

# Social Design Futures

HEI Research and the AHRC

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*Why 'social design' here, now?*

*What is society today, in certain parts of the world, such that it is not unusual to think that designers might have a role to play in reforming society?*

*What is design that designers think reformed sociality is the outcome, if not also the means, of what designers do?*

– Cameron Tonkinwise  
Director of Design Studies, Carnegie Mellon University,  
'Social Design and the Age of Neoliberalism',  
guest contribution to project blog  
<http://mappingsocialdesign.org>



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# Executive Summary

Social design highlights design-based practices towards collective and social ends, rather than predominantly commercial or consumer-oriented objectives.

It operates across many fields of application including local and central government, as well as policy areas such as healthcare and international development.

It is associated with professional designers, students, staff and researchers in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and also promoted and practised by some public sector bodies, funders, activists and non-profit and commercial service providers.

In the UK, and globally, we are currently witnessing a 'social design' moment. This has emerged from the confluence of several factors including the increasing visibility of strategic design or design thinking, social innovation and entrepreneurship, austerity politics and policy shifts towards open or networked governance.

This presents an opportunity for the research community in design and adjacent areas, for the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and for the UK more generally. There are a number of reasons why it is timely for the AHRC and HEIs to think about the development and support of social design research now. We are faced by a multitude of large-scale complex challenges, which social design has the potential to address. Cross-disciplinarity is a priority in research and design as a discipline has strengths in supporting the interactions between other disciplines. Professional design is expanding its reach, moving into new fields including government, but academic research has not been keeping up.

Recognising the opportunity presented by social design as an emerging subject for research, the AHRC commissioned this study in late-2013 to help with its strategy in this area. This report presents the results of the study.

Through our study we reviewed current challenges in the field including:

- the positioning of social design research in relation to design studies and the social sciences;
- funding mechanisms and availability in support of research;
- the relationship of HEI research to non-HEI bodies engaged directly or indirectly in the field through research and/or practice;
- the kinds of research already undertaken;
- comparative international models;
- the historical formation of the field, current policy and other contexts and future possibilities
- current capacity in terms of HEI strengths in social design in terms of research initiatives, peer community and postgraduate activity.

While we have found that the UK has a real strength in social design as practice, we see systematic weaknesses in the research landscape. We present our findings, observations and reflections in greater detail within section four of this report. However, in summary, we characterize the state of the research field in the UK as having more scope for criticality and social vision. There is also an incomplete historical understanding of

the development, reach and impact of social design. The academic research agenda is influenced (sometimes negatively) by non-academic work in the field.

Within academia there is a lack of capacity to provide strong leadership in terms of a mature research base, research-led teaching in design and related fields, supporting postgraduate research students, peer-review and contributing to and collaborating with research in related disciplines or professional fields. Research funding for social design has been derived from a variety of sources which often results in it being more concentrated on shorter-term projects aiming to have impact, rather than longer-term programmes aiming to build knowledge.

Nevertheless, the social design moment presents the AHRC with an historic opportunity to:

- fund world class, cross-disciplinary research;
- build effective pathways to impact;
- engage in tackling social problems, increasing competitiveness of the UK economy and improving quality of life;
- influence policy practice and behaviour;
- build capacity in knowledge exchange, reframe debates and drive the importance of design in numerous academic and civic contexts.
- forge new, hybrid research practices and specialisms with other academic disciplines;
- enhance the role of the creative arts in their contributions to national economic, environmental and social well-being;
- strengthen the position and practices of HEI research in design in general.

In order to suggest a route forward, we have set out a vision for where social design research could go and a strategy for how to get there. As well as specific new research themes, we propose a bolstering of the research ecosystem through new infrastructure measures. These include:

- building more effective coordination between HEI and non-HEI collaborators that ensures rigorous research content that is supported through a diverse portfolio of funding;
- opening up the dissemination and communication of social design research to a broad, multi-level audience;
- developing funding application processes to be able to incorporate the more flexible nature of social design research practices while ensuring their rigour and criticality.
- developing a strategy to build capacity through training and curriculum research.

To conclude, social design is at a critical point. Strong growth in student demand, professional practice and interest among non-HEI stakeholders has meant that practice has outstripped research capacity. Further, government interest in the potential of design-based approaches to sit within policy-making and implementation puts pressure on it to perform successfully. This presents the AHRC with the challenge - and opportunity - of mediating between the urgent requirement to build a strong research base while attending to the enormous potential to create positive social impact through knowledge transfer and via co-creating new solutions to address contemporary issues.

## Section One

# The Brief

In the summer of 2013, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, recognising the opportunity presented by social design as an emerging subject for research, commissioned this mapping study to inform its strategy in this area.

Section One presents the background to the study: the brief from AHRC, our terms of reference, and our methodology and definitions.

## 1.1 – The brief from AHRC: origins, aims and objectives

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This report is, in the first instance, intended to inform the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). It was commissioned by the AHRC to review social design research and practice in the UK and to help guide its future strategy in this area. Its primary focus is on academic research in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), although research collaboration with other bodies is understood to be of importance.

