of the roles, such as making mock-ups, renovating a shop-house interior or designing a magazine, require her skills as a designer. In other roles, her design skills are less relevant. For example, when she is trying to convince the local police department to allow a signboard to be placed on the sidewalk. When asked what the community thinks of her as a designer, she replies that she would like them to think of her as a friend helping them out, who just happens to be a designer.

Chapter 10 /

Sustaining design and social innovation initiatives

In section 2.2.3, three broad categories of approaches were discussed that aim to sustain design and social innovation initiatives in the long-term. However, all three ways of sustaining, by creating favourable environments, by upscaling and replicating and by preserving the underlying concepts, ideas and examples, are currently still too theoretical and speculative in nature. The large majority of case studies are limited in scope and/or consist of pilot projects, relying on scenarios that imagine how these projects might or should be continued. Toolkits and courses provide potential social innovators knowledge in the form of with tools and methods, but often lack essential contextual knowledge, which prospective users might not be aware of. Furthermore, examples of actual projects being sustained for a long period of time using any of the suggested methods are rare.

The first section of this chapter will therefore discuss how initiatives are sustained in the field by discussing the experiences of the practitioners that were interviewed for this study. The second highlights the challenges and issues that the practitioners encounter in order to arrive at a set of practical objectives.

10.1 The reality of sustaining initiatives in the field

Knowledge on sustaining design and social innovation is oftentimes based on academic accounts, which only in rare cases proceed beyond the phase during which the researchers and/or designers are involved.²⁸ Cases that are presented by practitioners are often descriptive and do not provide insight into how they sustain their initiatives. In order to gain a better understanding of how initiatives aim or attempt to sustain themselves in the field, the following sections discuss the concerns brought up by respondents regarding the current state and the future of the initiatives they are involved in, such as upscaling, business models and public space.

²⁸ A notable example is a study by Hillgren et al. (2016), which follows the Malmö Living Lab project over a time period of seven years, also discussed in section 2.2.3.4

10.1.1 Issues with upscaling and replicating

The act of upscaling and/or replicating is often regarded as one of the final steps and an indicator of success for initiatives in design and social innovation discourse. Similar ambitions were reported by some of the respondents. However, a frequently encountered issue is the perceived lack of manpower. The founder of the Bangkok Chinatown initiative noted that:

“On our own we cannot do everything. We have six people, we need to find financial support... office space, we need to do many things to support ourselves. We don't have enough people to run [the initiative]. If we can let others do it, we are okay with it, if it makes the neighbourhood better and the community is okay with it. We are not the owners of the project.”

One of the founders of architectural agency DOMAT experienced similar issues, elaborating on the impact upscaling would have on the daily operations of the agency itself:

“So, the thing we're now facing is how to scale up the project and help more people. For us, that's kind of a barrier, because we're a small office, it's difficult for us to envisage our project five or ten times bigger than it is now. It partly is a funding issue. For us as an office it's a management issue, the management of the project. And then fundamentally [...] it might be a huge undertaking we're working on. Because as an office it's just one thing we're working on, but we're actually interested in other things as well, other projects. If we focus all our effort on [the home modification] project, do we still have resources to work on other projects?

In Malaysia, Earth Heir also has reached a stage where it would like to scale-up, but are encountering barriers, as the owner remarks that:

“We also feel that the artisans are at a stage where they can scale. Say, we need to make a thousand [items], we can make it in a month. [...] For something machine-made that's nothing, but for something handmade, making a thousand a month is like 'yay!', in Malaysia at least. Here we don't have the same access to

lots of artisans like in our neighbouring countries. [...] It's very hard to find large groups of artisans to make something for you. A lot of the artisans are old. Our challenge now is how do we get the younger generation to be interested in these crafts?"

The project leader from the University of Malaya emphasised the importance of involving people who could help propel the initiative forward when thinking about upscaling:

"But upscaling in terms of human resources is important as well, because I do see those people mentoring other new volunteers. We have a few personalities that have changed the mind-set of a number of key people up there, so now the ecosystem has more people. We're not afraid of that kind of approach. In terms of upscaling an innovation it's not always about the particular innovation, but you have to make sure that the enabling environment is there as well. Part of that is having open-minded suitable top-down and bottom-up processes and the right people. You can't have the whole university being like that, but at least you have a critical mass of people moving towards that direction."

Elaborating on the case of the Water Warriors initiative at the University of Malaya, the project leader noted that the adoption of the project by the university did not necessarily have a positive effect on the project team:

"[...] heavily institutionalised environments like the campus, they like to institutionalise things and that reduces the dynamics, the organic nature of the process. The reason why there was so much stress in the initiative in the first place was because of the constructed nature of the process. [...] And that's the Catch-22 sort of process, as the movement grows you need money, and money needs accountability. And accountability as people see it now in terms of innovation is quantitative accountability. [...] You have to meet the objectives of what you have been given money for."

In a way, the initiative became a victim of its own success, as attempts at replication, without including the Heartware approach the team used previously, eventually turned out to be failures, as the project leader explained:

“We had these three successful living labs, based on these very grassroots beginnings. In the second year the higher management really liked the ideas, so we opened another 23 living labs, looking into different areas of the university. Not many of them worked, they don't go beyond the money. [...] What is lacking is the Heartware aspect. They got money for their innovation, but Heartware is the part that will go beyond your given mandate, because you believe in it and you built relationships so that you can continue. You don't have money, you find ways to continue.”

The discourse surrounding the upscaling and replicating of initiatives (see section 2.2.3.1) is largely focused on how to spread either the initiatives themselves or the underlying ideas in a most effective way. However, none of the initiatives in this study that have started bottom-up have been able to successfully do so. For many of them, the lack of manpower is a major issue, either within their own organisation or the people that the initiatives collaborate with. With a few exceptions, the projects described in this study are just one of many conducted by the organisations or the people behind them. It is therefore challenging for practitioners to make strategic decisions regarding, for example, prioritising social or commercial projects, or whether to expand their team, not knowing whether they can secure funding for their social activities. The precarious conditions in which initiatives are often situated, make upscaling or replicating something that is hard to achieve, even when the will is there.

Conversely, when initiatives do manage to upscale and replicate, which the Water Warriors initiative eventually managed to, institutionalisation can pose a threat to their original spirit and intentions. The introduction of accountability and bureaucracy can be a disillusion for practitioners who ‘did not sign up for this’. These experiences match the potential paradox described by Jégou & Manzini (2008), who warned against the loss of the social qualities related to the initiatives original (small) size when scaling up. However, in the case of Water Warriors, the initiative did not grow into a corporation, but was instead incorporated into the framework of the university, where it

was (unsuccessfully) copied, ultimately resulting in the demise of all replicated instances.

At first glance, upscaling and replicating might be an outcome that is desirable and attainable, particularly for social innovation initiatives that originated in an academic or institutional context, which is often the case. However, for initiatives that are situated outside of these kinds of frameworks, it is questionable whether it is the right way to move forward, or whether it is even possible, as the conditions required for the initiatives to thrive are less than ideal or not present at all. It can even be challenging for those that did start in an academic context, such as Water Warriors, whose underlying philosophy and mode of operation vastly differed from the institutional framework it found itself encapsulated by. Whether scaling up and replicating is the default next step for an initiative to take in order to be successful should therefore be reconsidered. Sometimes remaining local, small and true to original principles might be preferable.

10.1.2 Difficulty finding a suitable business model

Closely related to the issues of upscaling and replicating, but rarely addressed in academic literature, is the need for a business model that would be able to sustain the initiative, as funding is not always a feasible option. For one of the team members of Deschooling Games this was the reason that the initiative was not able to scale-up or replicate at the moment, stating that:

“A better way of learning games should not come from teachers, but from students, but this does not match the current business model. We can do the workshops for teachers because of the university budget to improve the teachers, so we can get that money. But for the students, it's more challenging. [...] Who will be the key [stakeholders] who will pay for it? [The workshops] can be free as well, but we cannot find a sponsor for that. [...] When the market is more open to support us, that will be the time to replicate a new Deschooling Games team.”

Agencies such as 3nity design, often need to keep a delicate balance between their for-profit and their not-for-profit work, as one of the partners explains:

“I have two partners, 90% of their role and scope is in corporate work. No doubt they participate [in non-commercial projects] as well once in a while. Without their support I wouldn't be able to do this, but I still need to balance between commercial work and [non-commercial projects], because I still need to contribute to the company to pay bills. [...] Sometimes we hit maybe more than 40% of pro bono, charity, social innovation projects. That is not healthy. If we can do it between 70-30, that would be good. [...] Being able to bring both together, having the client involved in what we do, I think that's the ultimate. [...] That obviously takes time. There are cases where we have clients involved in social innovation-related projects. [...] Eventually clients will pay you to do such a thing. [...] but it takes maybe 15 years to get the first client to pay for such movements.”

In contrast, the team behind The Rambutan also run their own graphic design agency separately and do not let the two mix, as one of the designers remarks:

“In the beginning we funded [The Rambutan] ourselves. We totally separate the finances. Afterwards we got money from some of the hosts, like TCDC, we don't fund it from our agency.”

The entrepreneur who is involved with Pom Mahakan pointed out that running a social enterprise is difficult in Thailand, as the business model officially doesn't exist yet:

“In the Thai context, business and social cannot be merged together, like what I'm doing. People will think whether there's a conflict of interest when I'm helping the community. I don't need to do this, actually. I can do business without the social aspect. But I believe in the social enterprise model, I believe that only business can help... I mean, I don't believe in an NGO or a non-profit model, because I think they need to get money from business anyway. [...] That's why I do social enterprise and what I'm trying to do is the model that I believe in, but in a Thai context. I think that there's a discussion at a government level to have a legal way to support [social enterprise], but 70% of the dividend needs to go back to society and 30% can go to the shareholders. But it's still a discussion and not finalised yet.”

The architectural agency DOMAT tries to position itself somewhere in between a commercial agency and a charity, but as one of the founders explains, where exactly they position themselves can have consequences:

“Our aim is to work full-time on social projects. So, for all our projects we aim to take a small fee for doing work, so they do pay us for work on the project. [...] The way we see it, there's a scale between a totally commercial office and a charitable institution. In the middle you have a social enterprise, but actually you can further subdivide that. [...] We're a social enterprise which is halfway between a social enterprise and a charity. We're more interested in the social impact of the project. And it's always in the back of the mind although we're that close to being a charitable institution, we don't have the benefit of being a tax-exempt organisation. So, if you're that close, isn't it better for us to cross over to become a tax-exempt organisation? Then we can apply for funding.”

Not having any funding at all can also be a conscious decision, as one of the team members of Form Society notes:

“If we have to apply for funding every time, of course, we have to fulfil the funding requirements and spend time on writing. Once it's my own investment, we can focus on how to run this business. It's also kind of a business model. I would like to tell people that this kind of business model works. [...] we don't make a lot of money, but we also need to survive. Of course, we don't mind to have funding, but I also believe that sometimes we also need to make it self-sustainable.”

She elaborates on how the Form Society is run, with each corner of the space having its own business model:

“We don't charge the craftsmen, they will deal with the people directly. We don't charge any commission. [...] We're not talking in terms of money, it's just what we have. I can provide space and [the craftsmen] need space, so [they] can come here. Kind of exchanging items instead of money. [...] For example, the food [in the restaurant corner]. People come here can pay what they want. [...]

we invite some chefs to run the kitchen during the weekends, but that is also using the pay-what-you-want method to run that corner.”

“Who is going to pay for it?” might be one of the most important questions in design and social innovation. It could arguably even be the most important question that could be asked in this context. Its absence from academic discourse is therefore striking, as the answer to this question is fundamental to the survival of an initiative. Particularly in Hong Kong, where the both the rents and cost of living are extremely high, it is imperative to be able to settle the initiative’s financial needs immediately. Initiatives that do not or cannot rely on funding, which in most instances are non-governmental initiatives, have to find alternative means of income to support themselves. In some cases, commercial activities are conducted by the practitioners, either within the same initiative or via another entity, to fund the initiative’s social activities. In the case of Form Society and The Rambutan, the initiative is funded out of the practitioners’ own pocket. None of these scenarios, however, are ultimately sustainable and even when an initiative is supported by funding there is no guarantee that they will receive funding in the future.

The lack of a suitable legal entity under which an initiative’s activities can be carried out can also pose significant difficulties, as it leaves practitioners in limbo; they are unable to claim certain benefits, such as tax exemptions, or do not even have any legal ground to exist at all. This highlights the importance for both academics and practitioners take into consideration that the various legal frameworks in which design and social innovation takes place can differ per country or territory. In Hong Kong and Malaysia, for example, the ecosystem for social innovation appears to be more favourable, whereas in Thailand this was significantly less so. In Bangkok, one of the members from Deschooling Games characterises the situation in Thailand as less favourable when compared with the UK, where he studied:

“In the UK, the government supports start-ups, there are grants and accelerator teams with advisors to help to develop [your initiative] if you get in the program. In Thailand we don't have anything like that as far as I know. Some organisations support this, but not on a government scale.”

Increased interaction between the fields of design and social innovation and social entrepreneurship could therefore prove beneficial, as it would expose practitioners to ways of dealing with the business side of their practice.

10.1.3 The lack of public space

Several of the initiatives discussed in this thesis, such as Co-create Charoenkrung in Bangkok, Play Depot in Hong Kong and the Lorong Bandar 13 in Kuala Lumpur utilise design interventions that impact public areas. However, in all three cities the concept of public space can be problematic. Unlike in, for example, Europe, where these spaces are usually owned by the (local) government, most of the seemingly public space in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur is privately owned. In Hong Kong, the availability of physical space itself is a major issue (see also section 7.1). The Bangkok Chinatown team felt hindered by the lack of public space, as the founder noted that:

“The problem that we found in the second year was that the community has many ideas, but no place to execute them. The area is occupied by the government or private companies. There are no public areas. The only public areas are the roads, streets, alleys and the river pier. This is a problem when you want to create activities... small museums... for anything that they want to do there's no place to do it. We kept this issue in mind and thought of how to create a creative space for the community.”

In Charoenkrung, which is adjacent to Bangkok Chinatown's district of Talat Noi, TCDC experienced similar difficulties. The policy manager discussed some of the problems in the neighbourhood:

“Problems: many historical valuable buildings, but no one uses them, the lack of communal spaces for people to interact [...] What is interesting is that the asset of Charoenkrung is the riverfront, but there's no access to the river. People in Bangkok have grown up with the river, but there is little opportunity to stroll along the river, sit and look at the river, because all the private companies and five-star hotels block the access to the river.”

The design manager expressed a similar feeling, adding that the private land owners have little incentive to participate in social innovation projects:

“The private sector has little understanding for public benefit. This is also new to me. If you're in the private sector and you have an asset, for example, empty land, they don't understand how they could use it in another way. They will commercialise it, use it as a marketplace. But they don't understand that if they turn it into a social space, they would actually increase the traffic.”

She added that the attitude of the private business owners also affected the development process of the project:

“We needed space for the first three projects, [but] every single space in this area by private companies or hotels, it's difficult to get. [...] The perception in Thailand is still not geared towards public use or public space and that's difficult. They just want to receive the money, but if they invest in a public space, a hub or a district, it will bring much more money than they earn today. It's very difficult to explain to [private land owners].

In addition, the design manager noted that during the research phase in which Thammasat University and TCDC used a European model to establish what drivers were important for urban renewal, public space was absent:

“When you review a lot of case studies, there's eight drivers and none of them are public space. For example, we reviewed a case in Japan. There they'll make sure every community has a public space, green space, park or recreation. But in Thailand, it is one of the factors that will drive the creative district, because we don't have that in our urban planning, that every community has their public space. This is one of the factors that we found that were very site-specific.”

This finding was echoed by the policy manager, who stated that:

“[...] there were eight drivers from international case studies. From this project [...] we got a ninth driver, it's called 'public space for public activities'. Because in

the US, Europe, they have parks and things already, organic in their own way. But not in Thailand, this is new.”

In Kuala Lumpur the situation is slightly different. Although officially public space is owned by the city council DBKL, similar issues arise when private companies come into play. One of the designers in a local agency mentioned that:

“There's a park across the road, but it's gated and no one can use it. [...] This developer bought over the land and their agreement with DBKL was they have to make it into a park for ten years and after that they can make into whatever they want to, which is probably a multi-storey office building. What's the point of creating a park that no one uses, that is under-planted as well? You're doing it to buy time so that you can use it, because it is prime land. DBKL had this idea to make a park, but they also don't execute it well and everyone just does what they want to do with it. It doesn't make sense.”

Government organisation Think City points out that there is a difference in who officially owns the public space in the city and who owns it in practice, as one of the architects explains that:

“By law, definitely most of the public spaces are DBKL's land. But if you go to the area, you would sort of know who actually owns the area, which is not usually DBKL. [...] In KL we have to be careful, because there's also gang members who own certain areas. [...] It's not a straightforward ownership. The land might belong to DBKL, but certain groups of people have certain ownership over it.”

Public space is often implicitly assumed to be property of the (local) government. Although in most cases this holds true in Europe, where the academic disciplines of participatory design and design and social innovation originated, it is consequently not considered to be as a condition for social innovation. Thammasat University found in their research for Co-create Charoenkrung that public space as an indicator of success for creative districts was, in fact, missing from western models. In some instances, however, space that is seemingly public can also belong to private organisations. In Bangkok, sections of the Chao Phraya riverfront are owned by luxury hotel chains and

in Kuala Lumpur, a large park which is supposed to be public, is owned by a real-estate developer. As these private organisations have no particular interest to participate in social innovation activities and government influence over these companies is limited, their unwillingness to cooperate can put an end to any type of plan that implicates public areas. More efforts need to be undertaken to understand what might incentivise private organisations to take part, or at least facilitate, social innovation efforts. However, practitioners also need to take into account that these organisations, and this applies for all other actors as well, simply cannot be convinced to participate. As this will inevitably have implications for the scale and scope of proposed interventions, it is therefore imperative for initiatives to manage to expectations of their stakeholders and set an ambition level that is realistic, in order to avoid disappointment, and ultimately, disengagement.

The previous sections discussed various issues surrounding the sustaining of design and social innovation initiatives that were brought forward by the respondents. In academic literature, successful examples of how to maintain or continue design and social innovation initiatives in the long term are virtually non-existent. Furthermore, the inherent fleeting nature of designer's involvement in social innovation projects, the absence of the sustainability aspect in participatory design methods and the fact that relevant knowledge often remains within academic circles are factors that can influence the progression in this area.

Moreover, numerous issues have been indicated by respondents that could potentially limit further development of their initiatives. The lack of manpower has been reported by several as an obstacle when attempting to scale-up. Even when initiatives manage to replicate, institutionalisation and the lack of a supporting social framework can ultimately result in failure. Respondents also reported issues when their current business model does not allow replication, it is imbalanced towards social projects or is not supported by government policy. The type of business model was also deemed significant as it determined whether or not initiatives receive funding, or conversely, how much freedom an initiative has in determining their own agenda. The lack of (public) space was a recurring issue, with private ownership of the space and the attitude of the owners affecting the implementation of projects.

10.2 Pragmatic objectives for design and social innovation

Current propositions from academic discourse on sustaining design and social innovation have not yet been able to offer ideas that are pragmatic enough for practitioners to enable them to sustain their initiatives in the field for an extended period of time. Academic concepts, such as enabling ecosystems and infrastructuring, project ideal scenarios that initiatives should work towards, thereby implicitly assuming that the initiatives themselves are stable entities. In fact, initiatives that are operating outside of academia or government, such as the majority of the cases described in this thesis, are struggling and in a constant state of precariousness. In their daily operations, practitioners encounter a multitude of barriers and antagonists, often having to conduct their activities in an environment that is indifferent or hostile to their cause. Perhaps one of the most problematic issues for design in social innovation is that design, by default, does not lend itself to long-term commitments, which happens to be exactly what is important when ensuring an initiative's survival. This section therefore aims to formulate clear and pragmatic goals for both academics and practitioners when sustaining design and social innovation initiatives.

1. Prioritising the creation of meaningful social relations over design

The importance of social relations in design and social innovation practice has been recognised at a relatively early stage of the discourse. As such, social relations are perceived to be a prerequisite in the concepts of *collaborative services* and *creative communities* (Jégou & Manzini, 2008; Manzini, 2013; 2015), *infrastructuring* (Hillgren et al., 2011; Björgvinsson et al., 2012; Light & Akama, 2014), the *intimacy* approach to design and social innovation (Akama & Yee, 2016), *communities-in-place* (Manzini & Thorpe, 2018) and designing for vulnerability (Cipolla, 2018).

However, in the case of collaborative services, Baek & Cho (2012) argue that social relations are often considered as “a by-product of a design outcome that can only be anticipated”. In similar fashion, Warwick (2017) asserts that “relationships and how they are formed in social design projects, has not been given the same attention as the tools and techniques of the approach itself”. Although more recent studies (Cipolla, 2018; Manzini & Thorpe, 2018; Prendiville, 2018) have taken an important step in foregrounding the importance of social relations in design and social innovation, the findings from this study expand this by highlighting new dimensions in which they can influence the process, aside from the two approaches earlier identified

(see sections 2.2.4.1 & 2.2.4.2). For example, social hierarchy was found to be a major factor, interacting with design and social innovation practice in Thailand on multiple levels and scenarios. Local practitioners, however, have developed their own approaches to deal with its negative effects or use it to their own advantage (see p.178). In addition, there were various facets of social relationships that were foregrounded by the respondents. The team from Play Depot prioritised the sharing of skills and knowledge over the design activities that they organised together, stating that:

“This project is not just about six groups of artists doing some creative toys or playthings and stuff. It's about engaging people to make things together. It's also about sharing ideas, sharing methods, sharing skills.”

Similarly, one of the teachers who participated in the Co-create Charoenkrung workshops, reflected on the experience favourably, noting that:

“I think it was very good for us, because after we joined this project, we became friends. A beautiful place, a good place, is only a place. But relationships are better. We know each other [...] I think Co-create Charoenkrung made us to be friends. It's better than a place, because places have limits, but friends have no limits. We can help each other.”

The preference of the social over the material is also reflected in the philosophy of CROSSs, as one of the team members stated:

“We think designing is important, but if the design fails, but the social structure is able to create something or substitute the incomplete design, we think that's worth it.”

