

Disentangling 'the social' in social design's engagement with the public realm

Markussen, Thomas

Published in:

CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts

DOI:

10.1080/15710882.2017.1355001

Publication date:

2017

Document version:

Accepted manuscript

Citation for published version (APA):

Markussen, T. (2017). Disentangling 'the social' in social design's engagement with the public realm. *CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*, 13(3), 160-174.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2017.1355001>

Go to publication entry in University of Southern Denmark's Research Portal

Terms of use

This work is brought to you by the University of Southern Denmark.
Unless otherwise specified it has been shared according to the terms for self-archiving.
If no other license is stated, these terms apply:

- You may download this work for personal use only.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying this open access version

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details and we will investigate your claim.
Please direct all enquiries to puresupport@bib.sdu.dk

Disentangling ‘the social’ in social design’s engagement with the public realm

Thomas Markussen

Department of Design & Communication, University of Southern Denmark, DK-6000 Kolding, Denmark

Postal address:

University of Southern Denmark

Universitetsparken 1

DK-6000 Kolding

Cell phone: +45 9350 7196

Email: thma@sdu.dk

Thomas Markussen is Associate Professor of Social Design at the University of Southern Denmark, where he has co-founded a social design research group. In his research and work, Markussen is interested in how citizens be can involved, through the use of design practices, in processes of social change. His primary research interests include social design, design activism, social games as well as design fiction, and his work has been published in journals such as *Design Issues*, *International Journal of Design* and *Design and Culture*.

Disentangling ‘the social’ in social design’s engagement with the public realm

Co-design’s increasing engagement with the public realm is closely related to the widespread turn towards ‘the social’ in design and design research. However, there is a lack of understanding of how the notion of the social in social design is different from social innovation and social entrepreneurship. This paper provides an inter-disciplinary examination of research literature with the purpose of positioning social design more firmly in its difference from these other approaches. One of the tangible results is an analytical framework that enables design researchers to grasp what is unique to social design and wherein lies the value for the public realm. By developing a whole set of defining criteria such as *aim, modus operandi, social value, locus of design and innovation, and the scale of effects*, the paper thus offers a fine-grained disentangling of the social in social design.

Keywords: social design; co-design; design for social innovation

Introduction

Co-design’s increasing engagement with the public realm is closely related to the widespread turn towards ‘the social’ in design and design research. Both of these tendencies can be seen, at least in a European context, in light of the on-going erosion of the welfare state (cf. Armstrong, Bailey, Julier, & Kimbell, 2014; Chen, Lu-Lin, Hummels, & Koskinen, 2016). Causes for this erosion are many. Due to the globalization of manufacturing and production, unemployment rates are rising; ageing populations push healthcare services to their limits; public services are challenged by historic waves of refugees and migrants escaping from the calamities of the “wars against terror”; labour forces are diminishing due to demographic development and so is

the tax-incomes funding welfare services. On top of that, the financial and economical crises in 2008 led to a collapse in global economy. As a consequence, public educational systems have been cut, foreclosures and debt are the brute reality for many families, social inequalities grow deeper day by day, and forces of privatization and marketization are currently colonizing the healthcare and energy sectors. But above all neoliberalism and its unmistakable hijacking of governance and politics has been criticised for its discontent of the public realm and social values (see e.g. Cruz, 2012; Harvey, 2007; Julier, 2013; Mulgan, 2015).

To remedy the maladies of the declining welfare states, policy makers and public sector innovators have urged design and the creative sectors to be socially responsible. This is not least reflected in the EU's 2020 strategy for social innovation, but also in the cultural policies of many European cities that, over the last decade, have coupled public spending tightly with a rhetorical demand for an instrumentalisation of art and design to tackle complex societal problems and help vulnerable groups dealing with, for instance, crime, drug addiction, illiteracy, poverty, etc. (cf. Bishop, 2012).

The accelerating interest in 'social design' and co-design's engagement with the public realm can be understood as responses to this context. Generally, social design is defined by its use of co-design activities with the public to "make change happen towards collective and social ends, rather than predominantly commercial objectives." (Armstrong et al., 2014, p. 15). Because it aspires to improve the well-being and inclusion of disadvantaged societal groups, the concept of 'social design' is often used interchangeably with terms such as 'social entrepreneurship' and 'social innovation'. However, this is unfortunate, because this conflation prohibits a sober analysis of the uneven ways in which the social and the public are addressed and the outcomes of doing so.

In social entrepreneurship, public engagement is most often coupled with a business approach focusing on market failures as new opportunities to bring about social outcomes (cf. Phillips, Lee, Ghobadian, O'Regan, & James, 2014, p. 430). In social innovation, public engagement typically arises because of a 'system error', a missing political will or capability to build up and organize public services to meet social needs (Christensen & Morgen, 2010; Phillips et al., 2014). Both social entrepreneurship and social innovation are defined according to the ability to achieve large-scale effects enabling others to copy ideas and transfer solutions (cf. Martin & Osberg, 2007). This is rarely the case in social design, where the aim is more humbly to foster social change to meet needs on a micro-level for marginal groups or minorities. But most importantly, social design differs from social entrepreneurship and social innovation in that processes of design and artefacts are essential for effecting the change (Markussen, 2013, 2015).