The research evolved out of earlier collaborations between members of the team and AHRC. From March 2012, the research team ran Social Design Talks, a monthly series of events created to open up critical debate in the context of social design's rapid ascendance (see <http://socialdesigntalks.org>). In 2012-13, research team members worked on the Design Commission parliamentary inquiry into re-designing public services (Design Commission 2013), which the AHRC sponsored.

Research for this current report took place between November 2013 and July 2014 under the title 'Mapping Social Design: Research and Practice' (see <http://mappingsocialdesign.org>). The research set out to:

1. Critically review HEI and non-HEI research and practice relating to social design in the UK and internationally;
2. Understand developments in the economic, social and political contexts that have shaped social design;
3. Produce recommendations and speculations on future research strategies, programmes and practices for the AHRC;
4. Raise awareness of issues, challenges and potentials for social design amongst UK researchers.

Our agreed objectives included the following:

1. Through interviews, visits, deskwork and workshops, to identify the key actors and practices in social design and understand the particular challenges and opportunities for HEI social design research;
2. Through the evaluation digital-based speculative research and expert workshops, create future social design research and practice scenarios that propose new research possibilities;
3. Through the maintenance of the Social Design Talks programme, participation in conferences and symposia, publication and presentation, build academic awareness and debate in this area;
4. Report findings and recommendations to the AHRC and a wider academic audience.

## 1.2 – Terms of Reference

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The research did not set out to produce an exhaustive audit of all research and practice activities relating to social design. As this report reflects, we have aimed to critically understand the key challenges and questions for research across a broad range of activities connected with the term social design. The emphasis is on research but this involves considering related practices in education, the design profession, non-HEI institutions and bodies, and local and national government policy-making.

The report does not propose specific research projects or specific educational programmes to build academic capacity. It does not make recommendations for the design industry or for non-HEI design-related organisations. These lie outside its remit. The focus of its recommendations is on building a sustainable research environment for social design and identifying some emerging themes that may work within this. While international comparisons are made, the report is intended to inform strategy in the UK, not elsewhere.

## 1.3 – Research Methodology

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The approach to this research project is based in an abductive logic (Blaikie 2002). It involved exploring the everyday language and activities used in the production, reproduction and interpretation of social design. This was an iterative process that involved the team in accessing and interpreting others' and our own accounts of social design practice and research. The research approach also recognized the team's roles in participating in and constructing the field through our blogging and events and through attending others' events.

Because of the huge diversity of sites and activities associated with social design and the lack of published academic research in the area, the team employed a variety of methods that reviewed past research and current practice, explored existing issues and developed speculations about future scenarios. This approach allowed the team to engage with a variety of actors and practices associated with the object of study, both accounts given in interviews as well as those that exist in academic and non-HEI published research.

Research materials such as notes from interviews and reviewing literature were shared between the team via a digital drive. Regular team meetings were used to discuss and synthesize findings. Work-in-progress presentations were given at the V&A, the University of Brighton and the University of Southern Denmark in order to give a more public platform to the findings and to get early feedback from colleagues.

