

## Article II

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# Social Design for Services Building a Framework for Designers Working in the Development Context

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**Abstract:** There is an evident need to shift from focusing merely on designers' tasks and methods towards taking a more holistic approach to socially responsible design. In order to do this, this paper looks firstly in retrospect at the global design research work done by the World Design Research Group and secondly examines an on-going research project in the development context. In both cases, the connections and differences between social design and service design are highlighted. As a concrete outcome this paper proposes a framework that can be applied to the development context. In other words, in design cases where the aim is to collaborate, share knowledge and experiences as well as co-design change in a multinational group. The framework itself gives designers an understanding of how to both navigate in the development field and work for improving the livelihoods of communities.

**Keywords:** Service Design, Social Design, Development Context, Community

## 1. Introduction

New emerging opportunities for design are in different local and global contexts that are at once compelling and fraught (Otto & Smith, 2013). Now designers are urged to work on the major social, cultural, political, and economical instances brought about by globalization. Critics like Hunt (2011), Suchman (2011), and Tunstall (2013) point out that such ventures should be set on modest and realistic goals, build upon human approaches, and aim fostering sensitivity to the cultural and socioeconomic contexts and values of local populations. In their opinion, this has proven to be very challenging task for designers.

Being concerned for society is of course not a new phenomenon among designers. Already Papanek (1971) discussed the social and moral responsibility of the designer both to his or her own society as well as what he calls "underdeveloped" and emerging countries facing issues of sustainability. In more recent times, Bonsiepe (2006) has encouraged designers "to focus on the excluded, the discriminated, and economically less-favoured groups" in their design activities. He is endorsing design solutions that contribute to democracy. Also Manzini (2014) promotes designers to focus on

process of change that emerge from the creative re-combination of existing assets, the bottom-up approach, and social innovation driven by local communities.

Service design is playing an important role in shifting former perceptions by breaking down preconceived notions of creativity, actively illustrating the significant and wider social application of design and involving more people in the design process (Andrews, 2011). The methodology of service design has dramatically broadened the application of “design thinking,” giving impetus and stability to the social design movement. Stickdorn and Schneider (2011) argue that the tools and methodologies developed by service designers provide a unique opportunity for all designers, whatever their discipline, to consider, approach and tackle social issues. As the processes of design become more transparent and accessible to different audiences, better understanding of design’s social value will emerge, helping to facilitate broad and sustainable social application of design (Andrews, 2011).

Further, Young (2012) writes about the service designer’s role in the co-design of socially responsible community practice contexts. He places social responsibility at the core of service design and argues that all design is socially responsible. However, the issue is not if design is concerned with outcomes that are intended to be socially responsible but that its priority is often compromised by other considerations in the design process. We have to stop thinking of design as the construction of graphics, services, and systems, and think about those as means for people to act, to realize their wishes, and satisfy their needs (Frascara, 2002). This requires from designers a better understanding of people, of society, and of the ecosystem. Design is, or should be, a culture and consequently designer has, or should have, their own view about world (Manzini, 2011). This becomes important when designing in a development context. Nussbaum (2010) calls designers to ask themselves whether they are collaborating with the best local people and being as sensitive as they might to the colonial legacies of the countries they want to do good in. In his opinion, doing good in own surroundings might already be challenging enough, let alone in a faraway country where language and different habits and culture pose new kind of challenges.

Nonetheless, designers should work to understand how the processes and artefacts of design help to define what it means to be human and focus on how design translates values into tangible experiences (Tunstall, 2013). In Tunstall’s (2013) opinion, design innovation has much to contribute to fighting global inequality, but first it should adhere to clear principles of respectful engagement with people’s values, the translation of them through processes of inclusive co-design, and the evaluation of their effects on people’s experiences from the perspective of the most vulnerable. By connecting the aims, knowledge, methods, and processes of social and service design, we might be one step closer to achieve clearer principles.

There is a great deal of overlap with social design and service design. Service design is focused on applying design to systems and processes, while the material of social design is usually social conditions (Bailey, 2012). Discussion, critique, and debate is still needed, but it seems evident that the history and knowledge of social design is relevant for service designers and vice versa, particularly in contexts where services should be delivered and sustained by the communities themselves.