Likewise, the project leader of the University of Malaya stresses the reliance of the Heartware approach on constructing long-term social relationships:

“Heartware means that you have a long-term resilience between stakeholders in dealing with the intangible of the innovation process. [...] A Heartware approach

is to build the design concurrently with the relationship and change the design as you go. And that is much more hard work. I think that's the biggest challenge in terms of time, energy, is finding the right people to work and sustain this kind of effort."

The informal nature of social relations was also referred to on several occasions, as one of the members of Form Society explained that:

"I also invite some people [to the shop] who are referred by my friends. Or new friends, because of the repair concept I meet new people. Like shoes, [the person who does] shoe repair is a new friend. He was referred to me by [another] friend who makes shoes."

Informality also characterises social relations in Malaysia, as one of the architects from the agency POW Ideas elaborated:

"It's a lot more based on relationships based on trust as opposed to, say, Australia. When I was working there, everything had to be in black and white. You're given stacks and stacks of contract to go through. [Here] it's a lot based on trust, building that sort of relationship is quite important. In a good relationship with your client and your contractors, it moves a lot faster. [...] In Malaysia it's a lot more fluid."

He adds that access to the right people can also be beneficial:

"Yeah, if you know certain people it helps <laughs>. Definitely with approvals. Especially with the council it depends on who you know. If you know someone on the inside, it definitely helps."

Developing social relationships with the local residents also increases their sense of ownership of the project, as one of the Think City team members comments:

“I think it's nice for us to have a deeper relationship with them. Keep talking to them, asking how are they [...] By building these relationships you earn the trust and hopefully a little bit of a sense of ownership.

It should be noted that the social relationships described in this context are of a different nature than the networks in a *design milieu* (Bello, 2007) or *collaborative networks* (Manzini, 2015), which take a perspective on social relations that is situated on a more macro-level. Instead, these examples are more akin to the account by Warwick (2017), who demonstrated that strong social relationships are essential when practising design and social innovation. In her study, the building of trust was particularly important in several phases of the process. First, when obtaining permission to proceed with the design activities, and further on, when it became apparent that the designer's trustworthiness, partly determined by the perception of benevolence, was deemed more important than the trust in the applied design methods.

The building of strong social relations requires considerable effort, but yields many benefits for the design and social innovation process. As suggested by, for example, Light & Akama (2014) in this study, too, social relations were found to strengthen initiatives by providing a foundation from which new ideas can emerge, even when the design component fails or ceases to exist. They can also help create a sense of ownership among the community. Furthermore, the findings highlight that social relations have dimensions and modalities which are not always apparent in all contexts and can manifest themselves in the design and social innovation process in a variety of ways. In Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, informality appears to characterise many social relationships, helping to expand networks and thereby creating new opportunities. In Bangkok, recognising both the positive and negative effects of social hierarchy can help practitioners navigate through the network of social relations more effectively. For example, knowing key people high up in the hierarchy can help facilitate the initiative's progression or open doors, which would otherwise remain closed. Even in the data collection process for this thesis, the building of trust and the maintaining of good social relations with the respondents was crucial for the success of the field research (see section 3.2.7). In several of the cases discussed in this study, social relations have exerted significant influence before, during and after the process and have sometimes

even been crucial in the success or failure of initiatives. It is therefore imperative that the particular dynamics of social relations, in all their complex shapes and forms, as well as their consequences, are understood in different contexts and recognised as forces that are fundamental to the design and social innovation process. Furthermore, given the potential durability of the social fabric encapsulating an initiative once established, this thesis argues that creation of the social relations that constitute it should be prioritised over any type of design. Whatever activity, service or product would be designed in the process would become irrelevant if the social aspects of the initiative dematerialise.

2. Building resilience through capacity building and instilling a sense of ownership

In all three cities, the importance of capacity building was a recurring theme. Two of the initiatives in Hong Kong entirely revolved around the capacity building, as Goodseed's assistant programme manager elaborated:

"Because we position our program as an inspirational program, capacity building. We treat you as a newcomer [who doesn't] know anything about social innovation and we'll tell you what you have to know. [...] I would say our program is more upstream, more to test innovative ideas, rather than having a solid solution. 'This idea would definitely help to alleviate...', I would not say that. But I would say if we have one hundred seeds planted, at least we'd have one growing into a flower. That would be amazing enough."

The programme leader of SI.DLab explained that Fine Dying and the other two projects also revolve around capacity building, stating that:

"Our project is a social innovation capacity program focusing on design students, trying to make them enablers for social innovation, rather than social innovators. So, they are enabling and that's why co-creation is important. Design students becoming enablers, enabling social innovation to happen."

For many of the Thai and Malaysian initiatives, capacity building was one of the main goals of the activities involving their respective communities. As Bangkok Chinatown's

founder explained, the ultimate goal is to let the local community run the initiative themselves:

“We tried many scales, like this walking tour where the community [members] could try to be guides [for tourists] themselves. In the last two or three years we did a lot of these [tours], so the community can practice how to communicate with others and when they empower themselves, they might feel that they can talk to organisations directly [as well]. In the past they didn't know about their powers, they were not encouraged to talk to other organisations, especially the local [district] office.”

In the case of Pom Mahakan, the co-creation activities that were organised helped the community realise their potential, as the entrepreneur who was in the lead describes:

“The outcome of the physical aspects, like the houses, was not reached in those two days, but in terms of empowerment it was very strong. If you think that only two weeks before, the houses were being destroyed, so everyone was like 'Oh, I will be the next one day'. This event made them feel more empowered. That was a very strong outcome. We worked three months to develop the visualisations. In December everything was done and we had a proposal to give to the government.”

The local youngsters that are involved with the local environmental club in the Mukim Pasangan river community are increasingly becoming independent, due to the University of Malaya team's efforts to empower them, as the project leader elaborated that:

“Now we know the youth uses a lot of social media, so we start using social media and connect them to policy-makers and scientists through social media. We're coaching them to use scientific terms and they're more confident talking to professors now, especially professors that we introduced to them. [One of the local youths] is leading the club, he is doing some mangrove replantation on his own, with our help. So, we don't actually have to go there, we have already a

group of youths who is running the show. [...] The municipality didn't even call us, they called them! <laughs>”

The underlying reason for the team behind The Rambutan initiative to also launch the Bangkok Art Book fair was to show local graphic designers that they can also make content-based work, instead of only working on the aesthetics. By providing a platform to showcase their work, they hope to encourage designers in the local scene, as one of the team members stated that:

“These kinds of projects are content-based, they have to do research and some of it will be social at some point. But it will never be published, because you don't know where it can be published, where to sell the books. Many artists or designers have something so say, they have an idea, but don't know how to present it and they give up. But at an art book fair, they can sell it and they can survive. It's kind of a holistic solution to make the cycle whole again.”

The architects at CROSSs were pleasantly surprised that after they had focused on capacity building with the local community during an initial project, they were actually hired by the community afterwards, as one of the team members disclosed:

“I think now we don't need ask them to organise a meeting anymore. They organise the meeting and ask us to come when they need us. Now we can back off from the community and let them discuss. If they're able to solve it on their own, we're happy. Let them do it. [...] This is very important, because it's the first time that we got paid by the locals. They hired us as facilitators.”

The team from Think City indicated that government actors can also benefit from capacity building, stating that:

“I guess at the same time we're also trying to build the capacity of the local council [in Kuala Lumpur] in terms of breaking down the barriers between them and the people. [...] For example, in Penang, every time we do a workshop we always invite the local council to be a part of it so they get to know the community and the people who are the voice of the community. If we're doing any

conservation work, we invite the engineering department of the local council to come and learn new things so that they can build their own capacity, so it's not only Think City."

Similar accounts in academic literature support the respondents' experiences. In their study of six cases, Yee & White (2016) found capacity building, alongside the building of trust and leadership, to be one of the three co-dependent conditions for impact in innovation and transformation projects. Moreover, the participants in the study recognised the significance of capacity and skill building to maintain the changes after the project had ended. In addition, Wang et al. (2016) stress designers' responsibility to foster the ability of local communities to create local solutions to local issues, instead of 'unique one-off solutions'.

Perhaps equally important as building capacity is creating a sense of ownership among the stakeholders or the community, which was underlined by the respondents, especially in projects involving the local community. One of the Think City architects noted that:

"The visioning workshop is some sort of formal engagement that we have, but we also need to have some informal engagement alongside while I'm on site managing the project. [...] Keep talking to them, asking how are they, just building the relationship. One good thing is one the uncles there, who owns the \$10 shirt shop, he kept saying that 'Oh, don't worry, I'll take care of this'. He even came to me and brought a plant so that I could plant his plants there. By building these relationships you earn the trust and hopefully a little bit of a sense of ownership. [...] It also helps with the hygiene issues I guess, because once people have taken ownership of the space, they want to keep it as clean as possible and they want to keep it safe."

The project manager of Water Warriors initiative on the University of Malaya campus ground also stressed the importance of the local university community being involved in cleaning up the lake, stating that:

“We tried the community to get involved as well [...] to come down and do clean ups. So, they know what's happening to the lake, that's why we have all this kind of rubbish, so the people involved appreciate it more and have more ownership.”

The team from CROSSs recounted their experiences during a project during which they co-designed a new space for a hospital on one of Thailand's islands. One of the issues they encountered involved the conservation of an old tree that was present on the hospital grounds:

“When we designed with the doctor, he said that he wanted to keep the history/ So, we designed a hole for the tree, but during the construction process the builder didn't know that. At the time we were really young, we weren't architects [yet], so the tree was cut, but the hole was still there. We and the doctor were so sad. But after three years the people of the island planted a new tree and this is the new one. Then I realised that we designed the social structure, they designed it together.”

Ownership of an initiative can even be formalised into a business. The entrepreneur who led the efforts at Pom Mahakan mentioned that there were talks about creating a form of collective ownership before the village was demolished:

“What I know is that they tried to establish a new legal entity, like a company. Mahakan company and Bangkok would be a partner of that company, for example 30%. Another 30% would be given to the local community and another 30% is for the architect association. They need to have a management team who takes care of the area. The local people would be the ones, but it depends on the elections who will be responsible for this area.”

The lack of ownership can be detrimental for an initiative, as illustrated by a case study by Freire, Borba & Diebold (2011), who describe a project where designers had come up with the idea for mothers from socially vulnerable families to earn extra income by producing necklaces by hand. The authors noted that when designers' involvement in the project ended, the mothers stopped producing the necklaces. The underlying reason appeared to be that the mothers did not perceive their products to have value,

because they were not involved in any of the other stages of the value chain, such as the creation and commercialisation. As a result, the mothers failed to identify themselves with the products they had made.

3. Creating enabling ecosystems for both (design) practitioners and their stakeholders by aligning with the interests of other actors

The precariousness of many of the case studies in this thesis (see also p.250), who in addition to helping local communities also need to sustain themselves, is an issue that is not being addressed sufficiently at the moment. One way that this could be solved is for practitioners to embrace precariousness as something that is inherent to their practice, as some might already reluctantly have. Designers, then, would have to abandon their utopian ideals and accept that they themselves will not be able to make a change nor will they witness it if it would indeed eventually happen. Such an approach would have a 'built in expiry date' and could, for example, entail building capacity and transferring ownership to the community, but in a very short timeframe. In a way, many cases described in literature are set up in this manner, although perhaps not deliberately. On one hand, this approach would suit the project-based mentality of designers, but whether such short-term community interactions would be sufficiently meaningful or create a lasting impact would be the question.

Another way could be through the creation of enabling ecosystems. However, the focus would not be solely on the community that the initiative aims to help, as suggested by Manzini (2015), but would also include the initiative itself. Given that design (practitioners) should indeed shift their focus to creating favourable environments that enable communities to co-create with one another, the respondents' experiences indicate that, in fact, no such environment exists for them; while practitioners are trying their best to sustain the initiatives that they have set up with the community, they themselves have difficulty to keep their own organisation together. In the same manner that communities are often helped by 'outsiders', which in this case are the practitioners, other outsiders, should be called on to support the practitioners.

Several respondents have noted that by aligning the goals of their initiative to those of the government or corporate businesses would make it more appealing for them to support the initiative. Co-create Charoenkrung's policy manager highlighted the importance of being creative when requesting for funding from other departments for the test day, their final event, stating that:

“At first, I tried to work within that budget, but after the project developed towards the idea of a test day, [the budget] was not enough. So, we were looking for more budget [...] This is Thai Health Development Board’s idea of a creative space for physical exercise. So, I put this objective in one point and try to match that [in the proposal]. Because you have to answer to your funder as well, right?”

The founder of Bangkok Chinatown tried to align his initiative to government policy on several levels. One of the initiative’s aims was to open the local pier for the public, which happened to coincide with a problem the local district wanted to have solved:

“In Chinatown there's a lot of Chinese restaurants, which can cause pollution, so the district office wants to solve this problem. [...] But we know that the district office controls the pier, so we created a project with them [...] and said that we want to open the [pier].”

Stressing the importance of alignment with the government’s when trying to discuss issues surrounding policy, he explained that:

“This year we focus on the UN sustainable goals, because if you want to talk policy, you need to pick the policies to talk to them in order for them to start to listen to us. We focus on number seven (SDG-7), it is the closest to our work <laughs>.”

Another major group of actors in design and social innovation are private corporations and organisations. Some of the respondents have realised the potential of tapping into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects to sustain their projects. One of the partners of 3nity design mentioned that:

“There are also clients who have some money through CSR. They may consider [social innovation projects] as well even though it's not connected directly to their business model. Some clients are starting to become aware that CSR is more than just giving money to somebody in need, but rather making something which is tangible and sustainable. It makes their money, their investment worthwhile. [...] Some clients are aware of their impact. Then again, there are not many

success cases to prove to them that it works. That's what we're doing now. Hopefully we can build enough success cases."

The Rambutan team also sees benefits in aligning with corporations, as one of the member states that:

"In Thailand, big companies need to have CSR projects, maybe through this channel we can get some support to do something."

Similarly, one of the designers involved with Pom Mahakan commented on the state of social innovation in Thailand, noting responsibility of corporations in this regard:

"So, social innovation is like, doing good, but you have no money. That's the perception of social enterprises. Some people think you cannot earn a lot of money doing that. It's more the mindset of doing good by charity or donation, but not by creating great change or impact. Those start-ups are trying to do social innovation, but in terms of the bigger picture for the government and the nation, there should be social innovation from big corporations."

As designers' involvement in an initiative is inherently finite, those who ultimately benefit from the initiative should also be responsible for sustaining it. The maintaining of healthy and meaningful social relationships between the actors and stakeholders involved is therefore imperative and should be prioritised over design-related goals and activities. The role of the designer in this process is to be whatever the community needs: be it an expert designer who designs a product or service, a facilitator in a co-creation session or an advocate for their issues when presenting to the local council. The designer is first and foremost a friend, who uses a combination of social and design skills to empower the community, manages perceptions and expectations, and helps them to connect to, and interact with, larger organisations and structures, such as governments and private corporations. Design education is currently still lagging behind design practice, with students coming into social innovation projects ill-prepared, due to their curriculum's focus on design methods instead of interpersonal and multidisciplinary skills. Creating and maintaining a sense of responsibility, and ultimately, ownership of the initiative is what should be aimed for, either through a

viable business model, such as a social enterprise, or a theoretical concept, such as *commoning* (Hillgren et al., 2016). Last, but not least, practitioners should also keep in mind that aside from creating enabling ecosystems for the community, they themselves are in need of such an ecosystem themselves in order to survive. Aligning their own goals with those of other stakeholders might be a way for practitioners to build this environment, in which they are supported by parties who have an interest in seeing their initiatives succeed.

Chapter 11 / Conclusion

This thesis provides new insights into how design and social innovation is practised, while at the same time addressing two major issues that seriously hinder knowledge development in its study. First, academic discourse on design and social innovation is currently dominated by western perspectives. Even though this need not necessarily be problematic, it becomes an issue when it is implicitly assumed that theories, methods and approaches that were developed in the west can be transferred and placed onto another, entirely different context. The fact that examples from other regions, such as Asia-Pacific, are underrepresented further contributes to the maintenance of the status quo. Second, studies on design and social innovation are often uncritical. The availability of evidence that design thinking and co-design, the perceived strengths of a design approach, have a significant effect on the social innovation process remains inconclusive. Yet, the prevailing academic narrative continues to highlight the various merits of design, while ignoring the weaknesses that have been pointed out by several authors (see section 2.2.1.3).

In order to contribute to the discourse from a practice-based perspective, field research was conducted in three cities in the Asia-Pacific region, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, where a total of 29 stakeholders who were involved in 16 initiatives were interviewed. During semi-structured interviews, guided by the Activity Theory framework, respondents were asked to elaborate on their motivations and the context in which their activities for the initiative took place. Several recurring themes were identified during the coding of the interviews (discussed in section 3.4). Further analysis using thematic analysis yielded several overarching themes which were classified under contextual themes that were mostly specific to certain cities (discussed in chapter 7), and three key themes (discussed in chapters 8, 9 and 10) leading to the formulation of three sets of recommendations. Figure 11-A presents a diagram of the relation of these recommendations to the contribution of knowledge, which will be elaborated upon further in this chapter.

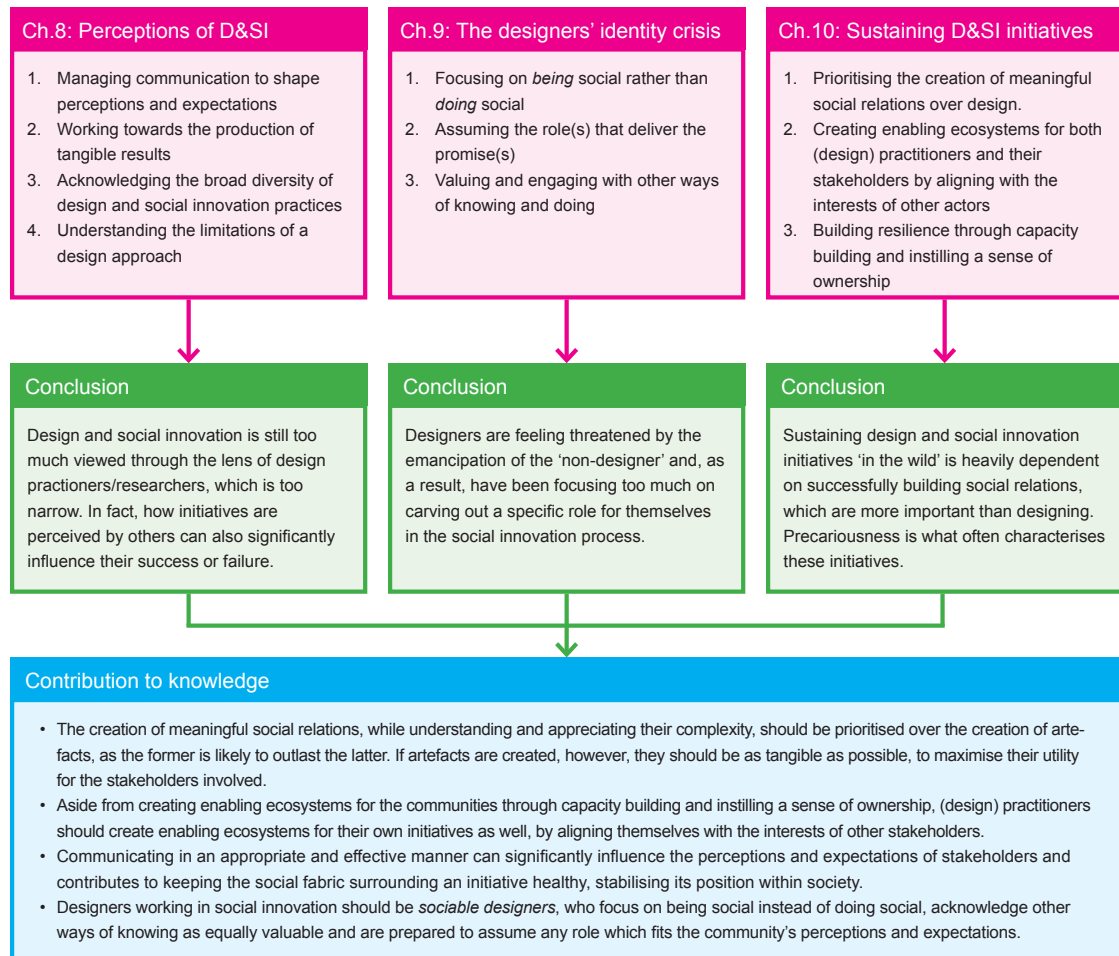


Figure 11-A. Diagram of the relation of the recommendations to the contribution to knowledge.

11.1 Revisiting the aims and objectives

The aim of this research was “to establish what constitutes design and social innovation in the Asia-Pacific region by learning from practitioners, academics, entrepreneurs, community members and other actors who initiate and participate in local initiatives” in order to obtain a greater understanding of how design and social innovation is practiced. The sixteen case studies, distributed over three cities in the Asia-Pacific region, demonstrate the breadth and complexity of design and social innovation practice (described in chapters 4-6). Each initiative has their own unique qualities and context, but at the same time shares many similarities, which have been captured in chapters 8-10. The Activity Theory framework (see figure 11-A), used for data collection, played a significant role in addressing the five objectives, which will be discussed separately in the following sections.

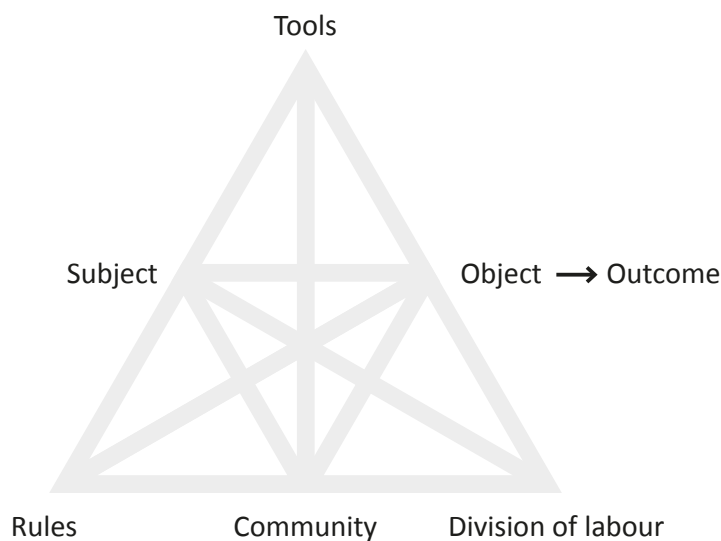


Figure 11-B The Activity System – adapted from Engeström (1999).