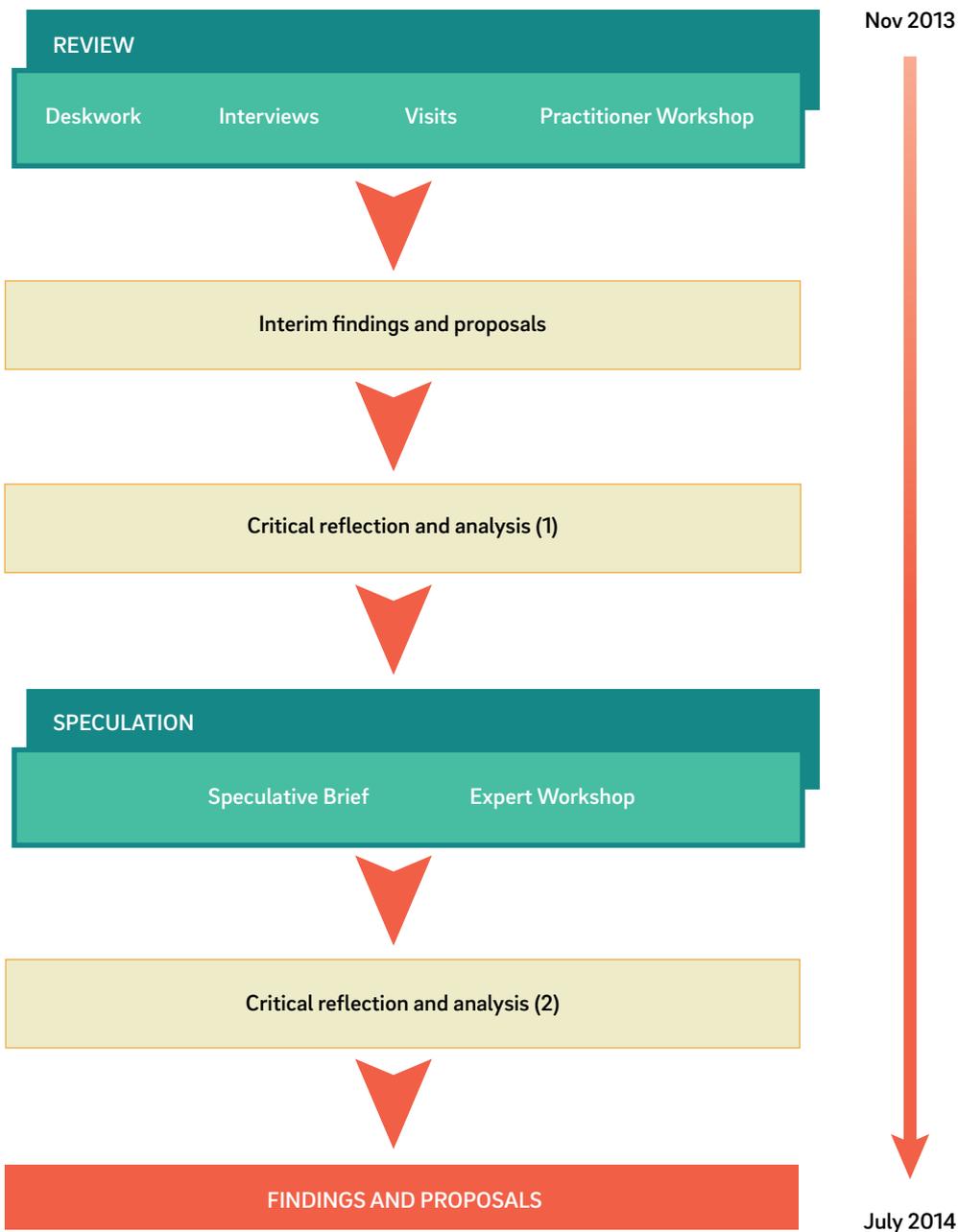
The team maintained a project blog (<http://mappingsocialdesign.org>) which contributed reflections on emergent issues and invited guest blogs and comments and was publicised via Twitter. Through the course of the research the team continued to run the Social Design Talks (<http://socialdesigntalks.org>) as a public forum for the discussion of this topic. In the final month of the research, a public presentation of the research was made at the V&A, to garner further responses and publicize the research. An Advisory Group was established to help provide critical oversight (see Appendix 3).

Method	Outline	Details
Deskwork	Review of academic and grey literature	
Interviews	44 personal interviews of key academics or practitioners averaging 60 minutes by phone, Skype or face-to-face.	List of interviewees Appendix 1
Visits and attendance	Team members attended and participated in 12 conferences, symposia and other research events.	List of visits Appendix 2
Practitioner workshop	Half-day workshop with representatives of UK key consultancies who are working. This explored their relationship to academic research.	List of workshop participants Appendix 3
Expert workshop	Full-day workshop with project Advisory Group and additional invitees. Participants were able to critique interim project findings and develop future research scenarios.	List of workshop participants Appendix 3 and project blog <a href="http://mappingsocialdesign.org">http://mappingsocialdesign.org</a>
Speculative design brief	We commissioned 10 art and design practitioners and academics from the UK, Turkey, China, Norway, Finland, and the USA to respond to a simple design brief to uncover unusual and provocative lines of enquiry for social design, which we published on the project blog.	Appendix 4 and project blog <a href="http://mappingsocialdesign.org">http://mappingsocialdesign.org</a>

The research process was structured into two main parts:

- review and critical analysis of past and current research and practices;
- speculation on future requirements and research activities.

The diagram below gives an overview of the how the different methods were employed during the project.



## 1.4– Definitions

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Social design is a set of concepts and activities that exist across many fields of application including local and central government and policy areas such as healthcare and international development. It is associated with professional designers, students, staff and researchers in design HEIs and also promoted and practiced by some public sector bodies, funders, activists and non-profit and commercial service providers.

Although all designing can be understood as social, the term 'social design' highlights the concepts 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.

Social design can therefore be understood to encompass a broad set of motivations, approaches audiences and impacts. For instance, these may be embedded within government policies or public services extremely critical of and divergent from these. Social design may be carried out by people who think of themselves as designers or who studied at design schools, or it might be an activity of designing that takes place involving people who are not professional designers. Arts practice, crafts, theatre and performance are also sites where social design activities take place.

## Section Two

# The Context

Section Two discusses the context within which the team made this study: the history of socially-oriented design, the reasons for its relevance today, the particularities and influence of the policy environment in the UK and its nature as a 'discursive moment'.

Throughout Section Two and Section Three we highlight pertinent findings towards the end of each sub-section. These are then explained further in the recommendations in Section Four.

## 2.1 – A brief history of socially-oriented design

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Social design as a term has only surfaced into frequent usage in the last decade. However, this is not to say that in the longer history of design that designers have been exclusively interested in its commercial outputs.

Nineteenth century design reformers in the UK – such as William Morris, John Ruskin and Christopher Dresser – were concerned with improving the quality of objects that were being manufactured, public consciousness as to the quality of their design and the wider social conditions resulting from industrialisation (Dutta 2009).

The social role of design in the UK received particular impetus in the 1940s and 50s in the context of post-war reconstruction and Attlee's Welfare State. Work by studios and consultancies including the Design Research Unit (DRU) aimed to maximize the civic benefits of design alongside the burgeoning commercial potential of design as an emergent profession.