## 2. Data and Methods

The framework presented in this paper builds on the research done in two cases. First, it looks at the World Design Research Group’s published dissertations through a narrative literature review (Green, Johnson, & Adams, 2006). The goal of the literature review was to identify central themes studied

and discussed by the World Design Research Group in the development context. The World Design Research Group's eight doctoral dissertations (Miettinen, 2007; Bello, 2008; Reijonen, 2010; Huhtamaa, 2010; Nugraha, 2012; Judice, 2014a; Judice, 2014b; Sarantou, 2014) form a sound body of data and it was selected for the study because it represented the design phenomena examined in the paper.

The second case is looking at design work that has been done in a multidisciplinary project called PARTY (Participatory Development with the Youth). The PARTY project aims to carry out international and inter-sectoral collaboration in the field of developmental cooperation through research and innovation staff exchanges and sharing of knowledge between researchers, the target group, and local actors in South Africa and Namibia. In this case, the research structure followed a flexible research design that progressed through cycles of collecting data, implementing design work, and evaluating results. This model of research design can be attached to constructive design research (Koskinen et al., 2011) and design science (Hevner, 2007). The project has started in 2015 and is still ongoing until February 2019. The data analysed in order to build a framework includes researchers' field notes and data created in five different co-design workshops during years 2015 and 2016.

### 3. Work of the World Design Research Group

The World Design Research Group was formed around the ethos of improving human livelihoods by using social design methodologies. This international group of researchers (from Brazil, Colombia, Finland, Indonesia, Mexico, and Namibia) at Aalto University (formerly known as University of Art and Design Helsinki) was funded through various sources, and the doctoral candidates themselves established it, which made it unique. The group's mission was to develop design outside the market, with an eye on designing for countries outside Europe and North America. A narrative literature review was done to World Design Research Group's members' dissertations, which were done during the years 2002-2014. The aim was to study the connections between social design and service design as well as the elements that designers need to consider when working in the development context. Next, the five overarching themes (Miettinen & Sarantou, 2017) that build the theoretical layer of the framework are presented.

#### 3.1 Dualistic Position

Thematically, the work of the World Design Research Group expanded itself into very wide spectrum from the design of concrete objects into strategic design and design for services. The themes can be viewed as a spectrum moving from further away or closer to market orientation. At the start of the spectrum are the themes of indigenous cultures and tradition (Huhtamaa, 2010) and crafts development (Nugraha, 2012; Reijonen, 2010; Sarantou, 2014). They expanded to include graphic communication and social design (Judice, 2014a; Judice, 2014b) as well as to other end of the spectrum with the themes of the design of abstract contents such as strategic and service design (Bello, 2008; Miettinen, 2007). All of the researchers had very dualistic position of being not only researchers but also actors for change in and with communities.



Figure 1. The themes and dissertation topics of the World Design Research Group.

Huhtamaa (2010) discussed the meaning attached to “Namibian Bodily Appearance and Handmade Objects” from craft persons’ point of view. Nugraha (2012), who was studying the production process, proposed ATUMICS method: Artefact, Technique, Utility, Material, Icon, Concept, and Shape for product development. These two dissertations define the relationship of designers with crafts tradition and development. Miettinen (2007) proposed shifting the focus to designing systems and experiences rather than objects. Sarantou (2014) discusses “narratives of care”, narrative practices that empower the community as the more abstract end of the crafts-making process. In the World Design Research Group’s work one can clearly see how their design practice changed from having concrete outcome towards more abstract goals.

### 3.2 Connection to Culture

Relating social design to a larger body of cultural theories was relevant for World Design Research Group. Shared themes in social and service design built a strong bridge between these two areas and enabled researchers of the group to shift from one area to another not only in their research work but also in their design practice. This bridge was built not only through design theory but also through cultural theories. The connection to culture in the groups’ work is not only theoretical but also practical.

