

Co-designing social innovation: A culturally grounded practice

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1. Workshop Organizer/s

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Abstract (200 words max)

How does culture impact on Design and Social Innovation practices especially when it often involves working with changing and varying cultures? When design/designers enter into existing circumstances to catalyse social change, they can disrupt existing practices, reconfigure local power-dynamics and shift gender relations in intentional or unknowing ways. Yet nuanced and detailed understanding of cultural heterogeneity in social innovation has not been emphasised in design research as much as tools and technique. In an attempt to reveal and re-frame current discourse of how design might operate as a culturally grounded practice, workshop participants will be invited to co-inquire what 'culture' means to understand its current and potential impact on design and social innovation practices.

2. Context of Workshop

The values, practices, habits and traditions that constitute culture, influence how people see and experience the world. Design and Social Innovation (D&SI) often involves working with changing cultures. When designers enter into conditions to work towards social outcomes, they can disrupt existing practices, reconfigure local power-dynamics and shift gender relations in intentional or unknowing ways. Here, assumptions of a 'neutral' designer are just as problematic as identifying individuals or groups of people by a taxonomized cultural

background based on geographical or nationalized categories. These insights have similarly shaped discourses in postcolonial HCI that ‘speak at once to the highly local and contingent practices that we see at work in different specific sites of technology design and use, while at the same time recognizing the ways that those localisms are conditioned and embedded within global and historical flows of material, people, capital, knowledge and technology’ (Irani et. al 2010, p1317). In foregrounding culture when designing with others, what issues, questions and concerns are significant to keep in view? What can help those who intervene, including stakeholders with certain agendas and existing practices, as well as the ‘local community’, be aware of and work with existing and morphing cultural logics?

The workshop aims to reveal and re-frame the current discourse and understanding of co-design for social innovation as a culturally grounded practice. This is a radical shift from co-design for social innovation associated with non-culturally specific tools or pre-defined models. To explore this re-framing, invited researchers and practitioners with significant experience of co-design and social innovation will be invited to co-inquire what ‘culture’ means to understand its current and potential impact on design research and practice. The workshop contributes to the ‘Multiple Voices’ theme at DRS2018 and follow-on from the paper track ‘Designing for Social Innovation in Cultural Diversity and Sensitivity.’ We hope this workshop becomes a rich mutual learning opportunity to understand and propose ethical and respectful ways co-designing can be undertaken.

3. Planned Activities and Expected Outcomes

The table below outlines the rough duration of the planned activities:

Timing	Activities
30 mins: <i>Belonging</i>	<p>What is your culture?</p> <p>We are dealing with culture implicitly and explicitly in our work. It is therefore useful to pay close attention and discuss how we negotiate, prepare, discover and utilise culture as part of our changing practice. We will start by drawing on our own culture through a simple exercise: asking participants to ‘identify’ aspects of their own culture using photos available to them on their smartphone as a way to talk about their life, family, history and places where they grew up and now live.</p>
30 mins: <i>Acclimatising</i>	<p>What does culture mean?</p> <p>We will encourage the group to think about culture as way of life, how the groups we are part of shape our understanding of the world, and our professional practices. This will be through a brainstorm around the word “culture” (to draw out issues and ideas collectively)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does “culture” mean to you? • What does it look/smell/feel/taste like? <p>Images of various <i>rituals</i> (e.g. celebration, funeral) will be used as triggers for discussion amongst small groups.</p>
45 mins: <i>Illustrating</i>	<p>How does culture shape your co-design?</p> <p>We will ask participants to share a specific example of how their understanding of cultures, including their own, participants, or context, was revealed as significant in their work. They will be asked to illustrate this moment tangibly through a series of making exercises. Group discussion will</p>

	be facilitated to identify approaches, footholds, questions and possibilities in embedding a culturally grounded co-design practice.
15 mins	Break
45 mins: <i>Proposing</i>	How can we enable culturally aware and embedded co-design? Using the outcomes from the previous session, we will ask the participants in groups to explore any approaches, handles, challenges and principles to enable culturally sensitive practice in co-design.
30 mins: <i>Reflecting</i>	What did we learn? Groups come back together to share what they explored, and in turn what they have learnt from the workshop. We aim for participants to leave with a heightened awareness of how culture shapes their D&SI practice and possible approaches to help them develop more culturally-aware practices.

4. Intended Audience

The intended audience for the workshop includes researchers and practitioners who are working in the Design and Social Innovation space. They should be interested in developing a culturally-aware practice and have experience working in different cultural contexts. The maximum number of participants should be no more than 20.

5. Length of Workshop

The length of the workshop will be 3 hours.

6. Space and Equipment Required

We prefer studio-like spaces with wall spaces that we can configure to account for max 5 groups (consisting of 4 people) working around a table. We would also like access to a whiteboard, flipchart paper, post-it notes, sharpies and blue-tag.

7. Potential Outputs

We aim to write up the outcomes of the workshop as a conference paper and make the resources created in the workshop available on the www.desiap.org website.

About the Organizers:

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.

Yoko Akama is an Associate Professor in communication design at RMIT University. Her design practice is informed by Japanese

philosophy of between-ness and mindfulness, to consider how and what futures can be created together.

Rachel Clarke is a Research Fellow in the School of Design at Northumbria University. Her research focuses on design practices informed by socially engaged arts within intercultural communities.

Joon Sang Baek is an Associate Professor at Yonsei University in South Korea. His research areas include design for sustainability, service design, and nature-inspired design. He is currently interested in a sociotechnical approach to designing for relational services, peer-support services among the elderly, and social biomimicry.