The radical social revolutions of the 1960s were followed by economic recession in the 1970s. The combination of these gave way to a global movement that proposed alternatives to mainstream, consumerist living. The roll-call of figureheads associated with this period is impressive. These pioneers include Jane Jacobs (urban activism), Victor Papanek (socially responsible design), Bill Mollison (permaculture food growing systems), E.F. Schumacher (re-localisation and appropriate technology) and Ralph Erskine (community architecture). The Italian anti-design movement of the same era also instigated a lineage that fed through to the innovative thinking of Ezio Manzini who has consistently championed design for social innovation and sustainability.

Such luminaries are frequently cited in historical treatments of social design (e.g. Whitely 1994). However, given that social design and design activism are often carried out at grassroots, localised levels, there are also many practitioners who have remained below the radar but have made significant contributions to the field. These might include the urban activist, Dennis Livingston in Baltimore or the community architect, Eddy Walker in Leeds.

The history of social design shows that its formation has come through varied circumstances and exemplifies a range of approaches and political positions. It is notable, however, that it has received increased impetus at times of economic and social challenge such as austerity Britain of the post-war period and the oil crisis of the 1970s. Now we see social design re-emerging against the background of the 2008 financial crisis and recession.

## Finding

Social design has deep historical roots. What is known about this history has tended to be folded into accounts of design history in which its pioneers are understood within mainstream accounts. However, social design invariably involves non-expert practitioners, close alliances with non-design fields, entanglement with policy bureaucracies or, conversely, below-the-radar, grassroots action. There remains much to be researched and analysed in its historical background.

*In this field, there is a need for long-term infrastructuring where relationships continue...*

*that is, that a social design project instigates a conversation and relationships that can be on-going beyond the 'life' of the project itself.*

*But that also makes the impact of social design very difficult to evaluate.*

– Pelle Ehn

Professor of Interaction Design, Medea, Malmö University  
Interview, 22 November 2013

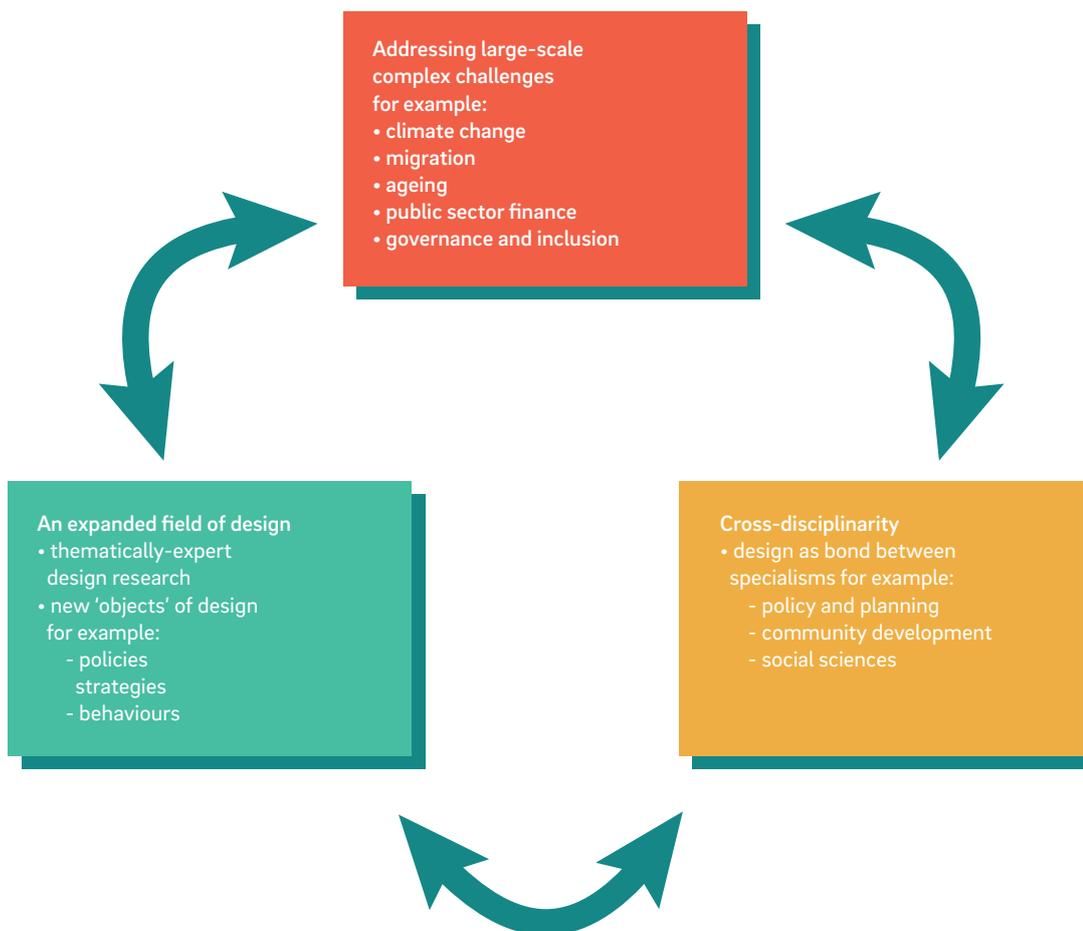
## 2.2 –

### The Current Relevance of Social Design Research

There are a number of reasons why it is timely for the AHRC and HEIs to think about the development and support of social design research now.