1. Establish the inner workings of initiatives

By encouraging the respondents to elaborate on the daily operations of the initiatives, in combination with the examination of the Activity Theory's 'subject-tools-object relationship' and the 'division of labour' (see also section 3.3.1), a detailed account could be constructed of what, how and why initiatives do what they do as well as the respondents' motivations, perceptions and expectations.

2. Identify the challenges and limitations that practitioners face

The Activity Theory categories of 'rules' and 'community', which were specifically addressed during interviews, provided insight into practitioners' limitations, challenges and issues. Many of the issues reported by respondents pertained to the perception and sustainability of their initiatives (discussed in sections 8.1 and 10.1, respectively).

3. Examine the power relations within initiatives

As the subject was deemed to be sensitive, questions regarding power relationships, both within initiatives and between different stakeholders, were not explicitly asked to the respondents. However, the configuration of the power relations could in most cases be established through indirect means. For example, by asking who was responsible for a certain aspect, decision or approach or by establishing what the limitations and rules were that respondents encountered.

4. Investigate what role design plays in the social innovation process

All of the initiatives were selected by the researcher on the basis of their incorporation of design in one way or another. However, it was not always immediately apparent why and in what way(s) design was used within certain initiatives. The interviews with the respondents, particularly those who did not have a design background, contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the roles that design and designers can play in social innovation practice.

5. Determine how value is perceived by the stakeholders involved

Similar to the topic of power relations, questions regarding the value created were not directly asked to the respondents, due to their unfamiliarity with the concept. Therefore, in most instances their opinion was asked of the eventual or current outcome of the initiative, and what their feelings of this outcome were. Although some respondents were frank in their opinions, in some cases it was not possible to establish the respondent's true beliefs or make a distinction between their professional or personal opinion.

11.2 Summary of findings

Context-specific issues (Chapter 7)

Most of the issues that were brought forward by respondents were shared among two or three of the cities studied. However, there were some themes that were prevalent in one particular city:

- Hong Kong: the lack of physical space and urban poverty were two intertwined issues acting as drivers and/or conditions of several initiatives, impacting the respondents' current and future activities.
- Bangkok: respondents often had a negative impression of the government's attitude and policies towards social innovation initiatives. In addition, social hierarchy strongly permeates all aspects of Thai social life and influenced initiatives on several levels.
- Kuala Lumpur: some of the respondents expressed concerns regarding institutional racism towards non-Malays and religious censorship by the government.

The perception of design and social innovation (Chapter 8)

Academic literature is mostly concerned with the *framing* of design and social innovation as a field of academia and/or practice (discussed in chapter 2). However, the *perception* of design and social innovation, or design in general, has received far less attention. Chapter 8 therefore explored how both design and design and social innovation are perceived by four different groups of actors.

1. Non-designer practitioners:

- acknowledge designers' creativity, but do not believe designers have a unique position in the social innovation process.
- can take on roles traditionally assigned to the designer.
- can be in charge of the entire social innovation process.

2. The (local) government:

- can exert considerable influence.
- can have an ambiguous attitude towards social innovation.
- will often pursue its own interests.

3. The (larger) community:

- does not necessarily see design in a positive light.
- views design as superficial, expensive and luxurious (Hong Kong and Bangkok).
- perceives designers as dishonest and does not hold them in high regard (Hong Kong and Bangkok).
- can resist the initiative's efforts in various ways.
- values tangible results, which works as a motivational factor.

4. The local design industry:

- can often antagonise practitioners.
- does not recognise design and social innovation as a legitimate form of design.

From the perceptions of these groups of actors, three main issues were identified:

- The negative perception of design(ers)
- Resistance to design and social innovation initiatives
- The role of power relations and politics

In order to address these issues, four recommendations were proposed to reposition design and social innovation:

1. Managing communication to shape perceptions and expectations
2. Working towards the production of tangible results
3. Acknowledging the broad diversity of design and social innovation practices
4. Understanding the limitations of a design approach

The designer's identity crisis (chapter 9)

Two major issues have posed significant challenges to the designer's role in social innovation. First, the democratisation of the design process has led authors to suggest a variety of roles that designers could fulfil in the social innovation process. Second, the various weaknesses of design approaches to social innovation are rooted in design education and have always been present (see chapter 2). The respondents' perspectives have elaborated on the designer's role in the process:

- Designers or architects tended to agree with academic views on their role in the process.
- Non-designers did not think that designers had a special status.
- Designers often have to build trust and/or friendships with partners or other stakeholders.
- Designers found the lack of control in the social innovation process challenging.
- The transfer of professionalism as symbolic capital from the designer to the non-designer might have caused the insecurity experienced by designers regarding their role in social innovation.

Based on these insights, a new designer's persona was suggested. The importance of meaningful social relationships, flexibility in roles and recognition of different approaches informed three suggestions of professional behaviours that might be beneficial for designers working in social innovation:

1. Focusing on *being* social rather than *doing* social
2. Assuming the role(s) that deliver the promise(s)
3. Valuing and engaging with other ways of knowing and doing

Sustaining design and social innovation initiatives

Few academic studies have thus far explored how initiatives can be sustained in practice. The respondents' experiences therefore proved insightful, highlighting several issues:

- Upscaling initiatives can be problematic, particularly due to the shortage of manpower.
- Institutionalisation can have negative effects as it is unable to replicate the initiative's social fabric.
- Constrictions in the business model adopted, or the lack of one, hampered replication efforts, funding and operational freedom.
- The lack of government policy and the inability or unwillingness to support social innovation.
- The perception of social innovation being charity or volunteer-based work and therefore of lesser value.
- The lack of public space, along with the private ownership of these spaces and the uncooperative attitude of the owners.

In addition, several strategies were reported by practitioners to be helpful:

- Building capacity allows the initiative to be carried by the local community and was overall deemed to be beneficial for other stakeholders as well.
- Creating a sense of ownership among the community members helped to maintain the initiative and push it towards independence.
- Aligning the initiative with the interests of other actors increased the chances of survival for initiatives.

The insights from the practitioners resulted in the formulation of three pragmatic objectives:

1. Prioritising the creation of meaningful social relations over design
2. Creating enabling ecosystems for both (design) practitioners and their stakeholders by aligning with the interests of other actors
3. Building resilience through capacity building and instilling a sense of ownership

11.3 Contribution to knowledge

The insights and experiences shared by the respondents in this study provide a basis for a deeper understanding of how design and social innovation is practised ‘in the wild’ and in contexts that have barely been explored. A critical analysis of design and social innovation discourse underscores that the mainstream view is mostly preoccupied with demonstrating its own validity in social innovation, adopting a narrow, uncritical, design-centric perspective and a disproportionate focus on design methods (see section 2.2.1.3). Furthermore, the emancipation of the non-designer appears only to be skin deep; even though all are supposed to be equal in the design process, designers are still slightly more equal than others.

The research findings paint a picture of design and social innovation that is remarkably different. Its field of practice is significantly broader and varied than thus far assumed, with diverse groups of practitioners engaging in different activities in a variety of contexts, but sharing similar concerns, challenges and hardships. The academic discipline of design and social innovation has somehow failed to keep up with the developments in the field of practice it studies, its gaze becoming increasingly blurred as time progresses. This ‘selective blindness’ might be attributed to design and social innovation studies being too firmly attached to design, which celebrates creativity, innovation and uniqueness. It is acknowledged that these characteristics can play an important role in the social innovation process. However, in order for design to make a truly valuable contribution to social innovation, its principal and ultimate objective should be to ensure that initiatives can move beyond an initial exploration or pilot stage and are able to survive independently in the long run.

Current approaches to sustain design and social innovation, through the creation of favourable environments, upscaling and replicating, or the preservation of ideas, concepts and examples, are still based on design-centric, western, integrity approaches, emphasising ‘hard’, formal systems and structures. In fact, the research demonstrates that non-design-centric, non-western, intimacy approaches emphasising ‘soft’, informal, fluid relations and communication are equally, or even more important.

For example, instead of focusing solely on the *framing* of design and social innovation, many of the issues that threatened the initiatives were, in fact, related to the *perception* of design and designers by others, which should be considered as well. Or, instead of attempting to develop and implement design methods to address a complex social issue, which is difficult to achieve, efforts should be directed towards building

social relations and managing the communication of the stakeholders involved, as they will be the most likely to sustain the initiative in the long run.

Likewise, rather than assuming that design can solve everything, the contextual and political dimensions should be understood and taken into consideration, as these can have a profound impact on an initiative's chance of survival. Designers need not be concerned with defining what they might be, but what they can do to ensure that the initiative can stand on its own feet.

The contribution of knowledge to the field of design and social innovation therefore consists of the following insights:

- The creation of meaningful social relations, while understanding and appreciating their complexity, should be prioritised over the creation of artefacts, as the former is likely to outlast the latter. If artefacts are created, however, they should be as tangible as possible, to maximise their utility for the stakeholders involved.
- Aside from creating enabling ecosystems for the communities through capacity building and instilling a sense of ownership, practitioners should create enabling ecosystems for their own initiatives as well, by aligning themselves with the interests of other stakeholders.
- Communicating in an appropriate and effective manner can significantly influence the perceptions and expectations of stakeholders and contributes to keeping the social fabric surrounding an initiative healthy, stabilising its position within society.
- Designers working in social innovation should be *sociable designers*, who focus on *being* social instead of *doing* social, acknowledge other ways of knowing as equally valuable and are prepared to assume any role which fits the community's perceptions and expectations.

Design and social innovation should let go of its utopian beliefs and adopt a more pragmatic, flexible and open-minded approach. The time has come to shift the emphasis in design and social innovation from the word 'design' to the word 'social'.

11.4 Limitations of the study

Some limitations can be identified that might have influenced the findings presented in the thesis. The limitations concerning data collection have been discussed in section 3.3.6.

This study of initiatives in Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia does not aspire to represent design and social innovation in other countries in the region, nor do the findings from the heavily urbanised cities of Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur necessarily correlate with development in their respective, predominantly rural, country sides. However, the key themes in the thesis were derived from multiple respondents involved in different initiatives, operating in different contexts and often based in different cities.

11.5 Recommendations for further research

The observations from the respondents provide fertile ground for new ideas and directions in design and social innovation. Building on some of the recommendations that have already been discussed in the previous chapters, further research could explore the social, business and political dimensions of design and social innovation. In particular, the many dimensions and complexities of social relations and how they exert influence over the design process. But also how they can be constructed, grown and managed in a more effective manner, or what business-focused approaches could be suitable for initiatives that are operating in certain contexts. Closer collaboration with other disciplines, a known weakness of design, should be encouraged and ultimately become established. Finally, a more thorough understanding of contextual and political factors could facilitate the development of strategies that would bring design and social innovation closer to government policy.

11.6 Personal reflection on the research process

When I started my pursuit of a PhD degree, expanding my field of expertise from being a design practitioner towards becoming a design researcher as well, I thought that my perspective on design and the design profession was already quite well-developed. From working in the creative industry for more than a decade, I had the feeling that

there was not much else for me to learn when it came to design. However, during my MA course in Design Cultures, I learned something new: how to critically reflect on design, and in particular the narratives surrounding it. But it was not until I started doing the field research for this PhD that my views on design shifted on a more fundamental level. Up until then, I too, was convinced that designers were a 'special' kind of people, who possessed skills that others did not have. Although I still think that designers are better at doing design than those who do not have the same background, I no longer believe that designers are somehow better equipped to address complex (social) issues than others, especially not by themselves.

What I learned from all the practitioners that I have interviewed during the field study, and in some cases, actually seeing the work they are doing and the environment they are working in, is that working in this space is extremely challenging. It is a completely different universe from the safe environment of commercial design, where as a designer your activities are structured and generally have few consequences. In contrast, working as a (design) practitioner in social innovation means that you constantly have to improvise, taking into account the interests of a variety of stakeholders, some of whom can be hostile towards you, and keep both the people you are trying to help as well as yourself afloat at the same time. It was also made me realise that as a researcher and a social innovation practitioner, there always has to be some kind of reciprocity involved; you cannot only keep taking from the people you are working with. Whenever possible, there should be something useful offered in return.

As someone whose origins lie in Indonesia, working in the contexts of Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia, did not bring up significant cultural difficulties. Familiarity with Hong Kong, where I lived and studied for three years, and Malaysia, of which the culture and language are relatively close to Indonesia, were beneficial in that respect. Thailand, however, was a slightly different. Although I felt that there were many similarities with Indonesian culture, there were slight differences, which in some cases made me doubt whether I had behaved appropriately during interactions with local people. It was exactly those small nuances that made me aware that although the culture seems similar, that I should not assume that it is the same.

But perhaps most importantly, I learned about the importance of building social relationships, which was also one of the main findings of this thesis as I have experienced this to be the same for myself as a researcher as well. Although the writing process took quite some time, the building of the relationships with the respondents took almost

equally long. Talking to them about their experiences and learning from them has also taught me a lot about myself and how I should both practice and research design. For this, I would like to thank everyone again who has helped me to make this thesis possible. Each and every person I have met during this process is source of inspiration and I sincerely hope they will keep finding ways to keep continuing their work, which is important to all of us.

List of references

- Akama, Y., Hagen, P., & Whaanga-Schollum, D. (2019). Respectful, Reciprocal, and Relational Co-designing with Indigenous People. *Design and Culture*.
- Akama, Y., & Yee, J. (2016). Seeking stronger plurality: Intimacy and integrity in designing for social innovation. *Cumulus 2016*. Hong Kong.
- Amaral, M., Bento, C., & Nugroho, W. (2014). *Effective Seed Storage in Timor-Leste* (S. Walsh, Ed.). Nairobi: Catholic Relief Services.
- Armstrong, L., Bailey, J., Julier, G., & Kimbell, L. (2014). *Social Design Futures: HEI Research and the AHRC*.
- Ashoka. (2019). About Ashoka. Retrieved March 28, 2019, from <https://www.ashoka.org/en-gb/about-ashoka>
- AUSTRADE. (2015). *Annual Report*. Retrieved from https://www.austrade.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1401/Austrade_Annual_Report_2014_15.pdf.aspx
- Baek, J. S., & Cho, E. J. (2012). Enrichment of social relations in collaborative service: Social networks and Sociability. *Cumulus 2012*.
- Baek, J. S., Kim, S., & Harimoto, T. (2019). The Effect of Cultural Differences on a Distant Collaboration for Social Innovation: A Case Study of Designing for Precision Farming in Myanmar and South Korea. *Design and Culture*.
- Bakhshi, H., & Throsby, D. (2010). *Cultures of Innovation, an Economic Analysis of Innovation in Arts and Cultural Organisations*. London: NESTA.
- Bala-Miller, P., Marras, I., & Zacarias, A. (2008). Creative Communities: Their role and impact on welfare and development (F. Jégou & E. Manzini, Eds.). *Collaborative Services: Social Innovation and Design for Sustainability*, pp. 133–136. Milan: Edizioni POLI.design.
- Bangkok Post. (2018, April 21). Big Problems in the City. Retrieved March 28, 2019, from Bangkok Post website: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1449610/big-problems-in-the-city>
- Bello, P. (2007). A Design Milieu? Nodes and links for building a structure for design. In S. Miettinen (Ed.), *Design your action: Social design in practice*. Helsinki: University of Art and Design Helsinki.

- Björgvinsson, E., Ehn, P., & Hillgren, P.-A. (2012). Design Things and Design Thinking: Contemporary Participatory Design Challenges. *Design Issues*, 28(3), 101–116. https://doi.org/10.1162/DESI_a_00165
- Björgvinsson, E., Ehn, P., & Hillgren, P.-A. (2010). Participatory design and “democratizing innovation.” *PDC’10*. Sydney.
- Blackler, F. (1993). Knowledge and the Theory of Organisations: Organisations as Activity Systems and the Reframing of Management. *Journal of Management Studies*, 30(6), 863–884.
- Bloor, D. (1999). Anti-Latour. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 30(1), 81–112.
- Borzaga, C., & Bodini, R. (2012). *What to Make of Social Innovation? Towards a Framework for Policy Development* (No. 36/12).
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). Forms of Capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood.
- Boyle, J. (1998). Cultural influences on implementing environmental impact assessment: insights from Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 18(2), 95–116.
- BRAC. (2019). Who We Are. Retrieved March 28, 2019, from <http://www.bracinternational.nl/en/who-we-are/>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Bristol, G. (2009). Rendered invisible: Urban Planning, Cultural Heritage and Human Rights. In M. Langfield, W. Logan, & M. Nic Craith (Eds.), *Cultural Diversity, Heritage and Human Rights: Intersections in Theory and Practice*. Routledge.
- Brown, T., & Wyatt, J. (2010). Design Thinking for Social Innovation. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, (Winter), 30–35.
- Bull, M. (2008). Challenging Tensions: Critical, Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives on Social enterprise. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 14(5), 268–275.
- Burns, C., Cottam, H., Vanstone, C., & Winhall, J. (2006). *Transformation Design*.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge.

- Cairns, G. (2017). Can Design Inform Effective Social Innovation? *The Design Journal*, 20(6), 725–734.
- Cairns, G., & Matthews, J. (2015). Managing for Sustained Performance: Collaborative Realisation by Design. *ANZAM Conference, Queenstown, NZ*.
- Cajaiba-Santana, G. (2014). Social innovation: Moving the field forward. A conceptual framework. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, 82, 42–51.
- Calvo, M., & De Rosa, A. (2017). Design for social sustainability. A reflection on the role of the physical realm in facilitating community co-design. *The Design Journal*, 20(sup1), S1705–S1724.
- Calvo, M., Sclater, M., & Smith, P. (2016). Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and Informal Learning as a key component of co-design practice in a community initiative. *ESREA: 8th Triennial European Research Conference, Maynooth University, Ireland, 8-11 September 2016*.
- Camacho Duarte, O., Lulham, R., & Kaldor, L. (2011). Co-designing out crime. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 155–168.
- Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 10, 807–815.
- Catoir-Brisson, M.--Julie, Vial, S., Deni, M., & Watkin, T. (2016). *From the specificity of the project in design to social innovation by design: a contribution*.
- Census and Statistics Department. (2016). *Thematic Household Survey Report No. 60: Housing conditions of sub-divided units in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong.
- Census and Statistics Department. (2017). *Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report 2016*. Retrieved from [https://www.povertyrelief.gov.hk/eng/pdf/Hong_Kong_Poverty_Situation_Report_2016\(2017.11.17\).pdf](https://www.povertyrelief.gov.hk/eng/pdf/Hong_Kong_Poverty_Situation_Report_2016(2017.11.17).pdf)
- Chan, V. (2018, July 6). More Hongkongers opting for burial sites in mainland China and the US as a lack of local cemetery space drives up prices. *South China Morning Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/community/article/2154150/more-hongkongers-opting-burial-sites-mainland-china-and-us>
- Chandran, R. (2018, November 23). Activists, planners oppose “unnecessary” Bangkok river promenade. *Reuters World News*.

- Chatzakis, E. (2014). Maintaining Agility: A study of obscure New Product Development practices in small and medium sized manufacturing enterprises to understand how they maintain relevance to their markets. Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Chick, A. (2012). Design for Social Innovation: Emerging Principles and Approaches. *Iridescent*, 2(1), 52–64.
- Chon, H. (2018). Social Innovation through Design. A Model for Design Education. *Cumulus Paris: To Get There*. Paris.
- Chow, Patrick, Y. (2017). *To explore the Issues of subdivided housing and the measures to improve it in Hong Kong*. University of Hong Kong.
- Chung, K. W. (2014). *The issue of subdivided units in Hong Kong: Licensing as a solution?* City University of Hong Kong.
- Cipolla, C. (2018). Designing for Vulnerability: Interpersonal Relations and Design. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 4(1), 111–122.
- Cipolla, C., & Moura, H. (2012). Social Innovation in Brazil Through Design Strategy. *Design Management Journal*, 6(1), 40–51.
- Cipolla, C., Serpa, B., & Afonso, R. (2017). *Design for social innovation between university and the broader society: a mutual learning process*.
- Costa, A., & Kallick, B. (1993). Through the Lens of a Critical Friend. *Educational Leadership: Journal of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development*, 51(2), 49–51.
- Cross, N. (1982). Designerly ways of knowing. *Design Studies*, 3(4), 221–227.
- Davidson, A. D. (1998). I Want My Censored MTV: Malaysia's Censorship Regime Collides with the Economic Realities of the Twenty-First Century. *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, 31(97), 97–151.
- Dawson, P., & Daniel, L. (2010). Understanding social innovation: a provisional framework. *International Journal of Technology Management*, 51(1), 9–21.
- DBKL. (2019). *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020*. Retrieved from <http://www.dbkl.gov.my/pskl2020/english/environment/index.htm>
- Denning, P., & Dunham, P. (2010). *The Innovator's Way*. Boston: MIT Press.
- Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2018). Demographic Statistics Fourth Quarter (Q4) 2018, Malaysia. Retrieved February 27, 2019, from https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemebByCat&cat=430&bul_id=UzliaFYxbW1nSFovbDYrLzFFR29zZz09&menu_id=L0pheU43NWJwRWVSZklWdzQ4TIhUUT09

- Desai, G. (2008). An activity theory framework for industrial design. *Journal of Design Research*, 7(3), 304–316.
- DESIAP. (2019). Design and Social Innovation in Asia-Pacific. Retrieved March 29, 2019, from <http://desiap.org/>
- Design Council. (2019). Social Innovation. Retrieved March 29, 2019, from <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/social-innovation>
- DESI. (2019). About DESI. Retrieved March 28, 2019, from <https://www.desisnetwork.org/about/>
- Di Prete, B., & Mazzarello, M. (2017). Towards a new “urban sensitivity”. The role of design as support to social innovation. *The Design Journal*, 20(sup1), S3589–S3600.
- Diedricha, A., Uphamb, P., Levidowe, L., & Van den Hove, F. (2011). Framing Environmental Sustainability Challenges for Research and Innovation in European Policy Agendas. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 14(8), 935–939.
- DiSalvo, C., Lodato, T., Fries, L., Schechter, B., & Barnwell, T. (2011). The collective articulation of issues as design practice. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 185–197.
- Dudman, J. (2014, September 16). Kuala Lumpur: A city in traffic gridlock, striving for sustainability. *The Guardian*.
- Dwan, D., Sawicki, M., & Wong, J. (2013). *Subdivided Housing Issues of Hong Kong: Causes and Solutions*. Hong Kong Institute of Education.
- Ebbighausen, R. (2018, October 16). Thailand on its way back to democracy? *Deutsche Welle*. Retrieved from <https://p.dw.com/p/36dWj>
- Ehn, P. (2008). Participation in Design Things. *PDC'08*, 92–101.
- Emilson, A., Seravalli, A., & Hillgren, P.-A. (2011). Dealing with Dilemmas: Participatory Approaches in Design for Social Innovation. *Swedish Design Journal*, (1), 23–29.
- EMUDE. (2019). Emude Creative Communities: Emerging User Demands for Sustainable Solutions. Retrieved March 28, 2019, from <http://www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/emude/>
- Engeström, Y. (1999). Expansive Visibilization of Work: An Activity-Theoretical Perspective. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 8(1), 63–93.
- Engeström, Y. (2000). Activity theory as a framework for analyzing and redesigning work. *Ergonomics*, 43(7).
- Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive Learning at Work: Toward an activitytheoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133–156.