Reijonen (2010) uses Amartya Sen’s (1999) capability approach and discusses the multi-dimensional role of welfare and how it is perceived through the “individual’s capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value”. Sen (1999) stated that “the freedom to achieve wellbeing is of moral importance and that capabilities are person’s real freedom’s or opportunities to achieve functioning”. Contemporary social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) proposed a framework constructed around scapes—ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes—to study cultural flow and disjuncture between economies, cultures, and politics in the globalized world. In World Design Research Group, Bello (2008) came up with goodscales that refer to the intertwined global and local structures and paths produced by the conception, production, distribution, exchange, use, and disposal of goods in a meta-relationship with Appadurai’s scapes. In addition, Miettinen (2007) discussed globalization and the tourism industry. She referred to the work of John Urry (1995; 2002) and the tourist gaze from three different perspectives: experiencing local identities, globalizing the tourist gaze through technology, and constructing the tourist gaze through signs and semiotics of tourism that can be a powerful analytical tool.

### 3.3 Ethnographies of Co-design

The ethnographic method, with the use of participatory observation and interviews, is a good research method for the fieldwork context and makes it possible to gain contextual understanding, which is important in social design. The ethnographic method enables in-depth contextual understanding of communities and their mundane happenings. Huhtamaa (2010), Miettinen (2007) and Sarantou (2014) use strong ethnographic methodologies in their research work. In Andrea Judice's (2014a) work the ethnographic methodology is present in the research work as well as in a variety of design tools used and evaluated as beneficial for the process.

In Marcelo Judice's (2014b) dissertation the influence of constructive design research (Koskinen et al., 2011) is evident. His research work is constructed around iterations of co-design workshops and process. Ethnography places designer and researcher in the field in interactions with the community. This is the initial step for co-design work. Social design as well as service design processes use workshops as a platform for co-design solutions as well as for learning from each other's. In Miettinen's (2007) research process, co-design workshops and exhibitions created a series of iterations, which outlined a creative tourism experience. Then design work is developed through a number of physical iterations and co-design work with the communities that is reflected on and analysed by using research methods (Judice, 2014a; Judice, 2014b; Miettinen, 2007).

### 3.4 Participatory Process

Participatory design (PD) thinking and the work of Pelle Ehn (1993) had an important significance in the projects of the World Design Research Group. Ehn, Nilsson and Topgaard (2014) discuss a number of these themes: design for politics for improved governing, use of the iterative approach for prototyping in social design work, and support structures for social innovation. The value of both of Judices' (2014a; 2014b) work is in their practical design context and use of design tools with the community of Vila Rosario. Judices are not mere participatory observers of their work; they also include users and citizens into the design process.

Andrea Judice's thesis (2014a) contributes to the PD discussions, which embraces users as participants of the product or service development process. Judice's approach to PD places the health agents and Vila Rosario community at the heart of her design process. Judice's thesis and approach to PD contributes to understanding the designer's role in not only a user-centred but also a community-centred design process that places designer within the community. Her thesis shows that contextual understanding is probably the only way for transformational change.

### 3.5 Community Focus

Andrea and Marcelo Judice's (2014a; 2014b) work is a great contribution to community-centred design (Winschiers-Theophilus et al., 2010) discussion, which highlights storytelling, inclusive decision-making and participatory community meetings. Social design work with communities includes long periods of presence in the field, interviews, co-design workshops, and discussions that create personal trust and relationship with the local community members. Judice (2014a) discusses the long tails of trust that describe the process of creating trust with the community members. This relationship continues after an intensive working period and enables continuing communication with the community as well as the opportunity to continue work.

Fieldwork and ethnographic methods encourage presenting the local context through the narrative voice of community members. Narratives and multivocality are present also in the work of Miettinen (2007), Huhtamaa (2010) and Judice (2014a). Sarantou (2014) discusses crafts and design practice as both empowering for the community and for individuals. Miettinen (2007) also identified the process

of empowering identity construction of local women connected with learning crafts skills. Judice (2014a) discusses identity construction related to the work of health agents in Vila Rosario. The themes of empowerment and identity construction are central to the group's research and development work. The World Design Research Group's work describes change processes taking place in communities and engaging the community members working in new activities. Community members need to reposition themselves during this engagement process.