1. Society currently faces extensive large-scale complex challenges, which social design is suited to addressing. The challenges of climate change, migration, ageing populations, chronic disease, wealth disparities, and pressures on public sector finances require smarter and more agile responses to how problems and opportunities are identified and framed, and how new solutions are generated, explored, prototyped, resourced and realised. There is growing awareness of the impact of designing and of design work in understanding and framing problems and finding solutions in collaboration with communities, impacting on societies and the wider environment. Additionally, research in design studies has highlighted the negative designers make in contributing to some of these issues in the first place, especially consumer culture, climate change and sustainability (e.g. Fry 2011). Despite the claim that designers have the potential to address these issues, the question remains as to whether they are adequately equipped to deal with them (Nussbaum et al 2010, Kiem 2013, Miller 2013).
2. Cross-disciplinarity is a priority now in research and design as a discipline has strengths in promoting interactions between other disciplines. Despite frequent calls for cross-disciplinary working in research and in organisational projects, how collaboration can best take place remains unclear. Design-oriented research can provide a bond between a number of fields, including policy and planning, community development, sociology, anthropology, human geography, and development studies. Design's material practices make the knowledge and contributions of other fields actual and observable. Buchanan (1992) argued that designers have a 'quasi subject matter' because they work with the particular and specific, rather than the general. As a kind of 'glue' (Kelley and Van Patter 2005), design practices bring issues and their publics into view (Marres 2005) and manifest and hold together a social world. Design consultants act as knowledge brokers between different fields of knowledge (Hargadon and Sutton 1997).
3. Design is operating in an expanded field and research has not been keeping up. Design expertise is being promoted as a vital contribution to addressing social and public challenges by governments, commercial consultancies, design associations, development organisations and HEIs across the world. Partly associated with the term 'design thinking' (Kimbell 2011a, Kimbell 2012), this rests on a view of design operating within an expanding field, as well as specific new fields such as interaction design and service design (Meroni and Sangiorgi 2011, Kimbell 2011b). Further there is strong undergraduate and postgraduate design student demand for engaging with public and collective issues, which is not being met by current academic resources. Design research has historically focused more on its technological or commercial applications emphasising the production of traditional design objects. Social design incorporates broader, more strategic considerations. It draws in the full range of design specialisms

and combines these with the deep understanding and analysis that exist in other areas such as ageing, healthcare, social welfare or policy and planning. Social design therefore opens up innovative ways of doing research and generating new knowledge.



## Finding

The interplay of these domains provides the AHRC with a timely opportunity to:

- fund world class, cross-disciplinary research;
- build effective pathways to impact;
- engage in tackling social problems, increasing competitiveness of the UK economy, improving the quality of life;
- influence policy practice and behaviour;
- build capacity in knowledge exchange, reframe debates and drive the importance of design in numerous academic and civic contexts.

*I have always thought that policy lags behind practice and so I want to make the case for practice-led socially responsive design research experimentation with communities as to what works – and evidencing that.*

– Lorraine Gamman, Professor of Product and Spatial Design,  
Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts,  
'Social Design Rant 1', guest contribution to project blog,  
<http://mappingsocialdesign.org>, June 2014

## 2.3 – The Policy Environment

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The rise of social design - both practice and research - is, in no small part, attributable to a number of policy shifts shaping the public sector over the last three decades. These have been taking place in the UK, Australasia and to varying degrees across Europe and the Americas. Five key drivers figure here.

1. **New Public Management (NPM)** approaches in central and local government developed from the 1980s. This involved a shift toward more entrepreneurial management, explicit standards and measurement of performance, an emphasis on output controls, decentralisation of services, the promotion of competition, a stress on private sector styles of management and the disciplining of resource allocation (Osborne and McLaughlin 2002, Du Gay 2004). The result of this has been an emphasis on achieving 'best value' through the outsourcing of services to private providers and NGOs. Further, it produced a decentralization or fragmentation of public service delivery. By and large, design has operated in service mode here, for example helping achieve cost-savings or service improvements, rather than providing any strategic leadership.
2. **Network Governance (NG)** is where governmental institutions work in a more coordinating capacity of services and of the public, rather than through the market mechanisms of NPM (Hartley 2005). This is expected to resolve tensions between centralization and decentralisation. Typically, central government also releases resources for experimentation and collaboration to orchestrate the interests of different stakeholders. Policy creation and its implementation is not necessarily undertaken either through stratified bureaucratic systems of public administration or within the entrepreneurially-driven and consumer-responsive context of the New Public Management. Instead, programmes are coordinated rather than managed. Socially-oriented consultancies such as FutureGov have been engaged in designing services that facilitate coordination and public responsiveness in this context.
3. **Austerity measures** have had a profound effect on the relationship of social design to policy. The radical cutting of public sector budgets across Europe has forced local, regional and national governments to rethink the way their services are delivered. Alongside this the development of 'lean' approaches to management, entrepreneurship and even user experiences has also prompted new ways of organizing to create and deliver services. One result of this has been the growth of Outcome Based Budgeting (OBB) or Outcome Based Commissioning (OBC). These place the chief focus on achieving the desired results of a service rather than micro-managing the bureaucracies running the services themselves. This has led to the innovation of systems that blend individual volunteers and support networks (whether NGO or governmental) to 'co-produce' services aimed at addressing policy issues. The consultancy Participle, for example, has been active in this respect, designing systems for mutual support for the elderly. The harnessing of active citizens into such solutions resonates with the Big Society agenda that was promoted early on in the Coalition government (Blyth and Kimbell 2011).