- Erözçelik, A., & Taşdizen, B. (2017). Designing on the spot: Learning from the social design projects in Gökçeada/İmros island. *Design for Next: 12th EAD Conference*. Rome.
- Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the Pluriverse: New Ecologies for the Twenty-First Century*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- European Commission. (2013). *Guide to Social Innovation*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eip/ageing/library/guide-social-innovation_en
- Fiske, A. P. (1992). The Four Elementary Forms of Sociality: Framework for a Unified Theory of Social Relations. *Psychological Review*, 99(4), 689–723.
- Franz, H.-W., Hochgerner, J., & Howaldt, J. (2012). *Challenge Social Innovation: Potentials for Business, Social Entrepreneurship, Welfare and Civil Society* (2nd ed.). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Freire, K., Borba, G., & Diebold, L. (2011). Participatory Design as an Approach to Social Innovation. *Design Philosophy Papers*, 9(3), 235–250.
- Frogdesign. (2012). *Collective Action Toolkit*. frogdesign.
- Fry, T. (2015). Design: On the Question of “The Imperative.” *Design and Culture*, 7(3), 417–422.
- Gamman, L., & Thorpe, A. (2018). Makeright—Bags of Connection: Teaching Design Thinking and Making in Prison to Help Build Empathic and Resilient Communities. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 4(1), 91–110.
- Gaudio, C. Del, Franzato, C., & De Oliveira, A. J. (2016). Sharing Design Agency with Local Partners in Participatory Design. *International Journal of Design*, 10(1), 53–64.
- GaWC. (2019). The World According to GaWC 2018. Retrieved September 1, 2019, from <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2018t.html>
- Gould, R. V. (2002). The Origins of Status Hierarchies: A Formal Theory and Empirical Test. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(5), 1143–1178.
- GovHK. (2019). Hong Kong – the Facts. Retrieved February 27, 2019, from <https://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/facts.htm>
- Grimm, R., Fox, C., Baines, S., & Albertson, K. (2013). Social innovation, an answer to contemporary societal challenges? Locating the concept in theory and practice. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(4), 436–455.

- Hillgren, P.-A., Seravalli, A., & Agger Eriksen, M. (2016). Counter-hegemonic practices; dynamic interplay between agonism, commoning and strategic design. *Strategic Design Research Journal*, 9(2), 89–99.
- Hillgren, P.-A., Seravalli, A., & Emilson, A. (2011). Prototyping and infrastructuring in design for social innovation. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 69–183.
- Huybrechts, L., Schepers, S., & Dreessen, K. (2014). Participation and Risky Trade-offs. In L. Huybrechts (Ed.), *Participation is Risky: Approaches to Joint Creative Processes*. Amsterdam: Valiz.
- IDEO.org. (2015). *Field Guide to Human-Centered Design* (1st ed.). IDEO.org.
- Ilstedt Hjelm, S., & Mårtens, P. (2011). *Design as Enabler of Social Innovation: A Swedish perspective*.
- Im, E.-O., Page, R., Lin, L.-C., Tsai, H.-M., & Cheng, C.-Y. (2004). Rigor in cross-cultural nursing research. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 41, 891–899.
- Impact Hub. (2019). What is Impact Hub? Retrieved March 29, 2019, from <https://impacthub.net/>
- Irwin, T. (2015). Transition Design: A Proposal for a New Area of Design Practice, Study, and Research. *Design and Culture*, 7(2), 229–246.
- Iversen, O. S., & Dindler, C. (2014). Sustaining participatory design initiatives. *CoDesign*, 10(3–4), 153–170.
- Janzer, C. L., & Weinstein, L. S. (2014). Social Design and Neocolonialism. *Design and Culture*, 6(3), 327–344.
- Jayantha, W. M., & Hui, E. C. M. (2012). Determinants of Housing Consumption and Residential Crowding in Hong Kong. *Journal of Facilities Management*, 10(2), 150–172.
- Jégou, F., & Manzini, E. (2008). *Collaborative Services: Social Innovation and Design for Sustainability*. Milan: POLI.design.
- Johansson-Sköldberg, U., Woodilla, J., & Çetinkaya, M. (2013). Design Thinking: Past, Present and Possible Futures. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 22(2), 121–146.
- Jonassen, D. H., & Rohrer-Murphy, L. (1999). Activity theory as a framework for designing constructivist learning environments. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 47(1), 61–79.
- Jones, P. D., & VanPatter, G. K. (2009). Understanding design 1,2,3,4: The rise of visual sensemaking. *NextD Journal*.

- Kang, L. (2016). Social Design as a Creative Device in Developing Countries: The Case of a Handcraft Pottery Community in Cambodia. *International Journal of Design*, 10(3), 65–74.
- Kaptelinin, V., & Nardi, B. A. (2006). *Acting with Technology: Activity Theory and Interaction Design*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kasulis, T. (2002). *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophical and cultural difference*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- Kaygan, P. (2017). ‘Arty’ versus ‘Real’ Work: Gendered Relations between Industrial Designers and Engineers in Interdisciplinary Work Settings. *The Design Journal*, 17(1), 73–90.
- Kiem, M. (2011). Designing the Social, and the Politics of Social Innovation. *Design Philosophy Papers*, 9(3), 207–216.
- Kimbell, L. (2011). Rethinking Design Thinking: Part I. *Design and Culture*, 3(3), 285–306.
- Kimbell, L. (2012). Rethinking Design Thinking: Part II. *Design and Culture*, 4(2), 129–148.
- Kimbell, L., & Julier, J. (2012). *The Social Design Methods Menu*.
- King, N. (2004). Using Templates in the Thematic Analysis of Text. In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.), *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research* (pp. 279–292). London; Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Kitiyadisai, K. (2005). Privacy rights and protection: foreign values in modern Thai context. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 7, 17–26.
- Komatsu, T., Celi, M., Rizzo, F., & Deserti, A. (2016). A case based discussion on the role of Design Competences in Social Innovation. *Design Research Society 50th Anniversary Conference*. Brighton.
- Koskinen, I., & Hush, G. (2016). Utopian, Molecular and Sociological Social Design. *International Journal of Design*, 10(1), 65–71.
- Kuutti, K. (1996). Activity theory as a potential framework for human-computer interaction research. In B. A. Nardi (Ed.), *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction* (pp. 17–44). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lam, C. (2015). From Light Home to SIE Fund: a crossover between helping the poor and promoting social innovation. Retrieved September 24, 2018, from <https://www.povertyrelief.gov.hk/eng/blog060715.html>

- Lam, P., & Liu, J. (2018, August 20). Nearly half of Hong Kong flats rent for US\$2,550 a month – 70 per cent of median household income. *South China Morning Post*.
- Latour, B. (1996). On actor network theory: A few clarifications plus more than a few complications. *Soziale Welt*, 47, 369–381.
- Lauche, K. (2005). Collaboration Among Designers: Analysing an Activity for System Development. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 14(3), 253–282.
- Law, J. (1992). Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity. *Systems Practice*, 5(4), 379–393.
- Leadbeater, C. (2007). *Social enterprise and social innovation: Strategies for the next ten years*.
- Lee, Y. (2008). Design participation tactics: the challenges and new roles for designers in the co-design process. *CoDesign*, 4(1), 31–50.
- Lee, Y. (2012). *The Ingenuity of Ageing*. London: Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design.
- Legislative Council Secretariat. (2018). *Statistical Highlights ISSH22/17-18: Land supply and utilization in Hong Kong*. Retrieved from <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1718issh22-land-supply-and-utilization-in-hong-kong-20180430-e.pdf>
- Liang, P. (2018, September 21). Housing not the only key issue Hong Kong government needs to tackle: China Daily contributor. *Straits Times*.
- Light, A., & Akama, Y. (2014). Structuring Future Social Relations: The Politics of Care in Participatory Practice. *PDC '14 Proceedings of the 13th Participatory Design Conference: Research Papers*, 151–160.
- Lock, A., & Strong, T. (2010). *Social Constructionism: Sources and Stirrings in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- MaD. (2019). About MaD. Retrieved February 27, 2019, from <http://www.mad.asia/about?lang=en>
- Magee, J. C., & Galinsky, A. D. (2008). Social hierarchy: The self-reinforcing nature of power and status. In *The Academy of Management Annals* (Vol. 1, pp. 351–398).
- Malaysian Investment Development Authority. (2019). Facts on Malaysia. Retrieved February 27, 2019, from <http://www.mida.gov.my/home/facts-on-malaysia/posts/>
- Manzini, E. (2013). Making Things Happen: Social Innovation and Design. *Design Issues*, 30(1), 57–66.
- Manzini, E. (2015). *Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Manzini, E., Baek, J. S., & Zhong, F. (2010). Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability: Hypothesis on a viable leapfrog strategy in China. *Asian Design Journal*, 5(March 2010), 104–135.
- Manzini, E., & Thorpe, A. (2018). Weaving People and Places: Art and Design for Resilient Communities. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 4(1), 1–10.
- Margolin, V., & Margolin, S. (2002). A “Social Model” of Design: Issues of Practice and Research. *Design Issues*, 18(4), 24–30.
- Markus, T. A. (1972). A doughnut model of the environment and its design. In *Design Participation*. London: Academy Editions.
- Markussen, T. (2017). Disentangling ‘the social’ in social design’s engagement with the public realm. *CoDesign*, 13(3), 160–174.
- Melles, G., De Vere, I., & Mistic, V. (2011). Socially responsible design: thinking beyond the triple bottom line to socially responsive and sustainable product design. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 143–154.
- Meroni, A. (2007). *Creative communities: People inventing sustainable ways of living* (A. Meroni, Ed.). Milan: Edizioni POLI.design.
- Meroni, A., Fassi, D., & Simeone, G. (2013). Design for social innovation as a form of designing activism: An action format. *Social Frontiers*. London.
- Miettinen, R., & Hasu, M. (2002). Articulating User Needs in Collaborative Design: Towards an Activity-Theoretical Approach. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 11(1), 129–151.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2007). DELINKING: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), 449–514.
- Mignolo, W. D., & Tlostanova, M. V. (2006). Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2), 205–221.
- Mohamad, Z. F., Abd Kadir, S. N., Nasaruddin, A., Sakai, N., Mohamed Zuki, F., Hussein, H., ... Amin Mohd Salleh, M. S. (2018). Heartware as a driver for campus sustainability: Insights from an action-oriented exploratory case study. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 196, 1086–1096.

- Mohamad, Z. F., Nasaruddin, A., Abd Kadir, S. N., Musa, M. N., Ong, B., & Sakai, N. (2015). Community-based shared values as a 'Heart-ware' driver for integrated watershed management: Japan-Malaysia policy learning perspective. *Journal of Hydrology*, 530, 317–327.
- Moran, U. C., Harrington, U. G., & Sheehan, N. (2018). On Country Learning. *Design and Culture*, 10(1), 71–79.
- Morelli, N. (2007). Social Innovation and New Industrial Contexts: Can Designers "Industrialize" Socially Responsible Solutions? *Design Issues*, 23(4), 3–21.
- Morelli, N., Aguilar, M., Concilio, G., De Götzen, A., Mulder, I., Pedersen, J., & Klitgaard Torntoft, L. (2017). Framing Design to support Social Innovation: The Open4Citizens Project. *The Design Journal*, 20(sup1).
- Mulder, N. (1996). *Inside Thai Culture: Interpretations of Everyday Life*. Amsterdam: The Pepin Press.
- Mulgan, G. (2006). *Social innovation: what is it, why it matters and how it can be accelerated*. London: Young Foundation.
- Mulgan, G. (2009). Strengths, weaknesses and a way forward? Retrieved from <http://www.socialinnovationexchange.org/designforsi/blog?page=1>
- Mulgan, G. (2014). *Design in public and social innovation: What works and what could work better*. Retrieved from NESTA website: https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/design_in_public_and_social_innovation.pdf
- Mulgan, G. (2017). Social innovation – the last and next decade. Retrieved March 29, 2019, from <http://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/social-innovation-last-and-next-decade>
- Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J., & Mulgan, G. (2010). The Open Book of Social Innovation. In *Social Innovator series*. Retrieved from The Young Foundation & NESTA website: <http://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/The-Open-Book-of-Social-Innovationg.pdf>
- Needham, C. (2007). Realizing the Potential of Co-Production: Negotiating Improvements in Public Services. *Social Policy and Society*, 7(2), 221–231.
- NESTA. (2014). *DIY: Development Impact & You*. NESTA.
- NESTA. (2019). About Us. Retrieved March 28, 2019, from <https://www.nesta.org.uk/about-us/>
- NIA. (2019). Vision. Retrieved March 29, 2019, from <https://www.nia.or.th/doveaf2lux.html>

- Nicolini, D., Gherardi, S., & Yanow, D. (2003). *Knowing in Organizations : A Practice-based Approach*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.
- NSO. (2010). *Preliminary Report: The 2010 Population and Housing census*.
- Obata, A., Ohori, K., Kobayashi, N., Hochreuter, H., & Kensing, F. (2012). Challenges of participatory design for social innovation: A case study in aging society. *PDC12 Participatory Design*. Roskilde, Denmark.
- Oeij, P. R. A., Klein Hesselink, J., & Dhondt, S. (2010). Sociale innovatie in Nederland: stilstand is achteruitgang [Workplace Innovation in the Netherlands: Stagnation Means Decline]. *Tijdschrift Voor HRM*, 1, 7–32.
- Olivastri, C. (2017). Con[temporary]. Design for social innovation. *The Design Journal*, 20(sup1).
- Onafuwa, D. (2018). Allies and Decoloniality: A Review of the Intersectional Perspectives on Design, Politics, and Power Symposium. *Design and Culture*, 10(1), 7–15.
- Panarat, T., & Tanakasempipat, P. (2017, May 21). Three years after coup, junta is deeply embedded in Thai life. *Reuters World News*.
- Papanek, V. (1971). *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* (1st ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Papanek, V. (1985). *Design for the Real World* (2nd ed.). London: Thames & Hudson.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pelzang, R., & Hutchinson, A. M. (2018). Establishing Cultural Integrity in Qualitative Research: Reflections From a Cross-Cultural Study. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17, 1–9.
- Penin, L., Staszowski, E., & Brown, S. (2015). Teaching the Next Generation of Transdisciplinary Thinkers and Practitioners of Design-Based Public and Social Innovation. *Design and Culture*, 7(3), 441–450.
- Phillips, W., Lee, H., Ghobadian, A., O'Regan, N., & James, P. (2015). Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship: A Systematic Review. *Group & Organization Management*, 40(3), 428– 461.
- Pietsch, J., & Clark, M. (2014). Citizenship rights in Malaysia: the experience of social and institutional discrimination among ethnic minorities. *Citizenship Studies*, 18(3–4), 303–314.

- Prachatai. (2018). Pom Mahakan community concedes: eviction to go ahead. Retrieved October 7, 2018, from Prachatai English website: <https://prachatai.com/english/node/7725>
- Prendiville, A. (2018). Amplifying Relationships through Place and Locality in the Design of Local Government Digital Services. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 4(1), 47–59.
- Quijano, A. (1992). Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad. In H. Bonilla (Ed.), *Los conquistados. 1492 y la población indígena de las Américas* (p. 437–448). Ecuador: Libri Mundi.
- Radder, H. (1992). Normative Reflexions on Constructivist Approaches to Science and Technology. *Social Studies of Science*, 22(1), 141–173.
- Ravindran, S. (2017, April 10). KL has a long way to go. *The Star Online*.
- Renings, K. (2000). Redefining Innovation — Eco-Innovation Research and the Contribution from Ecological Economics. *Ecological Economics*, 32(2), 319–332.
- Ridley-Duff, R., & Bull, M. (2011). *Understanding Social Enterprise: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.
- Rizvi, U. Z. (2018). Critical Heritage and Participatory Discourse in the UAE. *Design and Culture*, 10(1), 55–70.
- Robson, C. (2013). *Real World Research* (3rd ed.). Chichester: Wiley.
- Rujivanarom, P. (2018, April 21). Chao Phraya promenade project may be downsized. *The Nation*.
- Saksornchai, J. (2018). Bangkok Budgets 69M to Renew Pom Mahakan. Retrieved October 7, 2018, from Khaosodeng (English) website: <http://www.khaosodenglish.com/featured/2018/05/07/bangkok-budgets-69m-to-renew-pom-mahakan/>
- Sanders, E. B.-N., & Stappers, P. J. (2008). Co-creation and the new landscapes of design. *CoDesign*, 4(1), 5–18.
- Sangiorgi, D., & Clark, B. (2004). Toward a Participatory Design Approach to Service Design. *PDC-04 Participatory Design Conference*, 2. Toronto, Canada.
- Sarasvathy, S. D., & Venkataraman, S. (2011). Entrepreneurship as Method: Open Questions for an Entrepreneurial Future. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 35(1), 113–135.

- Schinkel, W., & Noordegraaf, M. (2011). Professionalism as Symbolic Capital: Materials for a Bourdieusian Theory of Professionalism. *Comparative Sociology*, 10, 67–96.
- Schulman, S. (2010). Design Thinking is Not Enough. Retrieved from <http://www.inwithfor.org/2010/01/design-thinking-is-not-enough/>
- Schultz, T., Abdulla, D., Ansari, A., Canlı, E., Keshavarz, M., Kiem, M., ... Oliveira, P. J. S. V. de. (2018). Editors' Introduction. *Design and Culture*, 10(1), 1–6.
- Selloni, D., & Corubolo, M. (2017a). Design for social enterprises: Co-designing an organizational and cultural change. *The Design Journal*, 20(sup1).
- Selloni, D., & Corubolo, M. (2017b). Design for Social Enterprises: How Design Thinking Can Support Social Innovation within Social Enterprises. *The Design Journal*, 20(6), 775–794.
- Seyfang, G., & Smith, A. (2007). Grassroots Innovations for Sustainable Development: Towards a New Research and Policy Agenda. *Environmental Politics*, 16(4), 584–603.
- SIE Fund. (2019a). About Social Innovation and Social Enterprise. Retrieved February 27, 2019, from <https://www.sie.gov.hk/en/faqs/about-si-and-se.page>
- SIE Fund. (2019b). What is SIE Fund? Retrieved March 28, 2018, from <https://www.sie.gov.hk/en/who-we-are/sie-fund.page>
- Simms, J. R. (2006). Technical and social innovation determinants of behaviour. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 23, 383–393.
- Sinclair, S., Mazzei, M., Baglioni, S., & Roy, M. J. (2018). Social innovation, social enterprise, and local public services: Undertaking transformation? *Social & Policy Administration*, 52, 1317–1331.
- Siwar, C., Ahmed, F., Bashawir, A., & Mia, M. S. (2016). Urbanization and Urban Poverty in Malaysia: Consequences and Vulnerability. *Journal of Applied Sciences*, 16(4), 154–160.
- Smith, G., & Whitfield, T. W. A. (2005). The Professional Status of Designers: A National Survey of how Designers are Perceived. *The Design Journal*, 8(1), 52–60.
- Social Innovation Exchange. (2018). *Social Innovation Exchange: Introduction 2018*. Retrieved from https://socialinnovationexchange.org/sites/default/files/uploads/sixintroduction_online.pdf