## 4. PARTY Project

The second case presented in this paper is PARTY project. It is an ongoing research project, which aims to endorse human development and assist in reducing youth unemployment in South Africa and Namibia. European Union funds the project and the six partners are from Finland, England, Italy, South Africa and Namibia. The project advances service design approach in the field of developmental research. While service design offers process and methods for co-design, the final aims are usually social.

The hypothesis of service design is that when the communities participate in the design process, new ideas, service needs and different ways of utilizing technology are encountered. Service design processes and methods can help in innovating human-centred service concepts (Miettinen, 2011). The community members, in this case youth, have everyday knowledge that can be used in designing new solutions for local needs. The PARTY project focuses on the means and tools for enabling the youth to participate in the service development in their own communities and recognizing the stakeholders that can enable change and increased inclusion in decision-making.

By analysing the field diaries of three designers that have worked at PARTY project as well as data collected from five different co-design workshops the aim is to add a practical layer to the framework for designers working in the development context. Next, the results of the project so far are presented in connection to the former more theoretical themes that emerged from analysing the dissertations published by World Design Research Group members.

## 5. Framework for Designers Working in the Development Context

An interesting finding is the dualistic role of the designer that has also emerged in PARTY project. When designer works within the community, he has at least two goals. Firstly, to engage the community and work with them, aiming for developing new service concepts and outcomes. Secondly, and at the same time, designer is observing, documenting, and analysing the happenings. This dualistic positioning is common for both social and service designers and in PARTY project's context, understanding of both design fields is needed.

The dualistic position of being a researcher and a designer at the same time is seen for example in the case of consent forms. Traditionally researcher needs to get permission for doing the research from community members before starting collaboration. But in PARTY's case, documentation tools have been developed together with the youth and documents containing official research text have been transcribed to more down-to-earth language for stakeholders and local actors working with the youth. Ethical ways of working together have been created collaboratively. This means that usually the permission for research is reached at the end of the workshop by looking at and discussing about the materials that have been created together. The aim of researcher or designer is to be equal participant with the skills of facilitation and empathy (Miettinen & Vuontisjärvi, 2016).

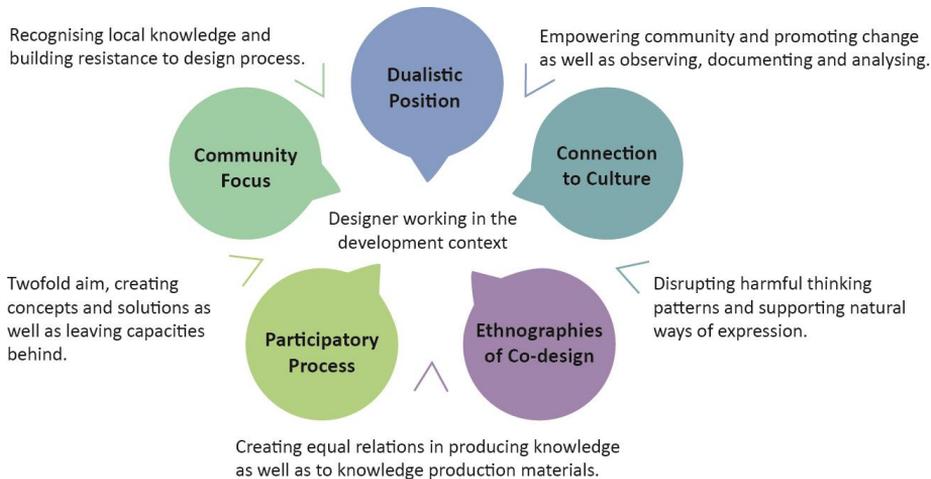


Figure 2. Framework for designers working in the development context.

In the case of PARTY project the life situation of the marginal youth, is resulting from historical, societal and geographical contexts. Project is working especially with San youth, one of the local tribes in Namibia and South Africa. The challenges with unemployment, substance abuse and lack of educational opportunities are huge. Design has ways of disrupting actively well-known or traditional ways of doing. In the case of PARTY, design has been used to disrupt existing understanding of the youth about themselves being bad, ugly and worthless. This has been done by designing activities that break those understandings and give concrete experiences of something else. Using service design process and methods has helped to add supporting elements also to solutions that the youth is co-designing. These elements can be in the touchpoints—environments, products, interactions and processes—of the planned solution.