If such clarifications are not made explicit, there is a risk of misconceiving the kind of 'public engagement' that are at stake in social design, not to mention the pitfall of over exaggerating the expectations of what can be achieved. Echoing Mulgan's (2014) critique, "overblown claims" about what can be expected from social design is damaging to the further developing of the field. It misrepresents the kind of 'social value' that is actually obtained and stands in the way of working out adequate criteria and methods for evaluating social design outcomes. Mulgan's suggestion is that such misconceptions can be avoided if design "learn from the larger study of innovation", which is partly what I shall attempt here. Hence, the overall aim of this paper is to provide a more nuanced understanding of social design's engagement with the public realm by carrying out a broader comparative study of social design and innovation. To set the scene, I start out by identifying the crux of the problem: 'social design' has

become a murky concept, because there is a lack of consistency in how it is defined vis-à-vis social entrepreneurship and social innovation. Hereafter, I will review research literature in all three areas in order to arrive at a tentative list of defining criteria that allow for disentangling different forms of public engagement in social design and mapping them out in a fine-grained, inter-disciplinary analytical framework. Along the way, I will make continuous use of project examples to substantiate my claims and let analytical distinctions stand out more clearly. Finally, I will discuss how this framework has some explanatory benefits when compared to other accounts in design research.

1. ‘Social design’ – a murky concept

Social design has a long history with various places of origin from the Arts & Craft movement to Bauhaus, from Buckminster Fuller to Victor Papanek and onwards.

However, it is not the place here for an archaeological unpacking of the many origins and definitions of social design as this subject is fully treated elsewhere (see e.g. Banz, 2016; Clarke, 2013; Ann Thorpe, 2012; Whiteley, 1993). Moreover a too strong insistence on historical roots risks inheriting past notions of social design, which are out of step with contemporary practices and challenges. We need, as Margolin and Margolin (2002) have argued, to reconceptualise social design according to the current condition of post-industrial societies.

This need is literally witnessed by the boom of publications and conferences that, over the last decade or so, have focused on ‘social design’ as well as the establishing of international networks such as DESIS (<http://www.desisnetwork.org/>) and Designers without Borders (<http://www.designwithoutborders.com/>). Moreover, educational programs specialised in social design have been established worldwide at research

institutions and design schools. Consequently, today the field of social design has become so multifaceted in theory and practice that it would seem to deter anyone from trying to say exactly what social design is. Nevertheless, a bold attempt at providing a clarification have been made by Armstrong et al. (2014, p. 15), who was commissioned by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council to survey the opportunities that social design offers to higher education and research:

”The term social design highlights the concept and activities enacted within participatory approaches to researching, generating, and realising new ways to make change happen towards collective and social ends, rather than predominantly commercial objectives.”

This clarification is based upon two criteria. Thus, social design is defined according to i) its *modus operandi*, i.e. its specific way of working and operating through ‘participatory approaches’ and ii) its *aim* toward ‘social ends’ being set as prioritized over commercial objectives.

As the survey of Armstrong and colleagues builds upon interviews with a group of researchers and organizations, this resonates with other scholars’ accounts of social design, although the terminology is not always identical. What generally stands out is that social design is conceived as a paradigm more or less sharply contrasted against a commercial market-driven paradigm (see e.g. Björgvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2010, 2012; Manzini & Jegou, 2003; Manzini & Rizzo, 2011; Margolin & Margolin, 2002; Melles, de Vere, & Misic, 2011; A. Thorpe & Gamman, 2011). There is also consensus that co-design or participatory design, depending on what tradition researchers acknowledge, is part and parcel of social design. In fact much has been written about

the role of co-design as the *modus operandi* of socially responsive design. For instance, Björgvinson, Ehn and Hillgren (2010) introduce the notion of ‘infra-structuring’ and ‘agonistic participatory design’ to denote how the designer should enter into collective processes of bringing together contradictory interests and power structures in order to articulate social aims. Gamman and Thorpe (2011) elaborate further on the role of co-design by introducing notions such as ‘maternalistic’ and ‘fraternalistic’ approaches to co-design being opposed to ‘paternalistic’ approaches. Hence, the reader can find rich sources on the aim of social design and the central role of participatory approaches.

However, the aim and *modus operandi* of social design cannot stand alone as defining criteria as they do not allow for clearly distinguishing the notion of ‘the social’ in social design from how it is used in social innovation and social entrepreneurship. Tellingly, with few exceptions (Manzini, 2015; Melles et al., 2011; A. Thorpe & Gamman, 2011), the authors mentioned above operate indiscriminately with ‘social design’ and ‘social innovation’. Because of this terminological conflation I will argue that social design has become a murky concept, if not a “container-concept”, as postulated by Cleven (2015), with only limited explanatory power.

If we compare with scholarship on social innovation, it becomes evident why we need additional clarification criteria. Traditionally, social innovation is defined as driven by aspirations to increase “social inclusion and well-being through improving social relations and empowerment processes” (Moulaert, MacCallum, & Hillier, 2013, p. 14) in contrast to market and consumer needs (see also Lettice & Parekh, 2010; Phillips et al., 2014). And more often than not participatory processes fostering collaboration between actors and institutions from different sectors are seen “as crucial to social innovation” (Phillips et al., 2014, p. 44; Edwards - Schachter, Matti, & Alcántara, 2012;

Murray, Caulier-Grice, & Mulgan, 2010). To make things even more complicated, in literature on social entrepreneurship, the drive to create “social value *as opposed to* personal or shareholder wealth” (Phillips et al., 2014, p. 430 my italics) is mentioned as an essential characteristic and “the activity of such social creation is characterized by pattern-breaking change or innovation, through the combination of, for example, products, services, organization, or production.” (ibid.).

With these other accounts in mind, we evidently need to come up with some supplementary criteria to avoid conflating social design with social innovation and social entrepreneurship. In the following, I will go through a number of sources harvesting a list of defining criteria in order to get a firmer grasp of what social design is.

2. Social entrepreneurship versus social innovation

Generally, the bringing about of social value, in social entrepreneurship is tightly coupled with a concern also to perform financially, which is denoted by terms such as ‘the double bottom-line’ and ‘social capital’. A vivid example of this would be *Place de Bleue*, a Copenhagen-based firm, which offers arts and crafts products made by immigrant women who have difficulties getting a job due to language barriers, trauma, illness or other kinds of vulnerabilities. In so doing, *Place de Bleue* is fostering social inclusion, reducing unemployment among immigrants, and at the same time making for-profit by selling their craft products on the market.