4. **Nudge and Behaviour Change** is perhaps an exception where policy aspirations have directly shaped the design of services, especially digital services. To address welfare and environmental challenges, government policy has strongly supported a behavioural psychology approach derived, in part, from Thaler and Sunstein (2009) (see also Dolan et al. 2010). The idea is that creating 'choice architectures' will positively influence the ways that people make decisions in their everyday lives relating, for example, to their health. As such, it has been seen as a transfer of mainstream market mechanisms to the policy and social sphere (Leggett 2014, Muniesa 2014). Social scientists working within other traditions (e.g. Shove 2010) have pointed out that the behavioural approach runs the risk of policy and the design of public services being limited to one framing of how social change happens, neglecting other research resources.
5. **Big Data and Open Data** are emergent areas that result from a convergence of technological, commercial and management developments. Investment in storage capacities, abilities to process vast quantities of digital data, pervasive data collection through the internet of things and mobile broadband have been accompanied by new service and business models that capture, analyse and combine data in new ways. The term 'open' data highlights the opportunities that are thought to come from organisations, especially government and public bodies, publishing their data for others to use which may be recombined into new services and ventures and drive accountability, transparency and responsiveness (Verhulst et al 2014). The UK's open data service includes datasets created by UK public bodies for use by others that cover things such as healthcare, live traffic data, social deprivation indices, water and air temperatures, flood levels, and government spending. Over 300 apps that use government datasets were listed on the data.gov.uk website in early 2014. Social design research also has the potential to connect up with these emergent activities, particularly in relation to thinking around smart cities and health and social care.

Academic research from the social sciences into these five areas has been extensive. For example, NG or 'digital governance' has been regarded by some as containing emancipatory potential for citizens by fostering more responsive, coordinated and democratic modes of governance and citizenship (e.g. Dunleavy 2013, Muir 2014). Developments such as nudge and big data are also closely intertwined with strands of social scientific research. In contrast, research within design traditions such as design studies and design history has barely begun to discuss what designing in such contexts might mean for how design is understood, practised, studied and taught.

This neglect of design in the context of these policy developments is striking for two reasons. First, there is at least a decade of designerly approaches and professional designers being deployed in relation to complex policy issues. Second, policy is an area of collective life where it is noticeable how little attention is given to how policies come into being – or put another way, how they are designed. For example, new models of governance and public sector management are often expressed as aspirations with little empirical evidence or testing of their operational impact. The systemic and material details of how a new policy might work when implemented – its design – is absent (Bason 2010). Further, the design activities, processes, knowledge and skills through which new policies come into being are rarely explored.

## Finding

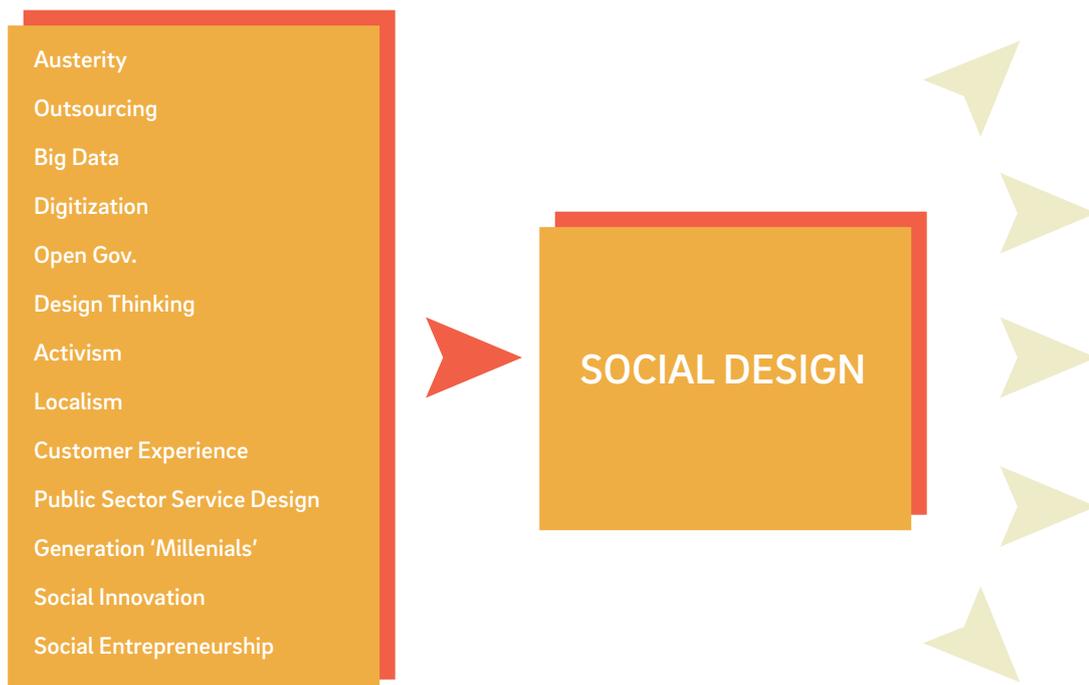
The current policy landscape opens up historic opportunities for HEIs and the AHRC to build impactful practices through social design research. With its orientation towards and grounding in practice, design research can engage with many other academic disciplines to produce new disciplinary fields and forms of collaboration.