Knowing culture, history and environment is helping for example on selection of design tools and methods. In the PARTY project, natural ways of expression for youth such as storytelling, singing and acting have been identified together and then tested in workshops (Miettinen & Vuontisjärvi, 2016). In addition, the importance of local partners, their participation and understanding of the project's goals has been acknowledged. It is about recognizing the power and significance of everyday life and local knowledge. European designers will never understand fully what it means to be a San youth in Southern Africa, but by supporting youth in creation and rooting the concept to local situation, it is possible to make a difference.

When co-designing, one of the challenges seems to be equality in practice. In PARTY project equality is reached via interaction with the group of youth and it starts from creating positive, equal atmosphere and building trust. This kind of process requires openness and is very personal when sharing one's experiences, expectations and dreams about employment and life in general. In PARTY project, ethnography is applied and aims on building connections. For example if researcher asks youth a question, like what is difficult in their daily life, they are also prepared to answer to same kind of questions that the youth might have. In the workshops relationship to knowledge production materials aims to be equal. Everyone can use post-it-notes or flipcharts. Youth has also expressed their interest in documenting the workshops. Therefore, anyone in the workshop can use cameras and youth have filmed as well as photographed the activities.

Looking at the PARTY project and workshops from a process point of view, there are always two goals that struggle to get noticed. First goal is more design focused of creating concept and tangible outcomes. Sometimes this overrides the second goal. When working in the development context also the second goal of empowering the community and leaving capacities behind is important. In PARTY project the aim is that, youth would learn and build creative tools during the collaboration that they can then later on use in their lives. This aim has to be built in to the workshops and meetings.

Therefore, in PARTY project special focus has been given to building open collaboration. For example, youth members that are interested about facilitation skills have been participating to the planning of the meetings and workshops. In addition, youth members run part of the workshops while researchers and designers participate. It is important to do what youth feels significant, not to force them realising readymade concepts.

Before PARTY project, Winschiers-Theophilus, Bidwell and Blake (2012) have established community-based participatory design approaches, which are linked to service design, in rural Namibia. The focus is not in the individual user but in the community and this poses new challenges to designers where understanding of social design becomes important. Local understanding of how individuals in communities are connected and work is needed in order to design solutions that work in specific contexts. Time is also an issue, it might take many visits and multiple interactions before co-design can start. As in the research results of the World Design Research Group, also in PARTY project building trust between co-designers has become a key issue. How collaboration starts, continues and ends can be co-designed with the communities. By empowering the communities, solutions where they are owners of the realization can emerge.

## 6. Conclusions

Design for next society might also mean that we focus on outside of our daily surroundings and backyards. Although there are many challenges working in the development context, many opportunities also exist. Focusing on social design for services have helped in PARTY project. Service design has been recognized as a tool for creating insights and understanding how the challenging life situations and communities are constructed. In addition, service design has initiated co-design processes that suggest more equal positions between different stakeholders.

The early service designers were all trained in other disciplines and moved into service design gradually (Blomkvist, Holmlid, & Segelström, 2011). Their various backgrounds have been reflected in the issues they performed research on. It seems like focusing on services might be a way of connecting passions of designers and the communities they work with. This same background would apply to social designers. Thinking in terms of services helps designers to deconstruct preconceived ideas about how things should be done, to generate new solutions and eventually transform society (Cooper, 2011).

Involvement of designers, local entrepreneurs, actors and community members, youth, students and researchers has been both rewarding and challenging in PARTY project. While service design offers process and tools for developing things together, social design acts as an overarching concept of the social goals that PARTY project is aiming to achieve. Social design brings understanding of how it might be possible to do it together and as equally as possible. This kind of co-design process between different stakeholders can be a way how to redefine power relationships between different parties in development context and create common understanding for redefining the challenges.

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