In addition to specifying the duality of the financial-social balance underlying the concept of social value, several authors forfeit the idea that social enterprises arise because of a ‘market error’ (see e.g. Christensen & Morgen, 2010; Dees, 1998;

Hockerts, 2006; Weerawardena & Mort, 2006). The assumption is that commercial market forces are unable to meet social needs, either because those needing services cannot pay for them (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006, p. 2) or because the nature of social problems are too wicked to be addressed from a business and profit-seeking approach (Weisbrod, 1975). In this sense, the success of companies like *Place de Bleue* is appraised against a market that does not usually allow for accommodating social needs of people who are unable to work full time, and whose work performance may be unpredictable from week to week due to personal problems. As other examples of ‘market errors’, one can think of venture capitalists and banks being unwilling to provide loans to people, in so-called developing countries, who want to start a business to get out of their economically disadvantaged situation. To overcome this, Internet marketplaces such as MyC4 have been set up to enable peer-to-peer investment in small businesses of local entrepreneurs. However, critics such as Edwards (2008) have questioned the unholy alliance between the social and the market, asking if a true concern for social needs is really consistent with financial interests. Most often, so the argument goes, the social enterprise and Corporate Social Responsibility strategies provide just a quick cosmetic fix of a deeper structural problem: social problems themselves being caused by a world-wide economic exploitation, shareholder interests, greed or ‘philanthro-capitalism’ to use the oxymoronic term originally introduced by Bishop and Green (2008).

It is not the place here to go further into discussing these issues. What I want to point out is simply that, no matter how one positions oneself in this dispute, the aim to meet social objectives must always be seen as being unmistakably entrenched with certain interests and ideologies. In a slightly caricatured account, one can thus argue that in social entrepreneurship social value is measured according to business principles,

while in social innovation the wish to create social value typically goes hand in hand with a concern by neoliberal governance for shrinking public spending and budgets. Obviously, the boundaries between the private, governance and the public are rarely as distinct as this would appear. But, what is important is to realize that the concept of ‘social value’ acquires a different meaning in different contexts and discourses.

These fluctuations in meaning can be further clarified if we consider the *locus of innovation* as yet another defining criteria, referring to *where* the innovation takes place. In their valuable systematic review, Phillips et al. (2015, p. 442) show that there is a tendency, in the research literature, to view social entrepreneurship as the work of “a lone visionary striving at all costs to bring about social change”. As an example of this, the authors mention *The Liter of Light project* that were initiated by Ilac Diaz to bring light to thousands of homes in Philippine shanty towns with the use of old plastic bottles filled with a solution of bleached water. The light bottles are easy to create, they cost 1\$ and with solar energy they produce light equivalent to 55W. By providing electricity to a population that lives off-grid the project leads to a new superior equilibrium, and it has even been claimed that the program associated with it has also created jobs for people facing extreme poverty (The Guardian ‘Sunlight-powered “bulbs” made from plastic bottles light up homes’, 2011).

In contrast, according to Phillips et al. (2014, p. 449), “social innovation is not undertaken in isolation by lone entrepreneurs, but is an interactive process shaped by the collective sharing of knowledge between a wide range of organizations and institutions that influence developments in certain areas to meet a social need or to promote social development.” Moreover, if social entrepreneurship is associated with identifying opportunities produced by market errors, social innovations typically happen as a result of a system error or organizational inertia that make a society respond to its

challenges in a delayed, insufficient or erroneous manner (cf. Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Consider, for instance, the *Samatarian Mobile Care Complex (SMCC)*-project in Latvia, which was shortlisted by the European Commission as one of the best social innovation projects in 2015. In the rural parts of Latvia there is a lack of care facilities for elderly people. To address this issue, the *SMCC*-project provides care facilities in mobile care offices as well as a service infrastructure consisting of, for instance, daily grocery delivery, neighbour support and alarm buttons in matters of urgency. In so doing, the *SMCC*-project enables elderly people to stay living in their own homes, thereby avoiding the stress and uncertainty associated with having to move into social care housing. In the *SMCC*-project, the locus of innovation is not within the social entrepreneur or enterprise, but within a complex system of multiple actors – ranging from local citizens and caregivers to technicians and decision-makers – collaborating to achieve a new level of social equilibrium and public services hitherto absent in these areas. While this is surely improving life conditions for a specific vulnerable group in society, it may of course also be coupled with a political concern to ease the pressure on healthcare budgets insofar as it inevitably reduces the costs of maintaining social care housing.

The *SMCC*-project also bears witness to another common characteristic of social innovations. They are usually the result of a new combination or hybrids of existing elements (e.g. care facilities) rather than new in themselves (e.g. making green technology out of bleached water contained in re-cycled plastic bottles) (cf. Manzini, 2014; Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, & Sanders, 2007).

Up until now, I have pinpointed several differences between social innovation and social entrepreneurship in terms of their *aim, modus operandi, the notion of social value, and the locus of innovation*, but there are also some similarities. Drawing upon

Martin & Osberg (2007) both social entrepreneurship and social innovation can be defined by the ability to achieve large scale transformations enabling others to copy the idea and distribute it through a number of significant imitations and implementations (cf. Christensen & Morgen, 2010, p. 10). This *effect* criterion has to do with the diffusion and scalability of the innovation to a macro-level. With small adjustments the *SMCC*-project could, for instance, easily be transferred to the rural outskirts of other countries and the business model of *Place de Bleu* is not unique, but underlies other similar social enterprises as well. For Martin & Osberg (2007, p. 36), there are also socially valuable activities that “never breaks out of their limited frame”, and for this reason they argue that these activities do not fit their definition of social entrepreneurship. In the following section I shall attempt to show that it is to this category that social design most often belong.