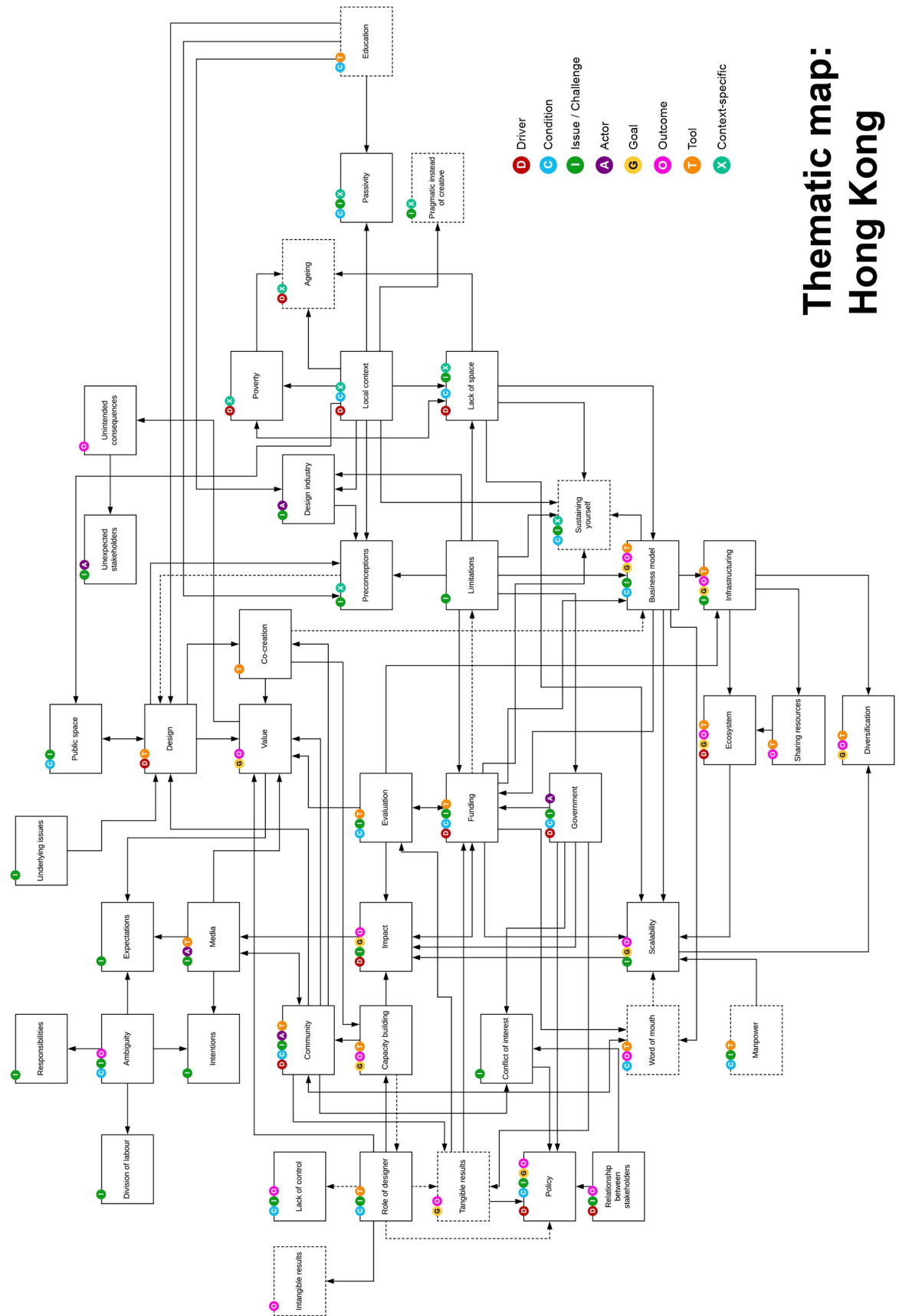
- Tan, L. (2012). *Understanding the Different Roles of the Designer in Design for Social Good. A Study of Design Methodology in the DOTT 07 (Designs of the Time 2007)*. Northumbria University.
- Tan, S., & Melles, G. (2010). An activity theory focused case study of graphic designers' tool-mediated activities during the conceptual design phase. *Design Studies*, 31(5), 461–478.
- Tarbox, J. D. A. (2006). Activity Theory: A Model for Design Research. In A. Bennett (Ed.), *Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design* (pp. 73–81). New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- The Young Foundation. (2019). About Us. Retrieved March 28, 2019, from <https://youngfoundation.org/about-us/>
- Thorpe, A., & Gamman, L. (2011). Design with society: why socially responsive design is good enough. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 217–230.
- Ting, H. (2009). The Politics of National Identity in West Malaysia: Continued Mutation or Critical Transition? *Southeast Asian Studies*, 47(1), 31–51.
- Tjahja, C., & Yee, J. (2018). Social hierarchy in design and social innovation: Perspectives from Thailand. In C. et al Storni (Ed.), *Proceedings of DRS 2018 International Conference: Catalyst (Vol.2)* (pp. 704–716). London: Design Research Society.
- Tjahja, C., Yee, J. S. R., & Aftab, M. (2017). Object of Design: Activity Theory as an analytical framework for Design and Social Innovation. In E. Bohemia, C. De Bont, & L. S. Holm (Eds.), *Conference Proceedings of the Design Management Academy* (pp. 931–947). London: Design Management Academy.
- UNDP Thailand. (2018). UNDP teams up with partners to empower young social innovators in Thailand. Retrieved February 27, 2019, from <http://www.th.undp.org/content/thailand/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2018/10/undp-teams-up-with-partners-to-empower-young-social-innovators-i.html>
- UNDP Thailand. (2019). About Us. Retrieved March 29, 2019, from <http://www.th.undp.org/content/thailand/en/home/about-us.html>
- United Nations. (2017). World population prospects: the 2017 revision. In *Volume II: Demographic profiles* (Vol. 2). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Valentine, L., Kroll, T., Bruce, F., Lim, C., & Mountain, R. (2017). Design Thinking for Social Innovation in Health Care. *The Design Journal*, 20(6), 755–774.

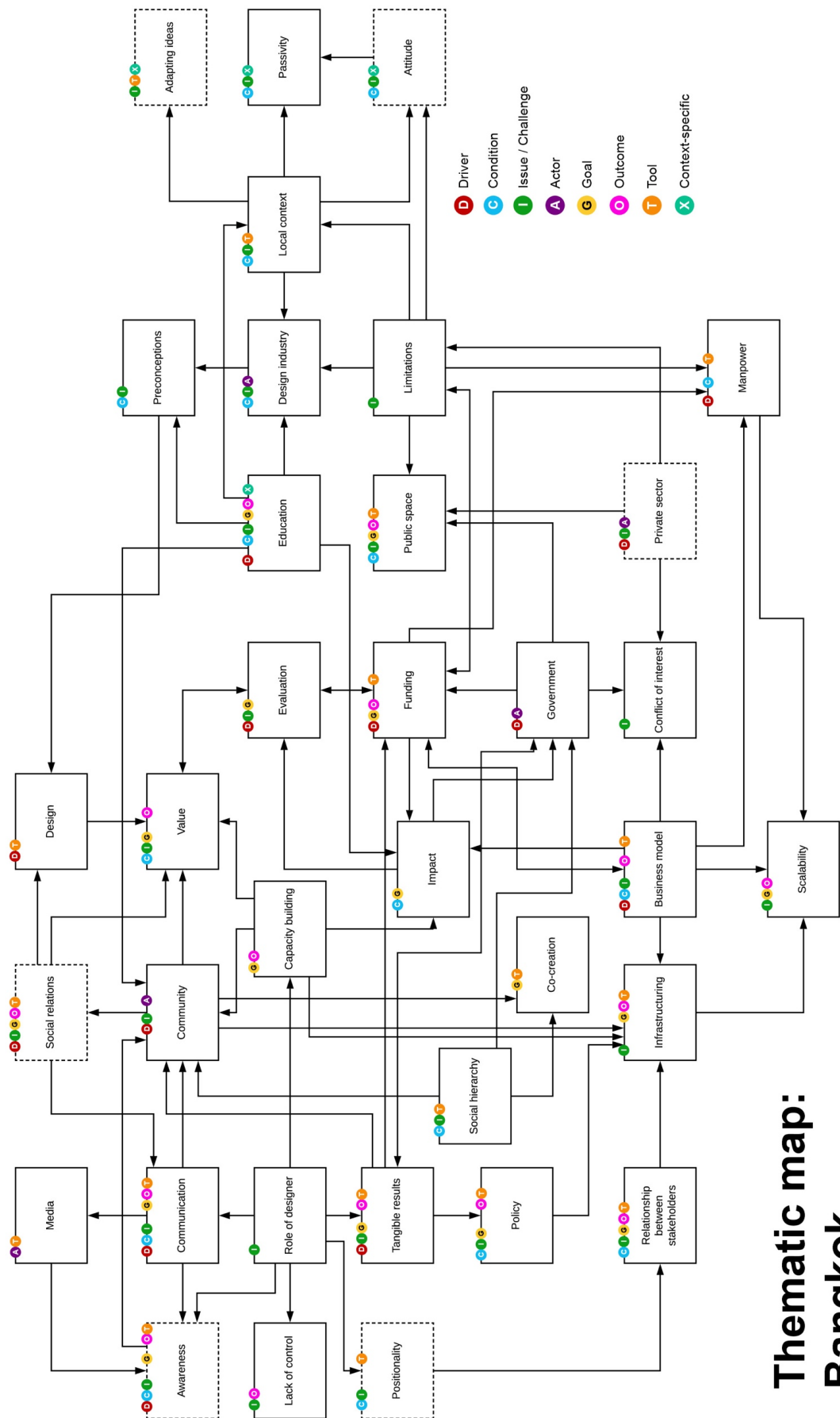
- VanPatter, G. K. (2009). *Design 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0: Understanding futures that have already arrived!*
- Vodeb, O. (2015). Social Innovation and Design Education: Towards a Socially Responsive Communication Design Pedagogy. *Design and Culture*, 7(3), 423–431.
- Von Busch, O., & Palmås, K. (2016). Social Means Do Not Justify Corruptible Ends: A Realist Perspective of Social Innovation and Design. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 2(4), 275–287.
- Voorberg, W. H., Bekkers, V. J. J. M., & Tummers, L. G. (2015). A Systematic Review of Co-Creation and Co-Production: Embarking on the social innovation journey. *Public Management Review*, 17(9), 1333–1357.
- Vorng, S. (2011). Beyond the urban-rural divide: Complexities of class, status and hierarchy in Bangkok. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 39, 674–701.
- Walther, M. (2014). *Repatriation to France and Germany: A Comparative Study Based on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Wancharoen, S. (2015, November 25). Public outcry continues over Chao Phraya promenade. Retrieved March 29, 2019, from Bangkok Post website: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/tourism-and-transport/776661/public-outcry-continues-over-chao-phraya-promenade>
- Wang, G., Mang, S., Cai, H., Liu, S., Zhang, Z., Wang, L., & Innes, J. L. (2016). Integrated watershed management: evolution, development and emerging trends. *Journal of Forestry Research*, 27(5), 967–994. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11676-016-0293-3>
- Wang, W., Bryan-Kinns, N., & Ji, T. (2016). Using Community Engagement to Drive Co-Creation in Rural China. *International Journal of Design*, 10(1), 37–52.
- Warwick, L. (2017). Designing Trust: the importance of relationships in social contexts. *The Design Journal*, 20(sup1), S3096–S3105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2017.1352817>
- Warwick, L., & Young, R. (2016). The Role of Design as a Critical Friend to the Voluntary Community Sector. *ServDes.2016 - Service Design Geographies Conference, 24-26 May 2016*.
- Wells, G. (1993). Reevaluating the IRF Sequence: A Proposal for the Articulation of Theories of Activity and Discourse for the Analysis of Teaching and Learning in the Classroom. *Linguistics and Education*, 5, 1–37.

- Westley, F., Goebey, S., & Robinson, K. (2012). *Change Lab/Design Lab for Social Innovation*. Retrieved from Waterloo Institute of Social Innovation and Resilience website:
http://sigeneration.ca/documents/Paper_FINAL_LabforSocialInnovation.pdf
- Wong, H., & Lam, C. M. (2005). *Current Situation of Poverty Problem and Poverty Alleviation in Sham Shui Po: A Need-based and Asset-based Analysis*.
- Wong, Hung, & Saunders, P. (2012). *Report of Research Study on Deprivation and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*.
- Wu, C.-Y. (2009). Remedial Strategy or Subliminal Racism? A Comparative Study on the Origins of Affirmative Action Policies in South Africa and Malaysia. *Sociology Honors Projects, Paper 18*.
- Yang, C.-F., & Sung, T.-J. (2016). Service Design for Social Innovation through Participatory Action Research. *International Journal of Design, 10*(1), 21–36.
- Yang, M.-Y. (2015). Industrial Design Students Design for Social Innovation: Case Study in a Taiwanese Village. *Design and Culture, 7*(3), 451–464.
- Yee, J., Jefferies, E., & Michlewski, K. (2017). *Transformations: 7 Roles to Drive Change by Design*. Amsterdam: BIS.
- Yee, J., & White, H. (2016). The Goldilocks Conundrum: The ‘Just Right’ Conditions for Design to Achieve Impact in Public and Third Sector Projects. *International Journal of Design, 10*(1), 7–19.
- Yin, R. K. (2016). *Qualitative research from start to finish* (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Young, R., Blair, S., & Cooper, A. (2001). Redesigning design education: the next Bauhaus? *Exploring Emerging Design Paradigm, Proceedings of ICSID Educational Seminar 2001, Seognam, Korea*. Seognam, Korea.
- Yu, K. (2017, July 3). City divided, poverty, housing: The challenges facing Hong Kong’s new leader. *SBS News*.
- Zahedi, M., Tessier, V., & Hawey, D. (2016). Understanding Collaborative Design Through Activity Theory. *The Design Journal, 20*(sup1), S4611–S4620.

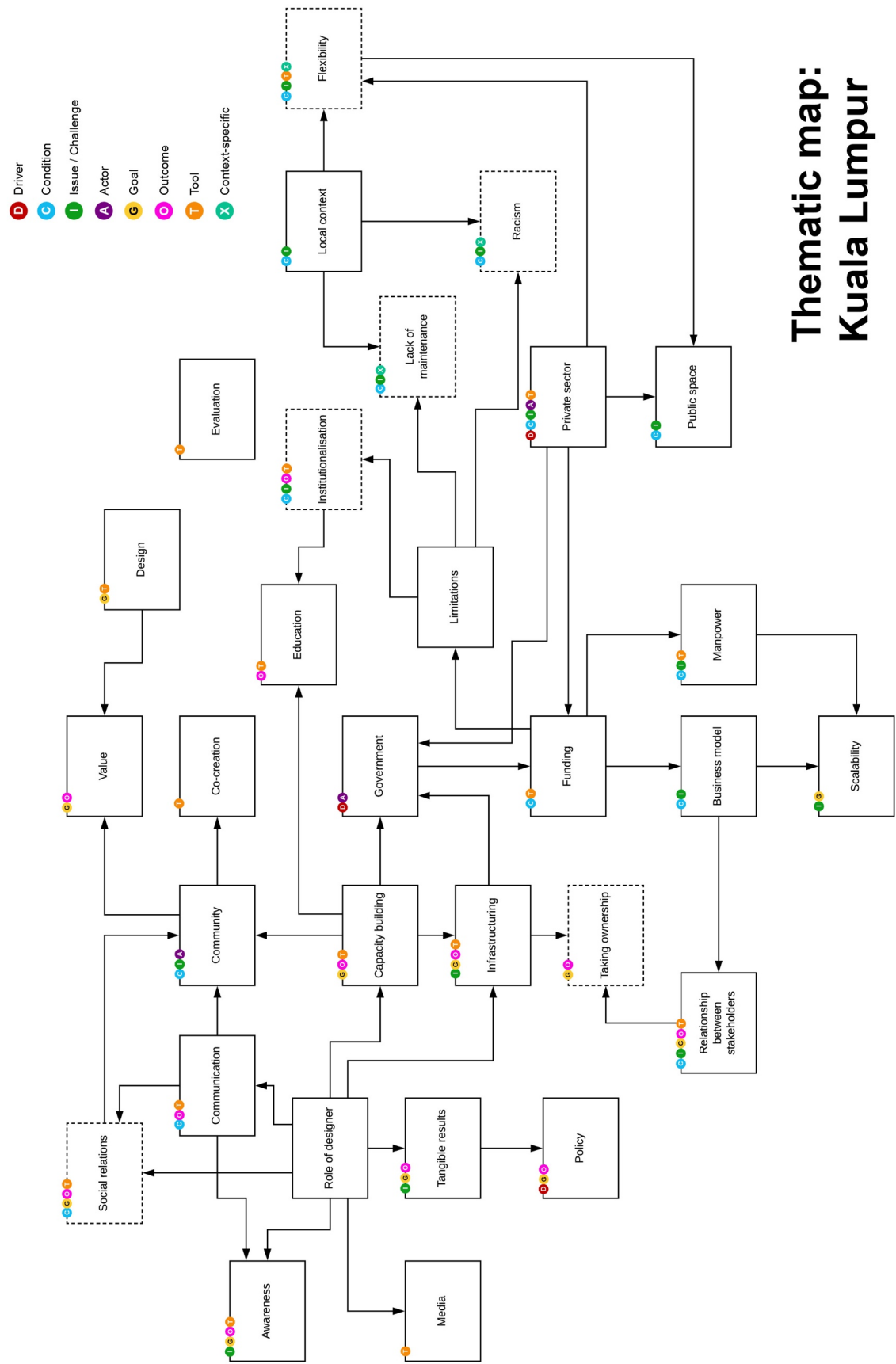
[illegible]

Appendix B / Thematic Maps





Thematic map: Bangkok



Thematic map: Kuala Lumpur



**RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES
ON CREATIVE INTERSECTIONS**

Objects of Design: Activity Theory as an analytical framework for Design and Social Innovation

TJAHJA Cyril*; YEE Joyce and AFTAB Mersha

Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

*Corresponding author e-mail: cyril.tjahja@northumbria.ac.uk

doi: 120

Design and social innovation is a developing field of study. The current lack of critical analysis of initiatives and the dominance of insights and methods from European cases in academic literature are not sufficient to construct an image that could be considered as comprehensive. This paper aims to address both issues by introducing Activity Theory as an analytical framework, as its ability to examine phenomena in their native context through multiple perspectives is considered to be well-suited to study design and social innovation initiatives. The analysis of data obtained during a field study investigating three social initiatives in Bangkok contributed to understanding how they work and why they exist, in addition to highlighting the influence of the Thai social and cultural context on the role of design in the social innovation process.

keywords: design and social innovation, activity theory, thailand, methodology

Introduction

With an increasing amount of initiatives sprouting up across the globe, the field of design and social innovation appears to be gaining momentum. However, its popularity in practice is overshadowed by the gaps in knowledge that currently exist in its study. Academic publications tend to focus on certain aspects of design and social innovation, such as its definition (Jégou & Manzini, 2008; DiSalvo et al., 2011; Manzini, 2015), issues regarding implementation and continuation (Camacho Duarte, Lulham & Kaldor, 2011; Hillgren, Seravelli & Emilson, 2011; Cipolla & Moura, 2012) and the role that design(ers)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

play in the process (Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Thorpe & Gamman, 2011). However, their mode of operation, the stakeholders' motivations and underlying power structures are usually not reported and analysis of what actually works is rare (Mulgan, 2014; Komatsu et al., 2016). In other words, *how* and *why* these projects work is often unknown.

The dominance of European best practice examples in literature problematises this further. As design and social innovation projects are connected to their respective social and cultural environment, the transfer of methods and ideas that have proven to be successful in the west might or might not be appropriate or desirable in a different context (Brown & Wyatt, 2010). Local knowledge and practices are in danger of being substituted by imported solutions and paradigms (Bala-Miller 2008; Akama & Yee, 2016), that are not necessarily better suited to address local issues and could also serve as good examples for the west. Without a framework that can analyse how design and innovation initiatives operate, their effectiveness and sustainability in the long-term, in any context, cannot be ascertained.

The aim of the paper is to highlight the suitability of Activity Theory (AT) to study design and social innovation initiatives by presenting findings that have been obtained during a preliminary field study in Bangkok where AT was used as a framework for data analysis.

Activity Theory is a framework that can 1) study an initiative along with its 'native' ecosystem instead of a viewing it as an idea, process or method developed in isolation, 2) reveal how an initiative functions through examining its internal dynamics as well as its stakeholders and 3) provide a means of evaluating and analysing an initiative in order to establish *what* works and *why*. It connects individuals to their culture and society by studying the *tools* and *signs* that mediate between them in relation to the wider community, along with the multiple perspectives of its stakeholders (Engeström, 1999). Motivations, (power) relations, restrictions and issues can be identified and analysed by constructing the stakeholders' respective *activity systems*, the primary units of analysis.

The current discourse on design and social innovation presents a view that leaves room for expansion. Analysis is often limited to the description or prescription of how the implementation of design methods have been beneficial to solve a perceived social problem (Jégou & Manzini, 2008; Camacho Duarte, Lulham & Kaldor, 2011; Meroni, Fassi & Simeone, 2013). However, this approach, although useful in demonstrating the potential merits of design, reflects a singular perspective on the process and does not take into account the perspectives of other stakeholders involved. Without knowledge regarding their motivations it remains unclear whether any value has been created for anyone other than the researcher(s).

Background

The Bangkok field study is part of a PhD research project investigating what constitutes design and social innovation initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, the research aims to determine *why* design and social innovation projects are initiated, *for whom* they create value and what role *design* plays in creating this value, by constructing a select number of case studies varying in type of project and locality. The paper presents findings from Thailand, the first of three countries that will be examined in the course of the PhD research project that is currently on-going.

Design and social innovation

In the last decade, there has been increasing interest in design and social innovation, which is often attributed to the rise in popularity that social innovation itself has experienced in the same time period (Hillgren, Seravelli & Emilson, 2011; Mulgan, 2014). Design methods such as visualisation, prototyping, participatory design and strategic design are perceived to contribute in a positive manner to the social innovation process (Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan, 2010). Along with its popularity in practice, the number of academic publications on design and social innovation has been increasing steadily in the past years as well. However, the study of design and social innovation is still considered to be developing (Irwin, 2015); Significant improvements can be made in terms of what is studied and how it is studied. The current lack of critical analysis, and the exploration and discussion of methods, values and practices of cases that are less represented in literature need to be addressed for design and social innovation to continue its development towards a field or discipline that could be considered as mature.

Activity Theory

Activity Theory, also known as Cultural Historical Activity Theory, is a framework that can be used for analysis of qualitative data. Originating in Classical German philosophy, the works of Marx and Engels and the Soviet cultural psychology of Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Luria, AT provides an alternative to the traditional view in which individuals are perceived as separate from their surrounding social structures. As this dualistic perspective falls short of explaining contemporary complex social transformations, AT aims to connect the individuals and their surrounding social structures by pursuing a *monist* approach in which both are studied at the same time by focusing on the generated activity (Engeström, 1999). AT is very well suited to analyse design processes as it can constructively describe its activity structure and development in its own context (Lauche 2005; Tarbox, 2006; Tan & Melles, 2010). It therefore has the ability to look further than design and social innovation as an isolated method, process or idea by also providing insight into the ecosystem in which an initiative takes place and to which it is inextricably linked.

AT has been applied in various fields of study, such as learning (Wells, 1993; Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999), human-computer interaction (Nardi, 1996; Kuutti, 1996) and organisation studies (Blackler, 1993; Chatzakis, 2014). Although AT has not been frequently used to study design, there are studies that have used AT as a method to examine graphic design (Tan & Melles, 2010), service design (Sangiorgi & Clark, 2004) and interaction design (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006).

The Activity System

Activity Theory is rooted in the idea that an individual or group (*subject*) should be studied together with its surroundings or social context (Nicolini et al., 2003, cited in Chatzakis, 2014). Subjects make use of concepts and/or artefacts (*tools*) to achieve their goals, intentions or desires (*objects*) (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006). The relationship between subject, tools and object can be considered as an *activity* conducted by a subject to achieve a certain outcome (Tan & Melles, 2010). Collective activities are driven by communal motives, which are formed when collective needs might potentially be fulfilled by certain objects. The motive for the activity is embedded in the object of the activity (Engeström, 2000). Linking the subject-tools-object relationship to the wider social context are *rules*, which can be implicit or explicit, the broader *community*, consisting of other activity systems and, if applicable, shared and coordinated by a *division of labour*

(Chatzakis, 2014). The relationship between these different elements make up the *activity system*, the basic unit of analysis in AT (see figure 1).