## 2.4 – 'Social Design': a Discursive Moment

The term social design - which has entered into more frequent use in the past 10 years - has come into view through the confluence of several factors. As well as new policy environments (such as austerity politics and policy shifts towards open or networked governance), these include the increased visibility of strategic design or 'design thinking', social innovation and entrepreneurship, the development and usage of digital and mobile technologies, and the rise of activist practices in the face of global challenges such as climate change and economic inequalities. These historically-specific factors have shaped current usage of the term.

Seeing the emergence of social design as a discursive moment, rather than a field or discipline, allows recognition of the variety of knowledge, understandings, identities and practices associated with the term. Social design is not well-defined or fixed in its processes and outcomes. Indeed, it will most likely disaggregate into new modes of practice and new specialisms that cannot be predicted. As the contextual factors that led to the emergence of the term change, so too will the practices and formations associated with social design. The consolidation of a maturing research agenda presents an opportunity to influence this development in positive ways.

For a timeline that illustrates initiatives relevant to social design that have taken place through conferences, networks and seminars, university courses and research networks, policy initiatives and design consultancies, 2005-13, see Appendix 5.





*Political scientists for the last 20 years have been dreaming of finding new models that move away from new public management... the opportunity of design is that it's probably our best shot at systematically discovering new governance approaches.*

– Christian Bason, Head of MindLab, Copenhagen at  
'EHDM Encouraging Design Driven Public Sector Innovation',  
Copenhagen, 15 May 2014.

### Three Distinctive Accounts of Social Design in HEIs

Within this ‘discursive moment’ and within HEI activities, a range of approaches to social design are have become discernible. Arguably, the most distinctive are as follows.

1. **Design for Social Innovation** involves expert design contributions that help to identify, support and develop opportunities for amplifying changing social practices (Jégou and Manzini 2008). It includes working closely with participants to explore everyday activities and outlooks, and to develop design responses through prototyping, implementation and evaluation.
2. **Socially Responsive Design** is less programmatic in its methods than design for social innovation. Here, the axes of the ‘T-shaped’ designer -- who has a breadth of understanding of different related fields and a deep knowledge of the technical and processual elements of design -- are reversed. Instead, they are experts in particular knowledge domains -- such as health, crime or local government -- but bring a designerly understanding to them (Gamman and Thorpe 2011).
3. **Design Activism** is more explicit in its political intentions than the two previous categories. It includes the creation of artefacts and experiences associated with political discussion and protest, but also results in designs that intervene into everyday lives while raising political consciousness concerning collective challenges (Markusson 2013, Julier 2013). It usually sits outside commercial or governmental structures and works through settings such as grassroots activities, community action or pressure groups.

### Finding

The current policy landscape opens up historic opportunities for HEIs and the AHRC to build impactful practices through social design research. With its orientation towards and grounding in practice, design research can engage with many other academic disciplines to produce new disciplinary fields and forms of collaboration.

## Section Three

# The state of research

In this section we discuss our conclusions about the state of social design research in its current instantiation. After a brief introductory overview of some of the main issues, we look in more depth at the relationships between HEI and non-academic research which have shaped the field to date, the interplay of social design with adjacent 'social' disciplines, the nature and role of social innovation labs and an assessment of research funding and collaborations. We conclude with an holistic cataloguing of the challenges facing social design research. Section Four follows with our suggested responses to some of those challenges.

### 3.1 – 'Social Design': a Discursive Moment

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Here we present an overview of the main concerns around social design research and the opportunities that lie ahead for it.

1. There is an incomplete historical understanding of the development, reach and impact of social design.
2. Social design has emerged as a discursive moment resulting from the confluence of several factors including the increasing visibility of strategic design or design thinking, social innovation and entrepreneurship, austerity politics and policy shifts towards open or networked governance. However, in order for the field to mature there needs to be a greater engagement with adjacent fields, especially in the realm of 'the social' as well as specific areas of knowledge such as healthcare, governance and social enterprise.
3. The academic research agenda is influenced (sometimes negatively) by non-academic work in the field.
4. There is a lack of capacity in UK academia to provide strong leadership in terms of a mature research base, research-led teaching in design and related fields, supporting postgraduate research students, peer-review and contributing to and collaborating with research in related disciplines or professional fields.
5. Research funding for social design has been derived from a variety of sources which often results in research being concentrated on shorter-term projects aiming to have impact, rather than longer-term programmes aiming to build knowledge.
6. Nonetheless, social design research presents an important opportunity for the AHRC to:
  - a) forge new, hybrid research practices and specialisms with other academic disciplines;
  - b) enhance the role of the creative arts in their contributions to national economic, environmental and social well-being;
  - c) strengthen the position and practices of HEI research in design in general.