3. Clarifying the ‘social’ in social design

In design research, social design is the topic of an on-going ideological struggle for protecting citizen democracy, empowering the people and supporting civic resistance against systems of power and control. This can be seen, for instance, in Björgvinsson et al. (2010), who raise concern that participatory design’s increasing engagement with social innovation in the public sphere has led to a trust in ‘democratic innovation’ taken in the sense of von Hippel (2009). The authors rightly criticise von Hippel’s democratic innovation for not being as democratic as it may seem, at first glance. Behind it, there is lurking an ideology heralding a competitive market economy and an ‘elite democracy’ where only a limited group of ‘lead users’ are given access to new milieus of innovation and means of production (Björgvinsson et al., 2010, p. 42). Following from this, the role of the citizen becomes that of the co-producer of novelty products.

The authors reminds us too that von Hippel's 'elite democracy' is very foreign from the original social democratic roots of participatory design and its social engagement with weak and marginalized groups. As an alternative they propose that participatory design is founded instead upon agonistic notions of democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001), shifting attention towards how design can be of value as an expanded open-ended process of *infra-structuring* that include conflicting needs and interests of a more socially inclusive public leading to more "sustainable life styles and consumption habits" (Björgvinsson et al., 2010, p. 43, 2012; Hillgren, Seravalli, & Emilson, 2011)

While the authors certainly succeed in rhetorically reconquering the lost conceptual territory of democracy, we should not let ourselves be blinded to the fact that democracy, in all of its leftist, right-wing and in-between manifestations, "necessarily depends on and requires exclusion" (Dean, 2009; Rancière, 2010). Consequently, as social design is cried for, on behalf of the public, to re-negotiate inequalities, increase democracy and citizen participation, one must be utterly aware of the *politics* underlying this instrumentalist agenda.

This politics is not simply a matter of flagging resistance towards the market or neoliberal governance. Rather we need to ask how is the oppositional relation between social design and these systems of power to be characterized? What forms of instrumentalisation of social design are at stake? Does social design have any structural capacity to instantiate politics affecting a re-distribution of the order of things? And if so, at what level does the change effected by social design manifest itself? I will argue that the list of above-mentioned criteria can be helpful in trying to answer some of these questions.

What is most essential for the definition of social design is to understand that rarely does it have the ability to effect social changes at a macro-level. This is in line

with the idea of socially responsive design given by Thorpe and Gamman (2011), who argue for lowering expectations to “good enough design” rather than massive change. That does not make it less valuable than social entrepreneurship and social innovation. On the contrary, its social engagement at a micro and meso level may lead to significant life improvements for a confined marginal group or minorities. It is precisely by inquiring into its way of operating at these levels that we may initially see why social design should be appreciated as an approach of its own. Let’s look at an example.

In the *Social Games against Crime* project, social designers work to improve life conditions for children and adolescents aged 12-18, who is challenged by serious social and personal problems due to parental incarceration. More specifically, the aim of the project is to design so-called social games to be played by children and their incarcerated fathers during in-visits in top secure Danish prisons. The intent is to provide these children with a playful initiative they can use to form attachment and stronger bonds with their fathers despite years of separation. This design intention is grounded in substantial empirical studies in social research and criminology showing that improved in-visit experiences and the maintaining of a positive relationship with an incarcerated parent can help children develop coping skills and resilience towards many of their problems (see e.g. Baum, Ginat, & Silverman, 2014; Burlison & Davis, 2013; Hein, 2013; Laor, Wolmer, Spirman, Hamiel, & Wiener, 2014; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013). Among these are difficulties learning in school, building social relationships, insomnia, and loss of appetite, depressions, anxiety and the experience of being stigmatized (see e.g. Poehlmann & Eddy, 2013).

Through a participatory design process, teenagers, inmates, prison officers, family therapists, prison management, staff from the Prison and Probation service and designers have been involved in researching and generating ideas for a social board

game called *The Prison*. A recurrent problem for children of inmates in top secure prisons is that they suffer from delusions of the place where their fathers are locked up for years. Taboos, lack of knowledge and the denial of access to see his cell, who he is together with and what he is doing on an everyday basis leads to anxiety and misconceptions dominated by images of prison life as they appear in media and movies.

The idea of *The Prison* game is to offer a protective frame for children and adolescents to demystify their notions of the prison. The game play is simple. Using a dice, two or more players move around a board, which represents a fictitious prison with wards, criminals and staff members. On their way around the prison, the players learn about the inmates, the crimes they are convicted of and their personality. For instance, Jimmy is a convicted gang member, who is pretty fond of his beard; Big Brian, who is also a gang member, convicted of man slaughter, misses chocolate and his mum, and so on. (see Fig. 1).

[Figure 1 near here: Character cards: The Gang members “Jimmy” and “Big Brian”.

© *The Social Games against Crime* project]

The inmates are divided into groups that inhabit certain locations in the Prison: the gang members are located in the wood and iron workshop, immigrants control the gym and the basket ball field, criminals convicted for fraud inhabit the library and the TV room, and so on. The game play is about making alliances between different inmates so that when another player lands on the inmates in your alliance, they learn about them and must pay “respect points” to be able to continue. As the game is played, children and

adolescents make themselves acquainted with hierarchies as well as unspoken rules and norms. Moreover, when landing on certain spots on the board, the players must choose a card. Such a card may encourage playful physical interaction between the players, encourage them to talk about deeper personal matters or it may reveal stories about everyday happenings and episodes inside the walls that may have a positive or negative influence on the further course of your game. By using caricature, satire and humour the game attempts to make it a lot easier for children and their fathers to talk about life in prison and generalized themes such as loss, separation and guilt.