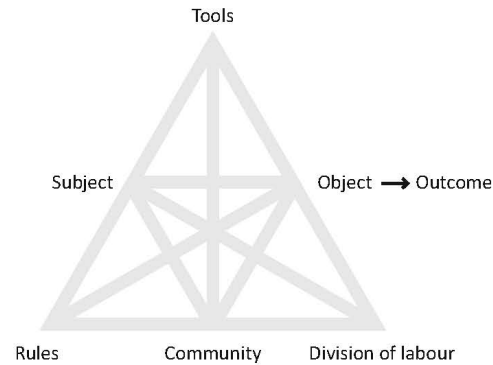


Figure 1 The activity system – adapted from Engeström (1999)

The Advantages of Activity Theory

Activity Theory has several advantages which make it suitable for studying design and social innovation:

1. The activity system allows for a rich description of *what* people do, *how* they do it and *with whom*, including the relevant context in which this takes place while taking into account both the relevant internal and external elements (Chatzakis, 2014). It therefore can provide insight into the (power) relations between the stakeholders in a design and social innovation project. Furthermore, AT allows the (cultural) context to be preserved as this is embedded in the activity system framework.
2. Innovation networks can be analysed as networks of developing activity systems with each having their own objects, knowledge and resources (Miettinen & Hasu, 2002). Using the AT framework on a design and social innovation initiative would enable analysis of specific activities, issues and motivations from multiple stakeholders' perspectives (see figure 2).
3. AT takes both the researcher's and the subject's view into account, thereby avoiding objectification of the subject (Engeström, 1999; Tan & Melles, 2010). As the construction of an activity system requires the input and interpretation of both the subject and the researcher, it is less susceptible to bias from the researcher's side.
4. By studying their own history, activity systems can focus on certain issues and track them over time (Engeström, 2001). Historicity can serve to extrapolate the past situation, via the current situation, to the future. It is therefore particularly

relevant to design and social innovation as this might facilitate *infrastructuring*, an organic approach that focuses on long-term commitment to the project by building relationships with stakeholders using a flexible allotment of time and resources, resulting in an open-ended design structure without predefined goals or fixed timelines (Björgvinsson, Ehn & Hillgren, 2010; Hillgren, Seravelli & Emilson, 2011)

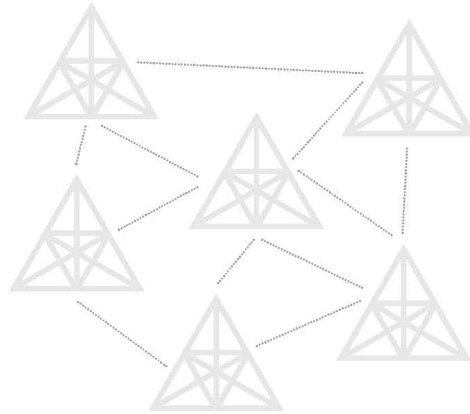


Figure 2 Innovation networks as networks of activity systems

Alternative approaches

Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) was initially considered as a method of analysis due to its ability to map out actors in networks of agency. Originating from the sociology of science and technology, ANT does not distinguish between humans and objects, considering all entities, individuals and non-individuals, as *actants* (Latour, 1996). Furthermore, ANT argues that all interactions are mediated by actant networks which not only participate, but are also responsible for actively creating all social life (Law, 1992). However, its assumption that society, and therefore culture, is created through the interaction between actants implies the absence of any pre-existing society or culture, including the one that which gave rise to the networks themselves (Bloor, 1999). Moreover, as the notion of success in the ANT paradigm is not based on the value created, but instead on the length on the network, any normative questions cannot be properly addressed (Radder, 1992). ANT is therefore not able to analyse issues surrounding culture, norms and values in design and social innovation, making it unsuitable for this study.

Participatory action research has also been considered as a possible strategy for both collecting and analysing data. Central to this approach is the desire to promote change by actively being involved in a certain practice, which is achieved by researchers collaborating with the those who are the focus of the research. Oftentimes, action research will be conducted in a cyclical manner, where planning, acting, observing and reflecting on a

change it will repeat itself throughout the process (Robson, 2013). Passive participant observation, which demands a lesser degree of involvement, was also considered. Here, the researcher collects and analyses data obtained through observation to find out what is going on in the field, becoming an accepted member of the group, but without directly participating in the process (Robson, 2013). Both participatory action research and passive participant observation were eventually dismissed as viable approaches to collect and analyse data as they were too demanding on the time and resources available for the research project. In addition, their dependence on the availability of, and access to, design and social innovation initiatives that were still on-going or in the process of starting up, made it impractical to pursue these approaches.

Methodology

Pilot study

To test whether data collection using AT would yield the desired type of data, a pilot study was conducted several months prior to actual field study. Students of the MA/MSc Multidisciplinary Innovation, a project-focused course taught at a UK-based university in which multidisciplinary teams of students and academics collaborate with external organisations on commercial and social innovation projects, were invited to participate in an AT workshop.

At the beginning of the workshop, a brief explanation was given on how to use the AT framework, followed by a session in which the students were given the opportunity to analyse multi-stakeholder group projects that they worked on in the previous term. The students were asked to team up with their original project members and use the AT framework to analyse their respective projects from the perspectives of at least two of the stakeholders involved. For this purpose, handouts with a diagram of the activity system (similar to figure 1) were distributed on which the students could write. The groups discussed among themselves for 30 minutes after which each group presented the result of their analysis to the other groups, which were then discussed with the entire class. After the session, the handouts were collected, the findings summarised by the researcher and distributed to the students.

The results of the groups' analyses using the AT framework revealed who the stakeholders were, how they related to one another, how they influenced each other's decisions and how they attempted to achieve their goals (see figure 3 for an example). Interesting findings include the notion that a *subject* could be utilised a tool by another subject, as one group of students felt that they themselves were being used as an instrument by their direct client to achieve a politically motivated goal within the client's organisation. Another group reported that (negative) comments on social media regarding the project led to their client reconsidering the *object*, which in turn affected the design process.

For the student project teams, AT proved to be useful as a reflective tool, enabling them to identify possible reasons why certain stakeholders behaved in a certain manner, what motivations underpinned this behaviour and how this influenced the outcome. For example, after conducting the analysis using AT, one group of students realised that the friction experienced in their project might have occurred due to the difference in underlying motivations of the different stakeholders, leading to expectations that were ultimately not met, thereby causing conflict.

[illegible]

Field study

Three initiatives were eventually selected to be further developed into case studies, based on the availability and willingness of the stakeholders to be interviewed. Other selection criteria include the type of project (top-down or bottom-up) and scale (small, medium or large). The majority of the meetings were arranged in an informal manner and conducted

The format used in the pilot study, during which the students analysed their own projects using the AT framework explicitly in a workshop setting, was not used in the field study as gathering all the stakeholders involved in the respective initiatives was not feasible. Instead, the AT framework was used implicitly during individual semi-structured interviews with practitioners and stakeholders by loosely directing the questions along the prescribed categories (subject, object, tools, rules, community and division of labour). The interviews were then transcribed and the answers grouped according to the six categories, thereby constructing an activity system for each stakeholder interviewed (see figure 4 for an example). The activity systems were then analysed by identifying patterns and interactions between categories and compiled into broader themes.

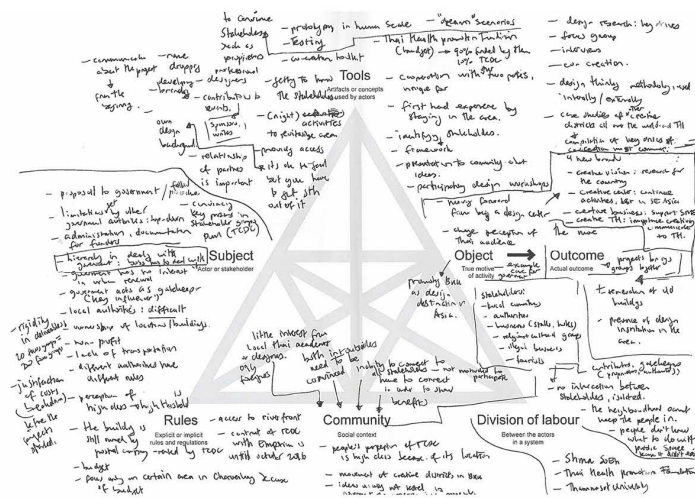


Figure 4 Example of an analysis conducted using the AT framework for one of the stakeholders of the Co-Create Charoenkrung project

Findings

Co-Create Charoenkrung – A pioneering urban renewal project

Context

Co-Create Charoenkrung is a large-scale high-profile design and social innovation project initiated by the Thailand Creative and Design Center (TCDC), a knowledge and education centre focused on promoting design and creative practice in Thailand. Currently located in the centre of Bangkok, it is planning to move to the historical *Grand Postal Building* located in the Charoenkrung neighbourhood. This relocation was taken as an opportunity to 'introduce itself' while simultaneously starting a process of urban renewal, co-created and co-designed with residents and other local stakeholders; an initiative that is unprecedented in Thailand. Two stakeholders in the project were interviewed: the initiator and overall project manager at TCDC and the project manager from the design agency Shma SoEn.

Mode of operation

The management and execution of the project is distributed among three equal partners. TCDC is responsible for the overall management of the project. Shma SoEn, a local design firm, oversees the execution of design-related activities and Thammasat University provides support in terms of design research and consultation. Adding to the complexity of the project are the many stakeholders, such as various local authorities, commercial businesses situated in the neighbourhood (international hotels and corporations, galleries, shops and stalls) and diverse groups of community residents (elderly, students, ethnic and religious minorities). TCDC utilises its own proprietary design thinking approach, formalised into the *Co-Create model*, in which a series of steps guide those who would like to start an urban renewal project in their own neighbourhood.

Selected findings

Object: the motivation of TCDC for initiating the Co-Create Charoenkrung project was driven by a desire to move forward as an organisation. By combining their relocation with a process of urban renewal, it wishes to remove the threshold that was perceived to exist by 'ordinary' Thai citizens and instead place itself in the middle of society. Shma SoEn's design team perceived Co-Create Charoenkrung as a 'dream project', combining their professional expertise in design with the need to do good and give something back to the local community.

Tools: Co-creation and co-design workshops were conducted at different stages throughout the process and with different participants: the partners, stakeholders and wider community of residents. In some instances, co-creation tools were custom-made to ensure the participation of all stakeholders, regardless of age or seniority, which can be a sensitive issue in Thai culture. Visualisation by design and prototyping on actual scale (1:1 prototyping) were mentioned as being particularly useful in convincing key government officials, private parties and the local community itself of the value of the project as both interviewees expressed that Thai people in general need to be shown concrete results in order to support an initiative. For example, it took significant effort for the project team to convince the Grand Postal Building's property management to allow the construction of

the *Green Pocket Space*, one of the planned 1:1 prototypes, in front of premises, despite the fact that TCDC is the building's tenant. However, after seeing the result, the property management staff requested to extend the three days that were initially planned for the prototype to seven days, and installed benches around the Green Pocket Space area for customers and passers-by to relax, which have become a permanent fixture.

Communication about the project was perceived to have played an important role. Internal communication managed the expectations of the stakeholders as the lack of knowledge regarding the project sometimes restricted the process and caused it to slow down. External communication, on the other hand, helped to prevent inaccurate representation of the project in the media.

Rules: As Co-Create Charoenkrung's aim of urban renewal inherently entails the modification of public and private spaces, the stakeholders involved here are (local) government departments and private corporations or land owners, who control access to these spaces. The interaction between TCDC and the various other government stakeholders encountered at different levels was characterised as being difficult. The general attitude towards the project was perceived to be polite but uncooperative and even those who were willing to help were only able to do so within their own jurisdiction. Hierarchy played an important role as key senior officials needed to be convinced to obtain access and cooperation. A top-down approach was therefore considered to be the only way to make the project succeed.

Community: Both interviewees found the most significant limitation of the project to be that some stakeholders could not be contacted or could not be persuaded to participate in the project. This was attributed to the fact that there was no real incentive for them to participate. Involving stakeholders and partners in the co-creation process who are normally not consulted, such as the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, which funded 90% of the project, was experienced to have a positive effect as this increased the sense of ownership. In addition, its success has prompted an exchange of ideas between the Co-Create Charoenkrung project group and other initiatives taking place in Bangkok as the concrete results it produces show that their approach actually works.

Afterword – A crowdfunding platform for books

Context

Founded by two former university classmates, Afterword is a small company that publishes books about niche topics. Founded in 2013, the company helps individuals who wish to publish with concept development, editing, design and crowdfunds the funds required to produce the book. Although initially Afterword was only involved in the activity of crowdfunding activity, along the way they realised that they also had to take on role of incubator for the book projects. The founders believe that topics that might not be commercially viable for major publishers are nonetheless important as they fulfil an educational demand that would otherwise not be met through traditional channels. One of the founding partners agreed to an informal meeting where she elaborated on the company itself, the books they publish and how their publishing process works.

Mode of operation

Although stakeholders may vary per project, those typically involved are Afterword itself, the client or author(s) who wishes to publish a book, a design agency who is responsible for the book's layout and the people who crowdfund the book. Co-creation processes often take place, involving the company and the authors. Although the two founding partners are a stable factor in this smaller-scale bottom-up initiative their collaborators shift constantly as the books they publish can have different authors, (crowd)funders and audiences.

Selected findings

Object: Although the founder indicated that she aspired to ultimately become a global brand, the motivation for starting Afterword was rooted in the desire to use a design thinking / human-centred design approach to tackle social problems, and in particular, issues surrounding reading and writing in Thailand. After an initial exploration of the problem, Afterword was founded as a crowdfunding platform for non-mainstream books. The partner who was interviewed stated that she is motivated by the Buddhist belief of doing good for most aspects in life, although not specifically for this company.

Tools: Afterword uses many design methods at various stages of the process. Design thinking is used to understand authors and readers who lack resources, both when exploring the issue as well as during the project. Rapid prototyping and tests are conducted to establish whether the ideas work and brainstorm sessions are organised together with stakeholders. Communication design is frequently used as crowdfunding requires a significant amount of online and offline strategic communication, which involves the design of messages and channels to reach the target audience. These messages are considered to be important to help build both Afterword's as well as the book projects' respective brands and communicate these brands a visually and verbally attractive manner.

Rules: Every publication has its own contributors and stakeholders; The clients dictate the amount of involvement of the company in the process, which can differ depending on the publication.

Community: The limitations encountered by the company is the commitment level of its stakeholders, which in some cases is perceived to be low. According to the founder, this might be due to the fact that although Thai people often will help those in need, they are less inclined to help those who are deemed to be of similar or higher standing. The government is perceived to be mostly focused on urgent issues, such as poverty, health and safety, instead of supporting the publishing of books. Afterword therefore did not request funding from the government nor attempt to contact them. Funding for Afterword in its early stages came from incubators (a public organisation and an international non-profit organisation). The individual book projects are funded through crowdfunding. As Afterword believes in crowdfunding and people's participation, there was no government involvement to begin with.

Deschooling Games – A collective that teaches skills through games

Context

Instead of solving problems themselves, Deschooling Games' aim is to teach their clients the skills needed to solve problems on their own, believing that games are a suitable medium for accomplishing this. Communicating mainly through Facebook, the multi-disciplinary team consists of three core members: a training facilitator, a teacher/activist and a designer, and occasionally enlists the help of volunteers. One of the team members of Deschooling Games provided information about his collective during an informal meeting after one of their workshops and a Skype interview.

Mode of operation

Deschooling Games organises training workshops for educators to improve (*gamify*) their teaching skills through the designing and playing of board games. For this purpose, the collective designs games that aim to achieve three goals: 1) Getting information (knowledge), 2) Developing specific skills and 3) Opening perspectives (attitude). For example, in a workshop given at a nursing school one of the teams of participants made a game where the objective was to guess nursing vocabulary.

Selected findings

Object: Deschooling Games believes that it is a challenge for design to improve education in Thailand in the broadest sense. Not limited to formal institutions such as schools or universities, but including educating certain target groups regarding important issues that are often complex in nature, such as policy, healthcare or the economy. The collective believes that *design for learning* tools are necessary to achieve this goal; Games are but one of the many possible directions that can be taken. The interviewed member's personal motivation was that commercial design is not meaningful enough, it needs a social side that is driven by the notion of tackling issues together instead of financial gain.

Tools: By emphasising on the transfer of the skills involved to develop these games, Deschooling Games hopes to achieve a more permanent effect. The *gamification* of the learning experience is considered by the collective to be an alternative way of learning that is fun and in which everyone can participate. The professional networks of the collective's members, social media and word of mouth were reported to be the reasons clients became interested in the Deschooling Games workshops.

Rules: As the individual members are involved in the Deschooling Games on a part-time basis, alongside their respective careers, time management is considered to be important. Furthermore, most projects need to be planned two to three months in advance and need to cater to clients who have different needs. The individual members of Deschooling Games have different views how to move their collective forward. The member that was interviewed expressed a vision that was not shared by the others, which is the need to expand to a different type of audience, emphasising diversification instead of replication. Since the team members are not involved in the initiative full-time, financial gain is not considered a priority. They therefore currently do not see a reason to rush into business.

Community: The learning through games workshops are perceived to highlight the value of their approach to the community by creating tangible results: the transfer of skills. Situations are simplified into a game format to enable participants to view the situation from different perspectives and promote discussion. In addition, Deschooling Games hosts a Facebook group where they can share events and information with active teachers who are interested in using games in the classroom and wish to design their own, helping them in the design process.

Discussion of findings

Although the findings discussed in the previous section are all perceived to be relevant to the study of design and social innovation, there are some patterns that are either recurring or interacting, leading to the identification of several broader themes.

The importance of education

All three initiatives, however different, perceive the current level of education as a problem and have their own way of addressing the issue. TCDC's mission is to educate Thai people on design and it views its relocation as an opportunity to position itself closer to the community it serves. Afterword aims to educate by publishing books which might not be considered commercially viable by mainstream publishers, but address topics which it feels strongly about. Deschooling Games hopes to improve education by offering a broader perspective on teaching through alternative learning tools, such as using games as a source of inspiration. The importance of education underscores the notion that initiatives are created in response to local needs and motivations, and can differ between cultural contexts (Bala-Miller et al., 2008).

The influence of the Thai cultural context

Although the following factors might not be unique to Thai culture, they were emphasised by the interviewees to influence Thai people's perception and attitude towards the initiatives. Akama and Yee (2016) note that motivations can lie beyond design, shaped by religious, spiritual and philosophical evolutions. Buddhism, practiced by most Thai, and/or the general desire to do good were reported by several interviewees to be their underlying motives for initiating or being involved in their respective initiatives. Hierarchy played an important part in all initiatives, albeit in a different manner. The Co-Crete Charoenkrung project team encountered issues surrounding professional hierarchy when approaching government officials, which made a top-down approach necessary. Hierarchy in the form of seniority, as described by Yasuoka and Sakurai (2012) in their Japanese case study, was encountered in Co-Crete Charoenkrung's co-creation process. To combat its potentially negative effects, custom tools had to be developed that removed perceived thresholds and encouraged all to contribute, regardless of their age or status. Deschooling Games, however, challenges educational hierarchy by empowering the bottom and giving ideas to the middle in order to create movement in the Thai educational system.

Hierarchy played a different role altogether in the case of Afterword, as the perception that only those that are worse off are entitled to being helped, was thought to be the cause of low levels of participation. A recurring factor present in both Co-Crete Charoenkrung and Deschooling Games was the need for tangible results, especially when proposing design solutions. Several interviewees stated that plans and proposals are usually not enough to convince Thai people, as they will only believe that something works by being able to see it with their own eyes.

The many faces of the government

Co-Create Charoenkrung, led by the government organisation TCDC, demonstrated that other manifestations of the same government can be encountered at different levels (local, municipal, departmental) and can assume different roles (authority, gatekeeper, influencer, funder, participant, initiator) within one project. It can also have different attitudes towards the initiative (facilitating, antagonising, indifferent). Other government agencies are therefore able to set limitations or boundaries for the project, for example, if they have jurisdiction or ownership over public space or buildings. The notion put forward by Mulgan (2014), that the application of design thinking within the public sector has become quite common around the world, is unfortunately not yet a given in Thailand. Local practitioners still need to work hard to gain the trust and cooperation of government bodies that does not seem to have much affinity with design nor social innovation.

The role of design

Co-Create Charoenkrung showed that design can be used to negotiate access, both literally and figuratively. Literally, by providing access to spaces which were inaccessible before through the redesign of public space. Figuratively, as a tool to convince stakeholders such as governmental departments, private parties and the community to lend their support through visualisation by design and prototyping proposed solutions on actual scale (1:1 prototyping). Here, design assumes the roles of *framework maker*, where design is used to create meaningful conversations that drive initiatives forward, and *community builder*, where design provides a conducive atmosphere and the tools for the stakeholders involved to co-create with one another (Yee, Jefferies & Michlewski, 2017).

Current limitations and plans for further study

Several key stakeholders of the respective initiatives provided the data that was used for the analysis. However, it was not possible to contact or set up interviews with all of the stakeholders originally envisioned due to the restrictions in time and resources available for the field study. A second, more extensive field study is planned where the stakeholders will be interviewed again to elaborate on the themes that were identified in this paper. This will allow a more extensive analysis by reconstructing the AT framework at a different point in time, thereby enabling the examination of the historical development of certain issues. In addition, other stakeholders that were involved will be contacted and their views incorporated in the analysis to furnish a deeper understanding of the three initiatives.

Conclusion

In the previous decade, we have established what design and social innovation is and how it can be implemented. In the next, we need to turn our attention towards how it works, why it works and for whom it works. The current gap, combined with the dominance of European examples, paints an incomplete and generalised picture of design and social innovation practice. This paper has shown how Activity Theory can potentially be an effective analytical framework for design and social innovation initiatives through its ability to study initiatives as they occur in their own context, revealing what motivates the

stakeholders, how they achieve their goals, what their limitations are and how they are influenced by their social environment.

The themes that were identified through this analysis show that local context can exert considerable influence on how design and social innovation is practiced. The desire to improve education appeared to be a recurring motive in all three initiatives. In addition, religion, hierarchy, the need for concrete results and the role(s) of the government were of significance. These factors, in turn, affected the role of design in the process.