No matter whether the game proves to be successful or not, the effect that *The Prison* is designed to evoke can be said to lie at an interpersonal micro level. The aim is humbly to help a limited group of children and inmates to build up stronger attachment and a positive relationship over time. At the same time, the project aims at effecting a change at an organizational meso level by providing the Danish Prison and Probation Service with an initiative in their Child Responsible Visiting program for adolescents that is currently lacking. To become part of this program it is required of the project that an evaluation study is made of the social outcome that is being designed for. Hence, this social design project is subjected to a *politics of instrumentalisation* that complies with a system of authority and power rather than being in antagonistic opposition to it.

As the project is entangled in an overall political agenda of the Prison and Probation Service, one should make no mistake that the strive towards meeting the needs of the children of incarcerated fathers goes hand in hand with a demand that social initiatives for these children should be measurable in terms of a benefit to the public. It is thus hoped that by helping them to cope with the problems related to incarceration they will not end up in crime themselves, which will reduce public spending on the victims of crime. Agonistic participatory design here does not mean

that the social designer assume a neutral position from where he can orchestrate a choir of contradictory voices. The social designer speaks and acts with a voice of his own and this voice may itself be husky as it is split between divergent interests and ideologies.

Moreover, unlike what we have seen in regard to social entrepreneurship and social innovation, design plays a much more prominent role in this project. Not only in the participatory process of infra-structuring the divergent interests of many actors, but also in the form of the game itself, its materiality and illustrations. While the game design may of course be transferred to other Danish prisons, it will require additional effort to copy and implement it within the prison systems of other countries. The game play and content are heavily informed by the Danish prison context, and the socio-cultural knowledge of all the people who have participated in the co-design process. This is not least reflected in the vernacular and lingo used to describe the inmate game characters and what goes on inside the walls.

4. A framework for social design

On the basis of this, we can now make a preliminary sum up. In Table 1 (see below), in the upper row, I have listed the defining criteria that can be useful when trying to position social design from social entrepreneurship and social innovation. All three disciplines can be seen, in many Western societies, as responses to shrinking public services and welfare states, but they vary from each other in terms of aim, modus operandi, the notion of social value, the locus of design and innovation, and the scale of effect.

	Social innovation	Social entrepreneurship	Social design
Aim	To remedy system errors in order to improve living standards, welfare service provision, sustainable consumption and productivity	To identify market errors as opportunities for bringing about a new social equilibrium for a needy group in society	To improve life conditions for a disadvantaged and confined social group or community
Modus operandi	Participatory processes based on a cross-sectorial systemic approach to foster social change	Participatory processes based on a business approach to foster social change	Co-design processes and material aesthetic practices take center stage in the form of infra-structuring contradictory interests and resources
Social value	Social value is conceived of in broad terms as "the common good" and must be to the benefit of large segments or "social movements" in society	Social value is tightly coupled with a concern also to perform financially	Social value is conceived of as a small, but decisive qualitative change in the form of a re-distribution of identities or interpersonal relations
Locus of innovation	The innovation is created out of interactive processes shaped by the collective sharing of knowledge between a wide range of organizations, 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"
Project examples	<i>Samatarian Mobile Care Complex</i>	<i>Place de Bleue MYC4 The Liter of Light project Basaglia's Democratic Psychiatry Logik & Co.</i>	<i>Social Games against Crime Cultural Intermediation Urban Farming</i>

Table 1 summarizes the analysis of research literature presented in this article.

It is important to notice that the question of whether a project belongs to one category or the other cannot be answered merely by applying a single criterion. The idea is that these criteria should be applied as a coherent set or combination of qualifiers. For instance, obviously both *The Samaritanian Mobile Care Complex* project and *Place de Bleue* have an effect – like social design – on a micro-level: a care infrastructure allows elderly ladies and gents in Latvia to stay comfortably in their home, and immigrant women in Copenhagen get a chance to enter the workplace and use their crafting skills in a company that at the same time respects their vulnerability. However, for matters of definition, it is their potential scalability together with the orientation towards the societal challenge of ageing and urbanization on the one hand, and the bringing out of social as well as financial outcome on the other, that allow us to single out these projects as respectively social innovation and social entrepreneurship.

As the reader will notice, it turns out that the majority of projects discussed here fall under the category of social entrepreneurship. Due to space limitations, it is unfortunately not possible to try out the framework in detail on more projects to make a more equal treatment. However, we may briefly consider a few well-known projects discussed by other authors in order to expand the social design category.

Under the label of ‘design for social innovation’, Malmö Living Lab in Sweden has delivered a series of path-breaking projects. For instance, Hillgren et al. (2011, p. 177) present a cooking service entitled *Cultural intermediation* where a group of five immigrant women offer homemade Afghan food to unaccompanied refugee children in Malmö. The food and eating together makes the children feel more comfortable and secure, and the women experience “joy of feeling helpful”. In my account this project would belong to the category of social design rather than social innovation, because of its confined context and the main achievement consists in re-distributing identities and

establishing an emotional interpersonal bond between the women and the children. Likewise, many social design projects can be found under Dott07, which focused on sustainable living. Among these is the *Urban Farming* project, where 1,000 residents in Middlesbrough grew vegetables and fruits in containers placed in unused public space. The project allowed not only for sharing knowledge and advice on how to grow vegetables. It also involved primary and secondary schools thereby increasing children's learning and awareness about sustainable food cultures.

But obviously we also need to be aware that often the messiness of reality cannot be sorted as neatly as the grid presented in Table 1 could easily lead one to believe. Hybrids and the merging of approaches exist between social design, social entrepreneurship and social innovation. Social innovation and social entrepreneurship can be design-led or driven by participatory approaches shaped by design. Hence, often it is a question of more or less rather than either or. The analytical framework is meant only to be guiding and suggestive, and needs to be challenged and critically adjusted as part of future work. Nonetheless, in its current format it contributes with some valuable clarifications that is lacking in related work.

5. Discussion

The account of social design given here is one out of many. In this section, I shall briefly discuss how the contribution made in this paper supplements other recent sources. Initially, let's begin by looking more closely into some ideas of how design can be a vehicle for social innovation.

To help designers understand the nature of social innovations, Manzini (2014, p. 57) has suggested to use two polarities as defining criteria: *incremental vs. radical change*, i.e. "changes that lie within the range of existing ways of thinking and doing"

in contrast to changes outside the range. The second polarity is *top-down vs. bottom-up*, referring to where the change starts: is it originated by experts, decision makers or political activists (top-down) or by the people and communities (bottom-up)? Manzini admits that his definition is “very broad”, but nevertheless contends that it is valuable for mapping social innovation initiatives. As an example of a top-down initiative, he mentions Franco Basaglia who founded the Democratic Psychiatry movement in the 1970s, or to cite Manzini at length:

“what he did was to “open” the psychiatric hospital in Triste [...], where he was the director, and at the same time to start up cooperative production and service groups that brought ex-patients, nurses, and doctors together in enterprises that had to be effective in economic terms. (These groups were real enterprises – not entities whose very existence depended on financial backing from the state).”

What is emphasised in this quote and further on is the deliberate concern to perform not only socially but also financially: “Since then restaurants, holiday villages, hotels and carpentry workshops have started up all run by ‘madmen’” (Manzini, 2014, p. 59).

Hence, according to my account, Basaglia’s Democratic Psychiatry would be an example of social entrepreneurship and not social innovation (see Table 1 above). In fact, in my view, Manzini’s “very broad” definition is too coarsely grained and supplementary criteria are needed to enable designers to make useful distinctions between social innovation, social entrepreneurship and social design.

More recently, Manzini (2015, pp. 64–65) have pointed towards the meaning of the adjective ‘social’ as being a semantic marker for distinguishing social design from social innovation. Accordingly, the ‘social’ in social design is “a synonym for

“particularly problematic situations (such as extreme poverty, illness, or social exclusion, and circumstances after catastrophic events”, which pose the need for urgent intervention, outside normal market or public service modalities. In addition, social design is for the poor, which means that someone else is willing to pay for it or it is undertaken by non-profit charity organizations. In contrast social innovation for Manzini (2015, p. 64) starts from a “different premise”: “what it produces is meaningful social innovations...based on new social forms and economic models”. It deals with all kinds of social change, not only for the poor, but also the middle and upper classes.

This is not entirely consistent with how social design has been defined here. First, the framework I propose does not rely on the notion of class society (poor, middle and upper class), because – like social innovation – social design works for all kinds of changes not being class-related. For instance, the children and their incarcerated fathers who participate in the *Social Games against Crime* project come from all classes in society. Secondly, my account does not rely on being able to tell whether a problem is considered extreme enough to belong to the social design category. By making “particularly problematic situations” a defining criterion for social design, the field of operation easily becomes restricted to developing countries or areas destroyed by catastrophic disasters, whereas social design is used as a more spacious term here. Thirdly, the urgency of intervening with resources outside normal market and public service modalities does not figure in my list of criteria, because many of the problems addressed by social designers were barely visible or deemed worth engaging with until they were identified by these designers as being important. Consider for the last time, the *Social Games against Crime* project that is addressing a highly problematic situation for children of incarcerated fathers, but it is not as such an urgent intervention and it is taking place inside – not outside – normal public service modalities, as it is intended to

be part of an existing visiting program offered by the Danish Prison and Probation Service. Consequently, it does not really fit Manzini's definition of social design. Rather, for him, it would be an example of social design and social innovation moving closer and creating productive overlap. In my account, however, the project still qualifies as a social design project, simply judged on the basis of its micro-level effects in addition to its aim, modus operandi, locus of innovation (inside institutional settings) and the nature of the problem.

Koskinen and Hush (2016) have made another attempt at distinguishing between three types of social design, which they label: *utopian social design*, *molecular social design* and *sociological social design*. Utopian social design is defined according to its grandiose aim at promoting structural changes at a macro-scale, for instance, by dealing with climate change, global financial systems running out of control, etc. Molecular social design refrains from such promises of massive change, starting instead with the infinitely small and micro transformations such as small-scale production forms. Sociological design is characterized essentially in that it builds on sociological theory.

While the idea of molecular social design resonates much with my account of social design, utopian and sociological social design aligns not so well with the framework I have suggested. More concisely, in stating that changes of social design lie at a micro-level, utopianism aiming at massive change is not conceived of here as a viable criterion. I am certainly not forfeiting the idea that social designers should not be allowed to share the grandiose hope of changing the world at a macro-scale. I simply claim that this aim is rarely, if ever, fulfilled through social design. However, interestingly, utopianism may blend into micro-level initiatives and social changes. For example, Wright (2010, p. 6) has identified manifestations of what he calls 'real utopias', which "embraces the tension between dreams and practice".

Logik & Co. is a construction firm that could be seen as such a real utopia. The director does not earn more than the carpenters and construction workers and salaries in the company go up and down depending on the state of the market to avoid firing rounds. Taken in Wright's sense, the alternative business model of the company is utopian in its resistance against capitalist forces, but at the same time it evokes real socially inclusive effects on a micro-scale for a confined group of people: the employees.

In Koskinen and Hush's account, *Logik & Co* would be an example of how utopianism mixes with molecular social design. In my account, however, since it unites social responsiveness with financial performance (the notion of social value), *Logik & Co.* would belong to social entrepreneurship. This is also due to the fact that the business model of this social enterprise can be copied by others and transferred to various capitalist markets (cf. the effect criterion). What this shows is that the more criteria we apply in the analysis of a specific project the more nuances and clarifications are we able to make.