This paper aims to contribute to the building of an increasingly rich and multi-faceted understanding of design and social innovation as it is practiced in regions outside of the western, developed countries by presenting findings obtained from three Thai social initiatives. As design for social innovation practice emphasises reciprocity in its approach and methods, this principle should equally be reflected in its study.

Acknowledgements

The presentation of the paper at the DMA Conference 2017 in Hong Kong was supported by the Design Research Society. The authors would like to thank the interviewees from Afterword, Deschooling Games and TCDC for sharing their insights and providing comments which greatly improved the paper.

References

- Akama, Y., & Yee, J. (2016). *Seeking stronger plurality: Intimacy and integrity in designing for social innovation*. Paper presented at Cumulus 2016, Hong Kong.
- Bala-Miller, P., Marras, I., & Zacarias, A. (2008). Creative Communities: Their role and impact on welfare and development. In F. Jégou & E. Manzini (Eds.), *Collaborative Services: Social Innovation and Design for Sustainability* (pp. 133-136). Milan: Edizioni POLI.design.
- Björgvinsson, E., Ehn, P., & Hillgren, P.-A. (2010). Participatory design and "democratizing innovation". Paper presented at the PDC'10, Sydney.
- Blackler, F. (1993). Knowledge and the Theory of Organisations: Organisations as Activity Systems and the Reframing of Management. *Journal of Management Studies*, 30(6), 863-884.
- Bloor, D. (1999). Anti-Latour. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 30(1), 81-112.
- Brown, T., & Wyatt, J. (2010). Design Thinking for Social Innovation. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*(Winter), 30-35.
- Camacho Duarte, O., Lulham, R., & Kaldor, L. (2011). Co-designing out crime. *CoDesign*, 7(3-4), 155-168.
- Chatzakis, E. (2014). *Maintaining Agility: A study of obscure New Product Development practices in small and medium sized manufacturing enterprises to understand how they maintain relevance to their markets*. (PhD), Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Cipolla, C., & Moura, H. (2012). Social Innovation in Brazil Through Design Strategy. *Design Management Journal*, 6(1), 40-51.
- DiSalvo, C., Lodato, T., Fries, L., Schechter, B., & Barnwell, T. (2011). The collective articulation of issues as design practice. *CoDesign*, 7(3-4), 185-197.
- Engeström, Y. (1999). Expansive Visibilization of Work: An Activity-Theoretical Perspective. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 8(1), 63-93.
- Engeström, Y. (2000). Activity theory as a framework for analyzing and redesigning work. *Ergonomics*, 43(7).
- Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive Learning at Work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133-156.
- Hillgren, P.-A., Seravelli, A. & Emilson, A. (2011). Prototyping and infrastructuring in design for social innovation. *CoDesign* 7(3-4), 169-183.

- Irwin, T. (2015). Transition Design: A Proposal for a New Area of Design Practice, Study, and Research. *Design and Culture*, 7(2), 229–246.
- Jégou, F., & Manzini, E. (2008). *Collaborative Services: Social Innovation and Design for Sustainability*.
- Jonassen, D. H., & Rohrer-Murphy, L. (1999). Activity theory as a framework for designing constructivist learning environments. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 47(1), 61–79.
- Kaptelinin, V., & Nardi, B. A. (2006). *Acting with Technology: Activity Theory and Interaction Design*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Komatsu, T., Celli, M., Rizzo, F., & Deserti, A. (2016). *A case based discussion on the role of Design Competences in Social Innovation*. Paper presented at the Design Research Society 50th Anniversary Conference, Brighton.
- Kuutti, K. (1996). Activity theory as a potential framework for human-computer interaction research. In B. A. Nardi (Ed.), *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction* (pp. 17–44). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lauche, K. (2005). Collaboration Among Designers: Analysing an Activity for System Development. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 14(3), 253–282.
- Latour, B. (1996). On actor network theory: A few clarifications plus more than a few complications. *Soziale Welt*, 47, 369–381.
- Law, J. (1992). Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity. *Systems Practice*, 5(4), 379–393.
- Manzini, E. (2015). *Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Meroni, A., Fassi, D., & Simeone, G. (2013). *Design for social innovation as a form of designing activism: An action format*. Paper presented at the Social Frontiers, London.
- Miettinen, R., & Hasu, M. (2002). Articulating User Needs in Collaborative Design: Towards an Activity-Theoretical Approach. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 11(1), 129–151.
- Mulgan, G. (2014). *Design in public and social innovation: What works and what could work better*. Retrieved from https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/design_in_public_and_social_innovation.pdf
- Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J., & Mulgan, G. (2010). *The Open Book of Social Innovation*. Retrieved from <http://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/The-Open-Book-of-Social-Innovation.pdf>
- Nardi, B. A. (1996). *Context and Consciousness: Activity Theory and Human-computer Interaction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Nicolini, D., Gherardi, S., & Yanow, D. (2003). *Knowing in organizations: a practice based approach*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Radder, H. (1992). Normative Reflexions on Constructivist Approaches to Science and Technology. *Social Studies of Science*, 22(1), 141–173.
- Robson, C. (2013). *Real World Research* (3rd ed.). Chichester: Wiley.
- Sangiorgi, D., & Clark, B. (2004). *Toward a Participatory Design Approach to Service Design*. Paper presented at the PDC-04 Participatory Design Conference, Toronto, Canada.
- Tan, S., & Melles, G. (2010). An activity theory focused case study of graphic designers' tool-mediated activities during the conceptual design phase. *Design Studies*, 31(5), 461–478.
- Tarbox, J. D. A. (2006). Activity Theory: A Model for Design Research. In A. Bennett (Ed.), *Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design* (pp. 73–81). New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Thorpe, A., & Gamman, L. (2011). Design with society: why socially responsive design is good enough. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 217–230.

- Wells, G. (1993). Reevaluating the IRF Sequence: A Proposal for the Articulation of Theories of Activity and Discourse for the Analysis of Teaching and Learning in the Classroom. *Linguistics and Education*, 5, 1-37.
- Yasuoka, M., & Sakurai, R. (2012). *Out of Scandinavia to Asia: adaptability of participatory design in culturally distant society*. Paper presented at the PDC12 Participatory Design Conference.
- Yee, J., Jefferies, E., & Michlewski, K. (2017). *Transformations: 7 Roles to Drive Change by Design*. Amsterdam: BIS.

About the Authors:

Cyril Tjahja is a PhD student at Northumbria University (UK) and a design practitioner. His research interests include design and social innovation, visual and government identities, Dutch design and material culture.

Joyce Yee is Associate Professor in Northumbria University's School of Design. Joyce's research focuses on the impact and value of design in social innovation. She is the co-founder of the Design for Social Innovation in Asia-Pacific network (DESIAP) with Yoko Akama. Her recent book 'Transformations' introduces 7 change roles that drives change in organisations through design.

Mersha Aftab Currently a senior lecturer in Innovation at the Department of Design, Dr. Mersha Aftab started working with Northumbria University, in June 2012. Mersha's interest lies in exploring the role of design as a leader in multinational organisations. Her PhD was a collaboration with Philips Design investigating the role of design as a leading functional discipline. Since, she has build design case studies of Nokia, Daimler, Airbus and Unilever.

Appendix D / DRS2018 Conference paper

DRS Design Research
2018 Society 2018
Catalyst

University of Limerick
25th - 28th June 2018

Social hierarchy in design and social innovation: Perspectives from Thailand

TJAHJA Cyril* and YEE Joyce

Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

* Corresponding author e-mail: cyril.tjahja@northumbria.ac.uk

doi: 10.21606/dma.2017.420

Our knowledge of how design and social innovation works outside of the Europe and the US is still insufficient, due to the limitations that are inherent to the prevailing perceptions, methods and tools, developed in and for this context. Although the importance of social relationships has been acknowledged, how social hierarchy, which is firmly rooted in many non-western societies, interacts with the design and social innovation process is scarcely documented. In this paper, we wish to expand on existing knowledge by sharing the experiences of practitioners and stakeholders involved in design and social innovation initiatives in Bangkok, highlighting the various ways that social hierarchy influences their practice.

Keywords: design and social innovation, thailand, social hierarchy

Introduction

Underneath Bangkok's skyscrapers an undercurrent exists of like-minded professionals from various backgrounds who actively use design in various initiatives geared towards social change. Often involving the participation of stakeholders, such as (local) governments, commercial parties and local residents, it is a practice known as design and social innovation (Hillgren, Seravelli & Emilson, 2011; Manzini, 2015). The sheer amount and variety of initiatives active in Bangkok and the rest of Thailand stand in stark contrast with how little is known regarding the context and conditions in which they operate. The European approach to design and social innovation, which currently dominates the field of study, is characterised by the exporting of methods and ideas developed in Europe and adapting them to local contexts (Jégou & Manzini, 2008). However, whether these best practices are suitable for, or even desirable in, other contexts is questionable (Brown & Wyatt, 2010), with the additional threat of replacing knowledge and solutions developed locally (Bala-Miller et al., 2008; Akama & Yee, 2016). As local, culturally specific factors are rarely included in design and social innovation studies, information about their effects is limited.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Field studies conducted in Bangkok during 2016-2017 found a multitude of individuals, collectives, project teams and organisations addressing a wide range of local issues, using various types of design, operating on different scales and collaborating with a variety of stakeholders. Data collection using Activity Theory, a framework that enables the study of initiatives together with their respective ecosystems, provided new insights into how local initiatives function by examining their inner workings as well as the (power) relations between stakeholders. Preliminary findings indicated the influence of the Thai context on the design and social innovation process through the importance placed on issues surrounding education, religion and the local government, among others (Tjahja, Yee & Aftab, 2017). Social hierarchy, in particular, appeared to be a recurring theme and was reported by several interviewees to have influenced their practice or involvement in different ways and on multiple levels. The aim of this paper is to examine the nature of social hierarchy in Thailand in relation to design and social innovation, highlight when, where and how it interacts with the process and lay a theoretical foundation in order to increase our understanding of the phenomenon.

Background

The current study is part of a larger on-going PhD research project which aims to determine what constitutes design and social innovation initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region through the construction of case studies based on data collected from initiatives in Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. The research focuses on *why* design and social innovation projects are initiated, *for whom* they create value and what role *design* plays in creating this value.

Design and social innovation in a Thai context

The field studies conducted in Bangkok indicate that the use of design methods in social innovation is rapidly becoming commonplace in Thailand, evidenced by the increasing amount of initiatives that could be characterised as design and social innovation, although practitioners might not always subscribe to or identify themselves with this term. Local issues and concerns, such as education, urban renewal, heritage and social activism are addressed or promoted by using design approaches, such as community architecture, gamification, co-creation and graphic design. Most initiatives appear to be bottom-up, although many receive indirect support from the government. The Thai Health Promotion Board is a frequent funder of projects as design and social innovation initiatives are often perceived as beneficial for the general health and well-being of citizens. Unfortunately, academic research on design and social innovation in Thailand is rare. A notable exception is a study conducted by Natakun & Teerapong (2014), in which they found that contributing time or skills to solve social issues has become particularly popular among young Thais and commercial organisations, the latter often providing support through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. In addition, professional reputation and existing networks were deemed to be important sources for acquisition and support for Thai organisations involved in design and social innovation.

The notion that design and social innovation is built on relationships (Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan, 2010; Baek & Cho, 2012; Manzini, 2015; Akama & Yee, 2016) is particularly meaningful in this context as Thais attach great value in maintaining 'smooth' social interactions. This is accomplished by avoiding hurting others' ego, not to overtly criticise them nor reject their good intentions, and maintaining a disposition that is flexible, polite, calm and humble (Komin, 1990). As Thai society is ordered in a hierarchical fashion, where criteria such as age, education level family background and professional rank manifest itself in all social relationships, awareness of relative place in the social hierarchy and deference to those higher in rank is expected (Boyle, 1998; Wetprasit, 2016). Subsequently, the smoothing of relations also entails being aware of and acting according to social hierarchy (Mulder, 1996).

Social hierarchy

Social hierarchy, also known as status hierarchy or social stratification, is commonly understood as an implicit or explicit order of individual or groups according to a social dimension and is pervasive to the extent that it is considered a fundamental type of human relation (Fiske, 1992; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). It has been studied in sociology, social psychology, organisation studies and developmental studies, among others, in relation to topics such as collective action (Simpson, Willer & Ridgeway, 2012), cognition (Zitek & Tiedens, 2012), self-perception (Anderson et al., 2006), social identity (Doosje et al., 2002; Cunningham & Platow, 2007), social dominance (Sidanius et al., 2003), occupational stress (Bacharach, Bamberger & Mundell, 1993), gender (Hays, 2013), prejudice (Rudman et al., 2012; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014) and inequality (Charoensy, 2012; Kerbo, 2012). Although the underlying premise that there is some kind of differentiation made among individuals or groups is generally agreed upon by scholars, theories on what basis this difference is made vary. Gould (2002) distinguishes two schools of thought in social sciences: differentiation based on the quality of individuals' personal characteristics or differentiation based on the quality of the social positions they occupy, regardless how these positions were obtained. Thye (2000) and Magee & Galinsky (2008) consider power, based on control over resources, and status, conferred by others, to be the primary dimensions of social hierarchy. Sidanius & Pratto (2001) view human social systems as group-based social hierarchies where the dominant social groups possess a disproportionate amount of positive social value compared to groups who possess mostly negative social value.

Social hierarchy in Thailand

The origin of social hierarchy in Thailand can be traced back to the 15th century, where the feudal *sakdina* system stratified individuals into ranks according to the size of their allocated land or rice field (*sakdi* = power and *na* = rice field). This hierarchical system of patronage helped maintain the flexible and interdependent Thai societal structure and determined an individual's rights, wealth, political power and public responsibilities (Boyle, 1998; Kitiyadisai, 2005). Life in modern Bangkok is still characterised by the constant appraisal of whether someone is considered higher or lower than oneself in the social hierarchy. Status differentiation has evolved to become increasingly complex and is not necessarily based on existing objective social structures but can include variable subjective interpretations depending on contextual and situational variables, such as wealth, seniority and urbanity (Vorng, 2011). It is important to note that Thais generally do not have negative associations with social hierarchy (Mulder, 1996), which differs from the view that particularly prevalent in western society, where it is perceived as an intimidating force instead of recognised as a type of relationship (Fiske, 1992). Another notable difference is the fluidity of Thai interpersonal social relations, characterised by the constant shift in social status depending on the situation, which do not fit the western, rigidly structured notions of social hierarchy (Vorng, 2011).

Social hierarchy in design and social innovation

There are currently few studies that explore the effects of social hierarchy on the process of design or design and social innovation. Akama & Yee (2016) highlight the approaches two initiatives in Singapore have taken in relation to social hierarchy. The founder of *The Thought Collective*, a group of social enterprises, interprets hierarchy as respecting and recognising experience from seniors rather than focusing the role itself. In a similar fashion, the *Ground Up Initiative* promotes an environment where one can learn from elders. A small number of studies have examined social hierarchy in relation to participatory design. Puri et al. (2004) observed in their study, in which they adapted District Health Information Software for use in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh using a participatory design approach, that participatory processes originating bottom-up, common in Scandinavia and the UK, were unlikely to succeed in India. This was perceived to be due to the traditionally strong hierarchical society. Participatory activities therefore will have to be initiated top-down by high-ranking government agencies, such as in this case, the Chief Minister's office. Yasuoka & Sakurai (2012) sought to determine to what extent participatory design would be

successful in Japan, which also possesses a deeply-rooted hierarchical culture. In a series of workshops, a variety of stakeholders from different backgrounds were asked to brainstorm social and economic solutions to the destruction caused by a massive earthquake and tsunami which took place the same year. Although social hierarchy has always been a major issue in Japan with any kind of participatory activity, their findings suggest that the occurrence of a disaster enabled a change in social dynamics, creating a more favourable environment for a participatory approach. As such an extreme situation was unprecedented, senior participants could no longer rely on their superiority based on previous experience, which stimulated the creation of a 'flat' community. In another study by Yasuoka (2012), in which participants in Denmark and Japan played a participatory design game in a workshop setting, the rules were modified to minimise the effects of social hierarchy as this time the workshop took place in a 'normal' situation.

The examples from India and Japan illustrate that social hierarchy exert considerable influence on the design process. Design and social innovation initiatives, in particular, are prone to be affected, due to their frequent use of participatory processes, such as co-creation, and their reliance on the involvement of stakeholders, whose social status can vary. Despite the fact that social hierarchy has been studied extensively in other academic disciplines, existing theories are not entirely relevant, do not sufficiently take the local cultural context into consideration or only partially address the issues that occur in the context of design and social innovation, necessitating the development of alternative perspectives. Failure to acknowledge and understand the role of social hierarchy in the design and social innovation process could result in the implementation of solutions that do not sufficiently address the needs of the stakeholders, or worse, render the entire initiative useless.

Methodology

The findings that are presented in this paper are based on data collected during two separate field studies in Bangkok, conducted in 2016 and 2017. Within a period of three months (both studies combined), 19 stakeholders of 7 different design and social innovation initiatives were interviewed about their involvement. The interview questions were loosely guided around the Activity Theory framework, the primary data collection method in the main PhD research project. Subsequently, an approach based on Grounded Theory was adopted to generate theory from the data obtained.

Activity Theory

Design and social innovation practice is deeply rooted in its specific context and locality. Activity Theory (AT) departs from the assumption individuals should be studied along with their surrounding social structures by focusing on the activity that is generated by them (Engeström, 1999). Using the AT framework to analyse design and social innovation initiatives can therefore provide insight into their unique ecosystems, along with the specific factors which exert influence on them. For a more in-depth discussion regarding the suitability of AT in the study of design and social innovation, see Tjahja, Yee and Aftab (2017).

The AT framework, or *Activity System*, is usually visualised as a triangle with six interrelated concepts (see figure 1). The upper part of the triangle, consisting of *subject*, *tools* and *object*, represents an activity by a subject, using certain tools to achieve a particular outcome (Tan & Melles, 2010). The bottom part consists of implicit or explicit *rules*, the local or broader *community* and the *division of labour*, linking the activity, symbolised by the upper triangle, to the wider social context (Chatzakis, 2014).

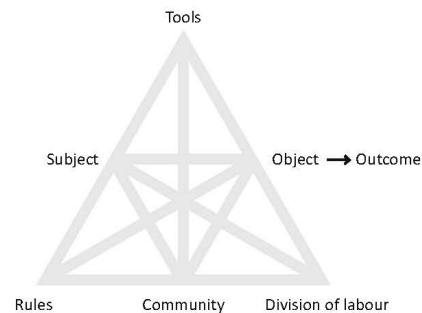


Figure 1 The activity system – adapted from Engeström (1999)

The issue of social hierarchy was brought up by thirteen interviewees from six different design and social innovation initiatives, on most occasions when asked about limitations, challenges and restrictions that influenced their work, in other words, the *rules* governing their initiatives. In the first field study, this occurred without any form of prior prompting from the researcher. In the second field study, however, social hierarchy had already been noted as being one of the recurring themes in design and social innovation in Thailand. Interviewees were therefore occasionally prompted by the interviewer to elaborate on the topic, although in some instances the topic of social hierarchy was still brought up without being solicited by the interviewer.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is a methodology that enables the development of conceptual theory from systematically collected data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1999). The theory, along with its hypotheses, is generated simultaneously with the gathering, coding and analysis of the data, thereby ensuring the theory's relevance to the phenomenon studied (Howard-Payne, 2016). During this process, concepts emerge which are grouped to form broader, more abstract categories. The establishment of relations between categories, eventually leads to the forming of the theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Findings

Co-create Charoenkrung

The Thailand Creative and Design Center (TCDC), a public organisation under the Office of the Prime Minister, focuses on the promotion of design and creative practice in Thailand. *Co-Creat* *Charoenkrung* is a large-scale top-down urban renewal project that was initiated in 2016, accompanying their relocation from the centre of Bangkok to the historical Grand Postal Building in the Charoenkrung neighbourhood. The relocation marked the beginning of TCDC's ambition to initiate a creative district in Thailand that has been co-created and co-designed with its residents and other local stakeholders. Several of the co-created proposals were prototyped on true (1:1) scale, a first in Thailand. TCDC's policy manager, who initiated and oversaw the overall project, and the project manager in charge of design, noted several aspects related to social hierarchy.

Both respondents mentioned the significance of high level gatekeepers and influencers within the local government. As (lower-ranking) civil servants are generally reluctant to be involved in issues they perceive to be outside of their authority or interests, failure to convince these key figures could cause a bottleneck, effectively ending the project. Therefore, taking advantage of existing networks in order to bypass the traditional hierarchy or bureaucracy was found to be beneficial, and often necessary. In addition, negotiations with high level officials from local authorities were carried out

by the policy manager's superior to increase the likelihood of cooperation. As such, TCDC believes that a top-down approach is a must for a design and social innovation project to be successful in this context and on this scale. Moreover, the status and seniority of some participants in the co-creation workshops was reported to have inhibited those who perceived themselves lower in hierarchy. Consequently, custom tools had to be designed to ensure the participation of all participants.

Deschooling Games

A collective that aims to solve problems by equipping their clients with the (design) skills to gamify learning experiences, Deschooling Games consists of multi-disciplinary team with three core members: a training facilitator, a teacher/activist and a designer, occasionally enlisting volunteers to facilitate during their sessions. The collective views social hierarchy in relation to education and sees it as their challenge to empower the bottom (students, parents and teachers), while at the same time giving ideas to the middle (management and HR) with the ultimate aim of creating movement in the Thai educational system, which they perceive to be stagnant. Two other stakeholders have offered their views on social hierarchy: One of Deschooling Games' volunteers, an engineer who often helps out as a facilitator or game designer, and one of their clients, a faculty Dean at a university in Bangkok.

The dependency of social hierarchy on role and context was mentioned by both respondents. The engineer reported to be more inclined to challenge social hierarchy in his workplace, as in this role his professional expertise is grounded in empirical facts. In the context of a Deschooling Games co-creation workshop, however, as a game designer and one of the interested volunteers, he does not have an expert role, making it more difficult to challenge social hierarchy. According to the Dean, who actively encourages co-creation and implements its practice in his own faculty, how social hierarchy is perceived depends on the design of the organisation and the division of labour; It is a matter of being able to separate different roles and communicating to each other effectively. For example, when it comes to negotiations with or presentations to clients, the Dean will take the lead. When discussing projects, however, he will join his staff and discusses with them as an equal. One role does not necessarily have to interfere with the other in participatory practice – everyone takes on different roles in different contexts. Moreover, the Dean perceives the argument surrounding social hierarchy to be an ideological one, in the sense that the common consensus appears to be that society should strive towards a flat hierarchy. He argues that this is not an accurate representation of what happens in real life. Instead of criticising the existence of social hierarchy, the focus should be on sensitivity towards it by being able to detect when relationships are not smooth.