Moreover, in contrast to Koskinen and Hush, my list of defining criteria does not include the role of theory. Social design is inherently cross-disciplinary and draws upon multiple theories, guiding philosophies and sources of knowledge. It may help considerably to understand the content of a specific social design project if we inquiry into the theories that has been beneficial or constitutive for the project. However, I simply contend that it does not significantly increase our understanding of how social design is different from social innovation and social entrepreneurship, which also draw heavily on sociological theory to achieve the same kinds of goal (see e.g. Moulaert, MacCallum, Methwood, & Hamdouch, 2013).

If sociology, as Koskinen and Hush claim, is valuable because “it gives conceptual tools useful in analysing society and those structures that reify aspects of it into forms ” (for instance in terms of ‘the public’, ‘democracy’, ‘citizens’, ‘social capital’, etc.), then it is equally important for utopian as well as molecular social design. Hence, it is difficult to reserve sociological social design as category of its own. The authors argue that the reason for this is that sociological social design allows “for a more explicit critique than that of molecular social design and a more theoretically grounded position than utopian design” (Koskinen & Hush, 2016, p. 68). These two distinctions – explicitness of critique and theoretical grounding – seem only to allow for a loose conceptual demarcation of the differences between the three types of social design. In fact, the authors openly regard these differences as being “deceptively small” (Koskinen & Hush, 2016, p. 70)

The vagueness of the categorical distinctions is deliberate and is a result of Koskinen and Hush’s epistemological stance. Hence, for them, social design is a ‘discursive moment’ rather than a field or discipline (Koskinen & Hush, 2016, p. 70). For this reason, the authors do not believe in putting the approaches into a matrix or attempts to make “definition in a dictionary” because in their view this “would lead to confusions and to a false sense of precision”. In the account given here, social design is conceived of, as an analytical category of its own, and I have tried to demonstrate the value of demarcating the conceptual boundaries between social innovation, social entrepreneurship and social design.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have made an examination of research literature from design and innovation studies with the purpose of disentangling the differences between social

design, on the one hand, and social entrepreneurship and social innovation on the other. One of the tangible results is an analytical framework that is intended to increase understanding of social design as an approach of its own and its engagement with the public. On the basis of this, it is evident that the adjective ‘social’ denotes a slightly different form of public engagement in social design than in social innovation and social entrepreneurship. In social design the social refers to the fostering of a small, but decisive qualitative change in the form of re-distributing identities and interpersonal relations; in social innovation, the social refers to what is “good for society”; and in social entrepreneurship the social is tangled up with a concern for the market. But a more comprehensive understanding of social design can be made if we apply a set of other criteria such as *aim, modus operandi, locus of design and innovation, and the scale of effects*. I hope these criteria can serve as conceptual tools for making some fine-grained characterisations of social design in theory and practice. It is not just a matter of words and definitions. The further development of social design relies on the ability to balance sober expectations of what can be achieved through social design and to evaluate the social value and public engagement of the approach.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Danish Foundation TrygFonden under Grant number 110492, and the Danish Council for Independent Research under Grant number DFF-4180-00221. I would like to express my gratitude to the Social Design group at the University of Southern Denmark – Tau Lenskjold, Isabella Tamara Hamid and Eva Knutz, for sharing their valuable work on the *Social Games against Crime project*.

Bibliography

Armstrong, L., Bailey, J., Julier, G., & Kimbell, L. (2014). *Social Design Futures: HEI Research and the AHRC*.

Austin, J., Stevenson, H., & Wei-Skillern, J. (2006). Social and commercial entrepreneurship: same, different, or both? *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(1), 1–22.

Banz, C. (2016). *Social Design: Gestalten für die Transformation des Gesellschaft*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Baum, N. L., Ginat, R. S., & Silverman, P. R. (2014). Childhood bereavement and traumatic loss. In *Helping Children Cope with Trauma: Individual, family and community perspectives*, ed. by R. Pat-Horenczyk, D. Brown and J. M. Vogel (pp. 66–78). London & New York: Routledge.

Bishop, C. (2012). *Artificial Hells: participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. Verso Books.

Bishop, M., & Green, M. (2008). *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich can Save the World*. London: Bloomsbury Press.

Björgvinsson, E., Ehn, P., & Hillgren, P.-A. (2010). Participatory design and democratizing innovation. In *Proceedings of the 11th Biennial Participatory Design Conference* (pp. 41–50). ACM.

Björgvinsson, E., Ehn, P., & Hillgren, P.-A. (2012). Agonistic participatory design: working with marginalised social movements. *CoDesign*, 8(2–3), 127–144.

Burleson, M. H., & Davis, M. C. (2013). Social Touch and Resilience. In *The Resilience Handbook: Approaches to Stress and Trauma*, ed. by M. Kent, M. C. Davis and J. W. Reich (pp. 131–143). London & New York: Routledge.

Chen, D.-S., Lu-Lin, C., Hummels, C., & Koskinen, I. (2016). Social design: An introduction. *International Journal of Design*, 10(1).

Christensen, P. R., & Morgen, A. S. (2010). Socialt Entreprenørskab–lappeløsning eller innovation? *Ledelse & Erhvervsøkonomi*, 75(4), 7–23.

Clarke, A. (2013). Actions Speak Louder - Victor Papanek and the Legacy of Design Activism. *Design and Culture*, 5(2), 151–168.

Cleven, E. (2015). Eigentlich sollten wir nicht mehr über Social Design sprechen. In C. Banz (Ed.), *Social Design - Gestalten für die Transformation der Gesellschaft* (pp. 43–59). Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Cruz, T. (2012). Democratizing urbanization and the search for a new civic imagination. In *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (pp. 56–63). Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Dean, J. (2009). Politics without politics. *Parallax*, 15(3), 20–36.