CROSSs

A social architecture agency which started out as a volunteering organisation, CROSSs developed into a team of four architects and one designer, formalising their initiative into a professional agency in 2016. CROSSs often works in rural areas of Thailand on a wide range of projects, from the redesign of interior spaces to city-wide urban renewal. Aside from being architects, they often take on different roles within their projects, such as connectors and facilitators. Two team members elaborated on the methods the agency uses to actively eliminate negative effects of social hierarchy.

For CROSSs, the major issue with hierarchy is that it can prevent some people from being involved in the co-creation process. For example, if citizens feel reluctant to voice their honest opinions in front of their mayor, it becomes a problem; Sometimes a 'recalibration' of hierarchy is necessary to stimulate the sharing of ideas in an open manner. CROSSs realised that the conscious shaping of the space, often by arranging the seating positions before a meeting takes place, changed the way people communicate as well as the hierarchy within that space. So instead of facing the front, listening to one speaker, CROSSs encourages the levelling of social hierarchy by having the participants in their meetings and workshops sit in a circle. In this way, the mayor of a town will sit at the same level as its citizens, with everyone seeing eye to eye. Another tool that is often used by

CROSSs is to let participants write their ideas on paper instead of saying them out loud to avoid overtly challenging figures of authority. The team members emphasise that the existing social hierarchy can also be used as leverage in certain contexts. If high-ranking individuals, such as community leaders, grant their support to an initiative, they can convince people to go along with him, facilitating the flow of the process. Moreover, communicating directly with those on top of the hierarchy prevents the dilution of the ideas that the agency wishes to get across, as the initial message will no longer be 100% accurate if it needs to travel up through too many levels.

Pom Mahakan

Built against the wall of a historical fort, the village of Pom Mahakan consists of a small community living in wooden houses, located in a prime location near the Grand Royal Palace in the middle of urban Bangkok. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has been trying to demolish the village since the 1960s and its residents have been resisting ever since. The community has contacted various outsiders, such as academics, designers, architects and others who are sympathetic to their cause, as well as the government itself, to co-create a solution for the current situation. The direction they are currently pursuing is that of a 'living heritage museum' which may convince the government to keep what is left of the village intact. Three stakeholders who were interviewed regarding their involvement with Pom Mahakan commented on issues surrounding social hierarchy: A local social entrepreneur who is actively involved in the co-creation activities surrounding the village and two architects who are members of the Association of Siamese Architects (ASA).

Two interviewees mentioned that the community leader is a forceful character, with strong opinions which are not always shared by the other villagers. The aim of the co-creation activities in this context was to enable the voices of the community to be heard and be considered. Subsequently, the leader was asked not to be present during the co-creation activities to ensure villagers could share their thoughts freely. In this example, the negative effects of social hierarchy had to be neutralised to ensure that the view of an individual does not override the view of the community. Furthermore, the strained relationship between the villagers and their leader could potentially weaken their position when negotiating with the BMA. Both architects emphasised that support from the authorities is crucial in order to succeed. Initiatives have to be viewed by the government as benefitting their own policies or they have to be backed by those high in the hierarchy, such as members of the Thai royal family. Although they are not able to help directly, they can be referred to as being sympathetic to the cause.

Bangkok Chinatown

The neighbourhood of Talat Noi is part of Bangkok's Chinatown and borders the Charoenkrung district. The *Bangkok Chinatown (Yaanjean Thin Bangkok)* initiative predates *Co-create Charoenkrung* and was initiated in 2012 by a group of architects and sociologist, with one of the initiators born and raised in the area. Similar to its neighbour, local residents were brought together in the rejuvenation process, which utilises various design methods, such as co-creation and the prototyping of ideas. As the agency needs to arrange the funding for each individual project separately, they accomplish their aim of urban renewal by doing one project at the time.

As some of the other initiatives, Bangkok Chinatown experiences effects related to social hierarchy during the co-creation process. The agency's founder attempts to reduce these negative influences by creating many levels of meeting. For example, some groups consist mainly of people who occupy higher social status, such as policy-makers, representatives from the government, landlords and big business owners, who can often offer a broader vision of what would benefit the community as a whole. Other groups consist of community leaders, local citizens and small business owners, who can give more detailed insights into how and what should be done to improve the current situation. Usually, individuals with a high social status will not participate in the co-creation sessions as they do not have the time. Instead, they will often join the first meeting to give ideas and the last meeting to

witness the results. In other instances, they will send their subordinates to attend the meeting, who will only observe and report back to their superiors. However, when high status people do attend the workshops, their opinions tend to dominate the opinions of (lower-ranking) neighbourhood committee members, who feel inhibited to express their thoughts in front of those they respect. Therefore, when organising large workshops, participant groups are separated along 'horizontal lines', with members of the same hierarchy in the same group, allowing the participants to open up and feel more at ease. All groups use the same co-creation tools and after discussion the results will be shared between the groups. The founder perceives social hierarchy to be natural and not considered a major issue. Instead, he tries to focus on combining the ideas that are generated in the meetings in order to benefit all stakeholders involved.

The Rambutan

Consisting of two partners who are graphic designers, *The Rambutan* aims to promote graphic design as a means to raise awareness for social issues. They organise workshops and events for graphic design students to show them the possibilities of graphic design as a means for social activism.

The partners state that although social hierarchy is particularly present in Thailand, they try to emphasise equality instead. They believe that knowledge is needed to accomplish this, as people of any hierarchy will listen if the message that is being conveyed makes sense to them. The duo does not attach any value to social hierarchy in their practice, but does acknowledge its existence, noting that the creative industry in Thailand is dominated by designers who are well-established. Even though *The Rambutan* operates in a completely different area, they are indirectly affected by these authoritative figures as their voice is louder and carries more weight. Even if information is wrong or outdated, the opinion of a professional graphic designer is valued far less than a design professor, who is often seen as the 'expert' in the subject, even by his clients. This isn't helped by the fact that the general public does not possess sufficient knowledge to judge what is right or wrong and will therefore rely on traditional notions of expertise based on educational status. Hierarchy also manifests itself when the design students, inspired to pursue a social approach for their school assignments after participating in their workshop, are often overruled by lecturers who are uncomfortable with the idea of using design for social causes.

Discussion

Although perceived and/or experienced differently, all respondents acknowledged the fact that social hierarchy exists and that it is an integral part of Thai society. Moreover, the majority of the interviewees view social hierarchy as a permanent feature of Thai society that does not necessarily have to be challenged but has to be dealt with accordingly. Based on the respondents' observations regarding the effects of social hierarchy in relation to the design and social innovation process, the following categories were identified.

The negative effects of social hierarchy on the co-creation process

As the studies in India (Puri et al., 2004) and Japan (Yasuoka, 2012; Yasuoka & Sakurai, 2012) have shown, participation in co-creation activities is not a given in societies where social hierarchies are engrained in everyday life. This was also the case in Bangkok, where in four out of six initiatives the co-creation process had to be modified in one way or another to minimise the negative effects of social hierarchy and maximise the participation of stakeholders. In Co-create Charoenkrung, custom co-creation tools were designed to encourage participation of those lower in hierarchy. Co-creation sessions at Pom Mahakan were characterised by the absence of the village chief, to ensure the views of the other villagers would be heard. The team of Bangkok Chinatown grouped people of similar standing together during their sessions in the hope that participants would be more open in the company of those they perceive as equals. The architects of CROSSs actively shaped the space in which their co-creation sessions will take place by requesting participants to sit in a circle, thereby

breaking down the hierarchy and encouraging the sharing of opinions, thoughts and ideas as equals. Awareness of the fact that social hierarchy and participation can interact with one another in co-creation processes is imperative to effectively negate its effects.

The necessity of leveraging on existing social hierarchy

Several respondents mentioned the dependence on the higher tiers of the social hierarchy. Support from above was reported by stakeholders from Pom Mahakan and Co-Creato Charoenkrung to significantly increase the likelihood of success. In addition, having direct access to high-ranking people ('knowing the right persons in the right place') was considered to be an asset in the Co-creato Charoenkrung project and by CROSSs, who added that it enabled them to communicate their message more directly to the decision-makers. CROSSs also noted that 'a good leader who makes good decisions' can be beneficial as they can considerably streamline the process. However, a leader can also create tension within a community which can harm the overall process, a concern voiced by some involved with the Pom Mahakan community. The founder of Bangkok Chinatown observed the dominance of those high in hierarchy in co-creation sessions over those who were considered to be lower, although the former contributed in a positive way by possessing the vision needed to push the initiative forward. Although they were not affected by social hierarchy directly, the team of The Rambutan expressed their difficulties in spreading their message due to resistance of the established designers and academics in the local industry, whose opinions are deemed to be of greater value because of their perceived higher status. Identifying key individuals and understanding the role that the higher echelons of the social hierarchy play, in particular in terms of support and facilitation, can greatly contribute to the success of design and social innovation initiatives.

The importance of understanding social hierarchy in the Thai government

A previous study has shown that the respective (local) government departments can have different attitudes towards design and social innovation, ranging from supportive to indifferent (Tjahja, Yee & Aftab, 2017). The insights gained from the respondents in this study support the notion that the organisational culture of public sector might be one of the underlying reasons of this ambivalent stance. As almost all initiatives in this study had some form of government support, an understanding of hierarchy within the government context is essential. The policy manager from TCDC, itself a government organisation, expressed considerable frustration in dealing with other governmental departments. Although some might be willing to cooperate, they are only able to do so within the limits of their jurisdiction, with a reluctance to be involved in issues perceived to be outside of their authority or interests. This experience was echoed by one of the architects working with Pom Mahakan, adding that Thai civil servants in general are not brave enough to stand up to their superiors out of fear of professional consequences. Although this is a common characteristic of those working in public service in other parts of the world, in Thailand it appears to be exacerbated by the effects of social hierarchy. Thai civil servants tend to avoid conflict and uncertainty, and are reluctant to voice their opinions towards colleagues or superiors. Pimpa (2012) attributes this behaviour to the concept of *ti tum ti soong* in which Thai people are perceived to be destined to occupy in a certain position in society. This position ('ti') is fixed and determined by their familial and social status. Therefore, superiors at top of the organisation or social hierarchy tend to be accepted due to their position, and not necessarily their professional merits. Those who follow the supervisor's orders and do not challenge their authority are traditionally perceived as being effective employees (Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999). Furthermore, even when key figures are present that are sympathetic to the initiative, support in the long-term is never guaranteed due to the continued shifting of positions within the government. Additional supporters are needed to mitigate the problem of relying too much on a single key person. Therefore, an understanding of the influence and position of supportive key people in order to know who to lobby for support is necessary to ensure the long-term survival of a project.

The fluidity of social hierarchy

The notion that Thai social hierarchy is flexible or fluid, adapting to different situations and contexts (Vorng, 2011) was also attested in this study. Two respondents involved in the Deschooling Games initiative suggested that their respective places in the social hierarchy was not static but changes depending on the situation that they find themselves in. The Dean perceived hierarchy as a product of organisational design and culture. Different contexts require the adoption of different roles, which can be separated from one another if communicated properly within the organisation. The engineer underlined the difference in his perceived status in his role as facilitator/game designer during sessions with Deschooling Games as opposed to his 'normal' professional role.

Preliminary ideas

There are several interesting ideas that can be further developed from the categories that have been identified in the previous section. First, hierarchy studies traditionally examine individuals as units of analysis *within* a group or the dynamics *between* groups. Design and social innovation initiatives, however, are characterised by interactions both within and between groups and individuals, sometimes occurring simultaneously. For example, within a project social hierarchy can exert a negative influence on participants during a co-creation process, but at the same time the project manager can make use of social hierarchy to elevate the project to a higher level by involving key people through his or her network. Second, the fluid characteristics of social hierarchy entail that someone can be affected directly or indirectly, depending on which role this person has at a certain point in time. For example, when a designer tries to minimise the effects of social hierarchy during a workshop, (s)he is influenced indirectly whereas the participants are the ones directly affected. Conversely, the same designer can feel the effects of social hierarchy directly when (s)he tries to negotiate with the local government and realises that their place in the hierarchy is too low to accomplish their goal. In turn, the government official, who might try to help by mediating within their own department, is indirectly affected. Third, aside from positive and negative, attitudes towards social hierarchy can also be characterised as being active or passive. An example of an active attitude would be the creation of custom tools by a designer in order to promote participation, whereas a passive attitude would be a neighbourhood resident who feels inhibited to speak their mind in the presence of someone regarded higher in status.

It appears that there are several dimensions of social hierarchy that are relevant in design and social innovation: types of interaction (within/between groups and individuals), degree of influence (direct/indirect) and attitude toward social hierarchy (active/passive). In addition, the dynamic and fluid nature of social hierarchy in Thailand, which might bear similarities to other cultural contexts, needs to be taken into consideration and explored further. The tentative ideas proposed in this paper will hopefully contribute towards a greater understanding of how design and social innovation is practised, particularly in non-western contexts.

Conclusion

The inherent reliance of design and social innovation initiatives on the support, facilitation and participation of stakeholders has prompted us to further explore the nature of the social relationships which lie at its foundations. The examination of the six Bangkok initiatives demonstrated that hierarchy in social relationships was present in various areas and stages throughout the process: Opening or closing doors, including or excluding people from participation, shifting and flowing from one social situation to the next. In societies where social hierarchy is an integral part of life, practitioners and stakeholders involved in design and social innovation have developed their own ways to deal with it, either using it to their advantage, or in some cases, attempting to reduce its negative effects. Using a grounded theory approach, a number of categories were identified from the findings, giving rise to ideas that can be used as building blocks for theories of social hierarchy in design and social innovation.

This paper exemplified the effects of social hierarchy on design and social innovation practice in Bangkok. Awareness of its existence and how it can influence the process can be beneficial for both local and non-local practitioners as well as organisations who are operating in contexts where social hierarchy is prevalent or whose work involves stakeholders who are affected by it. Questions regarding the role of the designer become current once again in this context. Do design and social innovation practitioners need to actively position themselves inside or outside of the social hierarchy? Would this be possible and if so, what would the consequences be for the process?

Furthermore, there are many other context-specific factors in Thailand, and elsewhere, that are in need of investigation, such as urban and rural environments, religion, racial prejudice, policies and legislation, to name but a few. Design and social innovation practice is as complex as the societies that they are meant to improve, with seemingly infinite intricacies and nuances. Contextual knowledge therefore is a prerequisite for understanding how and why certain concepts, ideas and initiatives (will) work and others not.

References

- Akama, Y., & Yee, J. (2016). Seeking stronger plurality: Intimacy and integrity in designing for social innovation. *Cumulus 2016 Conference Proceedings*, Hong Kong.
- Anderson, C., Beer, J. S., Srivastava, S., & Spataro, S. E. (2006). Knowing your place: Self-perceptions of status in face-to-face groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(6), 1094-1110.
- Baek, J. S., & Cho, E. J. (2012). Enrichment of social relations in collaborative service: Social networks and Sociability. Paper presented at the Cumulus 2012.
- Bacharach, S. B., Bamberger, P., & Mundell, B. (1993). Status inconsistency in organizations: From social hierarchy to stress. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 14(1), 21-36.
- Bala-Miller, P., Marras, I., & Zacarias, A. (2008). Creative Communities: Their role and impact on welfare and development. In F. Jégou & E. Manzini (Eds.), *Collaborative Services: Social Innovation and Design for Sustainability* (pp. 133-136). Milan: Edizioni POLI.design.
- Brown, T., & Wyatt, J. (2010). Design Thinking for Social Innovation. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*(Winter), 30-35.
- Boyle, J. Cultural influences on implementing environmental impact assessment: insights from Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 18(2), 95-116.
- Charoensy, A. K. (2012). Social Hierarchy and the Inequalities of Access: Evidence from Rural Southern Laos. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 42(2), 276-297.
- Chatzakis, E. (2014). *Maintaining Agility: A study of obscure New Product Development practices in small and medium sized manufacturing enterprises to understand how they maintain relevance to their markets.* (PhD), Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. L. (1990). Grounded Theory research: Procedures, canons and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Cunningham, E., & Platow, M. J. (2007). On helping lower status out groups: The nature of the help and the stability of the intergroup status hierarchy. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 10, 258-264.
- Doosje, B., Spears, R., & Ellemers, N. (2002). Social Identity as both cause and effect: The development of group identification in response to anticipated and actual changes in the intergroup status hierarchy. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 41, 57-76.
- Engeström, Y. (1999). Expansive Visibilization of Work: An Activity-Theoretical Perspective. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 8(1), 63-93.
- Fiske, A. P. (1992). The Four Elementary Forms of Sociality: Framework for a Unified Theory of Social Relations. *Psychological Review*, 99(4), 689-723.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.* New Brunswick: AldineTransaction.
- Glaser, B. G. (1999). Keynote Address from the Fourth Annual Qualitative Health Research Conference: The Future of Grounded Theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 9(6), 836-845.
- Gould, R. V. (2002). The Origins of Status Hierarchies: A Formal Theory and Empirical Test. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(5), 1143-1178.
- Hays, N. A. (2013). Fear and loving in social hierarchy: Sex differences in preferences for power versus status. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49, 1130-1136.

- Hillgren, P.-A., Seravalli, A., & Emilson, A. (2011). Prototyping and infrastructuring in design for social innovation. *CoDesign*, 7(3-4), 69–183.
- Howard-Payne, L. (2016). Glaser or Strauss? Considerations for selecting a grounded theory study. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 46(1), 50–62.
- Jégou, F., & Manzini, E. (2008). *Collaborative Services: Social Innovation and Design for Sustainability*. Milan: POLI.design.
- Kerbo, H. R. (2012). *Social Stratification and Inequality*. Dubuque: McGraw-Hill.
- Kitiyadisai, K. (2005). Privacy rights and protection: foreign values in modern Thai context. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 7, 17–26.
- Komin, S. (1990). *Psychology of the Thai people: values and behavioral patterns*. Bangkok: Research Center, National Institute of Development Administration.
- Magee, J. C., & Galinsky, A. D. (2008). Social hierarchy: The self-reinforcing nature of power and status. *The Academy of Management Annals* (Vol. 1, pp. 351–398).
- Manzini, E. (2015). *Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J., & Mulgan, G. (2010). *The Open Book of Social Innovation*. Retrieved from <http://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/The-Open-Book-of-Social-Innovation.pdf>
- Mulder, N. (1996). *Inside Thai Culture: Interpretations of Everyday Life*. Amsterdam: The Pepin Press.
- Natakun, B., & Teerapong, K. (2014). Social design enterprises in Thailand: potentials and challenges. *Journal of Architectural/Planning Research and Studies*, 11(1), 119–136.
- Pimpa, N. (2012). Amazing Thailand: Organizational Culture in the Thai Public Sector. *International Business Research*, 5(11), 35–42.
- Puri, S. K., Byrne, E., Nhampossa, J. L., & Quraishi, Z. B. (2004). Contextuality of Participation in IS Design: A Developing Country Perspective. *PDC'04 Conference Proceedings*, Toronto, Canada.
- Rudman, L. A., Moss-Racusin, C., Phelan, J. E., & Nauts, S. (2012). Status incongruity and backlash effects: Defending the gender hierarchy motivates prejudice against female leaders. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48.
- Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (2001). *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Sidanius, J., Van Laar, C., Levin, S., & Sinclair, S. (2003). Social Hierarchy Maintenance and Assortment into Social Roles: A Social Dominance Perspective. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 6(4), 333–352.
- Simpson, B., Willer, R., & Ridgeway, C. L. (2012). Status Hierarchies and the Organization of Collective Action. *Sociological Theory*, 30(3), 149–166.
- Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam, N., & Jablin, F. M. (1999). An Exploratory Study of Communication Competence in Thai Organizations. *Journal of Business Communication*, 36(4), 382–418.
- Tan, S., & Melles, G. (2010). An activity theory focused case study of graphic designers' tool-mediated activities during the conceptual design phase. *Design Studies*, 31(5), 461–478.
- Thye, S. R. (2000). A status value theory of power in exchange relations. *American Sociological Review*, 65(3), 407–432.
- Tjahja, C., Yee, J. & Aftab, M. (2017). Object of Design: Activity Theory as an analytical framework for Design and Social Innovation. In E. Bohemia, C. de Bont, & L. S. Holm (Eds.), *Conference Proceedings of the Design Management Academy* (Vol. 3, pp. 931–947). London: Design Management Academy.
- Vorng, S. (2011). Beyond the urban-rural divide: Complexities of class, status and hierarchy in Bangkok. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 39, 674–701.
- Wetprasit, N. (2016). *Seniority and hierarchy in Thai work environment: An additional factor influencing transfer of training of management trainees in a leading international hotel chain in Thailand*. (MA), BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo.
- Wilkins, C. L., & Kaiser, C. R. (2014). Racial progress as threat to the status hierarchy: Implications for perceptions of anti-white bias. *Psychological Science*, 25(2), 439–446.
- Yasuoka, M., & Sakurai, R. (2012). Out of Scandinavia to Asia – Adaptability of Participatory Design in Culturally Distant Society. *PDC'12 Conference Proceedings*, Roskilde, Denmark.
- Yasuoka, M. (2012). *Cultural Impact on Participatory Design Method -ICT Design Game Case*. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256845781_Cultural_Impact_on_Participatory_Design_Method_-_ICT_Design_Game_Case
- Zitek, E. M., & Tiedens, L. Z. (2012). The Fluency of Social Hierarchy: The Ease with which Hierarchical Relationships are Seen, Remembered, Learned and Liked. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(1), 98–115.

About the Authors:

Cyril Tjahja is a PhD student at Northumbria University (UK) and a design practitioner. His research interests include design and social innovation, visual and government identities, Dutch design and material culture.

Joyce Yee is an Associate Professor at Northumbria University's School of Design. She is the co-founder of the Design and Social Innovation in Asia-Pacific (DESIAP) network with Yoko Akama. Joyce's research focuses on the role, value and impact of design in organisational context.