Dees, J. G. (1998). *The meaning of social entrepreneurship*. Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership.

Edwards, M. (2008). Philanthrocapitalism: After the Goldrush. *Open Democracy*, 19.

Edwards-Schachter, M. E., Matti, C. E., & Alcántara, E. (2012). Fostering quality of life through social innovation: A living lab methodology study case. *Review of Policy Research*, 29(6), 672–692.

Ferreira, J. (2015). Post-Fordism. In F. Wherry & J. Schor (Eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Economics and Society* (p. 1301-). Thousand Oaks: SAGE publications.

Harvey, D. (2007). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Hein, G. (2013). Empathy and Resilience in a Connected World. In *The Resilience Handbook: Approaches to Stress and Trauma* (pp. 144–155). London & New York: Routledge.

Hillgren, P.-A., Seravalli, A., & Emilson, A. (2011). Prototyping and infrastructuring in

- design for social innovation. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 169–183.
- Hockerts, K. (2006). Entrepreneurial opportunity in social purpose business ventures. In *Social entrepreneurship* (pp. 142–154). Springer.
- Jessop, B. (1996). Post-Fordism and the state. In *Comparative Welfare Systems* (pp. 165–183). Springer.
- Julier, G. (2013). From Design Culture to Design Activism. *Design and Culture*, 5(2), 215–236.
- Koskinen, I., & Hush, G. (2016). Utopian, molecular and sociological social design. *International Journal of Design*, 10(1), 65–71.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2001). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. Verso Books.
- Laor, N., Wolmer, L., Spirman, S., Hamiel, D., & Wiener, Z. (2014). A child-oriented perspective on community resilience. In *Helping Children Cope with Trauma: Individual, family and community perspectives*, ed. by R. Pat-Horenczyk, D. Brown and J. M. Vogel (pp. 165–179). London & New York: Routledge.
- Lawrence, P. R., & Lorsch, J. W. (1967). Differentiation and integration in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1–47.
- Lettice, F., & Parekh, M. (2010). The social innovation process: themes, challenges and implications for practice. *International Journal of Technology Management*, 51(1), 139–158.
- Manzini, E. (2014). 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*. MIT Press.
- Manzini, E., & Jegou, F. (2003). Sustainable everyday. Scenarios of urban life.

- Manzini, E., & Rizzo, F. (2011). Small projects/large changes: Participatory design as an open participated process. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 199–215.
- Margolin, V., & Margolin, S. (2002). A “social model” of design: Issues of practice and research. *Design Issues*, 18(4), 24–30.
- Markussen, T. (2013). The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design Between Art and Politics. *Design Issues*, 29(1).
- Markussen, T. (2015, November). *Design activism as a form of social design*. Presentation, Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
- Martin, R. L., & Osberg, S. (2007). Social entrepreneurship: The case for definition. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 5(2), 28–39.
- Melles, G., de Vere, I., & Misic, V. (2011). Socially responsible design: thinking beyond the triple bottom line to socially responsive and sustainable product design. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 143–154.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2013). An attachment perspective on resilience to stress and trauma. In *The Resilience Handbook: Approaches to Stress and Trauma*, ed. by M. Kent, M. C. Davis and J. W. Reich (pp. 156–168). London & New York: Routledge.
- Moulaert, F., MacCallum, D., & Hillier, J. (2013). Social innovation: intuition, precept, concept. *The International Handbook on Social Innovation: Collective Action, Social Learning and Transdisciplinary Research*, 13.
- Moulaert, F., MacCallum, D., Methwood, A., & Hamdouch, A. (Eds.). (2013). *The International Handbook on Social Innovation: Collective Action, Social Learning and Transdisciplinary Research*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Mulgan, G. (2014). Design in public and social innovation: what works and what could work better. *Article Publié Sur Www. Nesta. Org. Uk*.

- Mulgan, G. (2015). *The locust and the bee: predators and creators in capitalism's future*. Princeton University Press.
- Mulgan, G., Tucker, S., Ali, R., & Sanders, B. (2007). *Social innovation: what it is, why it matters and how it can be accelerated*. Oxford: Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship.
- Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J., & Mulgan, G. (2010). *The open book of social innovation*. National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Art.
- Phillips, W., Lee, H., Ghobadian, A., O'Regan, N., & James, P. (2014). Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship A Systematic Review. *Group & Organization Management*, 1059601114560063.
- Poehlmann, J., & Eddy, J. M. (Eds.). (2013). *Relationship and Processes in Children With Incarcerated Parents* (Vol. 78). Boston, Massachusetts: Wiley-Academy.
- Rancière, J. (2010). *Dissensus: On politics and aesthetics*. (S. Corcoran, Ed.). Continuum Intl Pub Group.
- Sunlight-powered 'bulbs' made from plastic bottles light up homes. (2011). Retrieved 22 September 2016, from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/dec/23/sunlight-bulbs-plastic-bottles-light>
- Thorpe, A. (2012). *Architecture & Design Versus Consumerism: How Design Activism Confronts Growth*. Routledge.
- Thorpe, A., & Gamman, L. (2011). Design with society: why socially responsive design is good enough. *CoDesign*, 7(3–4), 217–230.
- Von Hippel, E. (2009). Democratizing innovation: the evolving phenomenon of user innovation. *International Journal of Innovation Science*, 1(1), 29–40.
- Weerawardena, J., & Mort, G. S. (2006). Investigating social entrepreneurship: A

multidimensional model. *Journal of World Business*, 41(1), 21–35.

Weisbrod, B. (1975). Towards a theory of the nonprofit sector. In E. S. Phelps (Ed.), *Altruism, Morality and Economic Theory*. New York: Russell Sage. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Whiteley, N. (1993). *Design for society*. Reaktion books.

Wright, E. O. (2010). *Envisioning real utopias* (Vol. 98). Verso London.