## 3.2 – Relationships between HEI and non-Academic Research

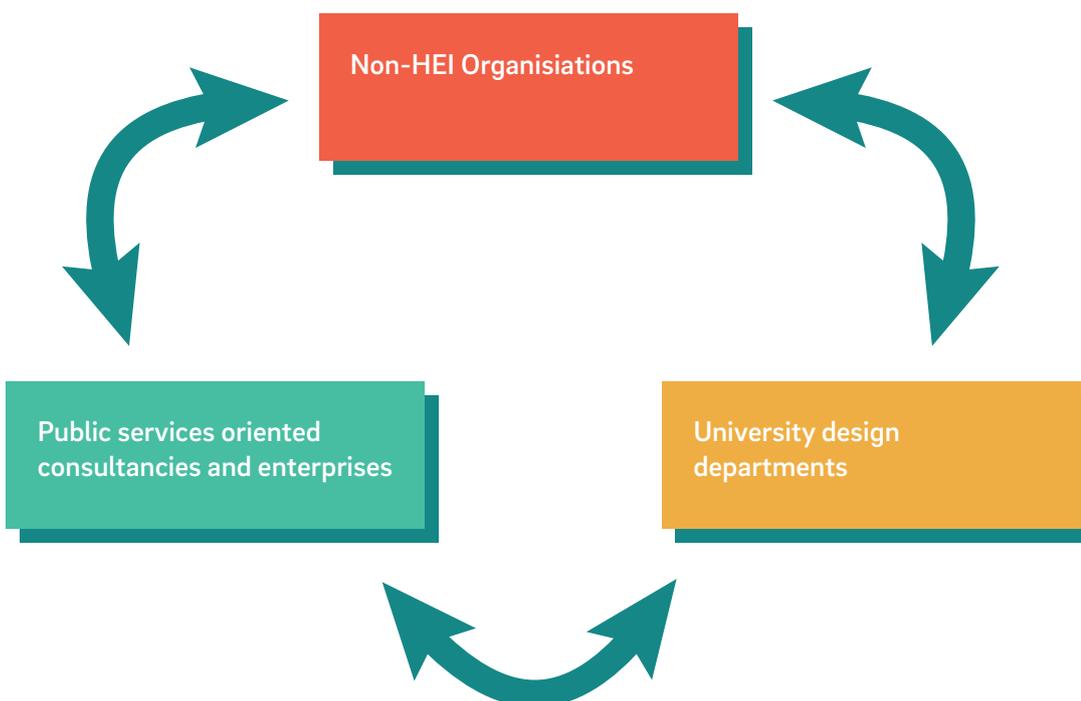
Academic research relating to social design has been prefigured in the UK by a significant amount of research and policy work and other initiatives by non-HEI bodies. Indicative examples are given below.

Organisation	Dates	Initiative
Design Council	early 1990s	Greater emphasis on advisory role to government
	2005-06	RED unit
	late 2000s-to present	Design Challenges with NHS Trusts, Local Authorities
	2007	Designs of the Times (DOTT) Northumbria*
	2009	DOTT Cornwall
	2012	'Scoping Study on Service Design' (report)*
	2013	'Design for Public Good' (report)
Department for Education and Schools	2002	Innovation Unit
Nesta	2002	Futurelab
	2009	Innovation Lab
	2013	Centre for Social Action
Royal Society of the Arts	2003	RSA Student Design Awards switch to explicit social agenda
	2009	'Design for Rehabilitation' (report)
Policy Connect	2012	Design Commission 'Re-Starting Britain 2: Design and Public Services' (report)*
Cabinet Office	2010	Behavioural Insights Team
	2011	Government Digital Service
	2013	Open Policy Making Team
	2014	Policy Lab (one year initiative) *

There are many weak and strong ties linking these public or policy-based organization and initiatives, HEIs and other organisations.

- There are informal links between public bodies, HEIs and a cluster of public-service- oriented consultancies and enterprises such as FutureGov, Innovation Unit, Participle, Redfront, Sea Communications, Snook, STBY, UsCreates, as well as other design consultancies.
- Research is sometimes funded as part of consultancy for example resulting in project reports or impact reports.
- Some of the staff and consultants working in relation to social design have undertaken post-graduate study including doctoral work. Many maintain close ties with HEIs through part-time teaching and collaborations with undergraduate or postgraduate design courses.
- Many of the individuals working in social design have also been active with the non- HEI bodies discussed above, taking part in workshops, events, or joining steering groups such as the Design Council Public Services Action Group.

Arguably, this has led to a closed loop between this consultancy sector, non-HEI bodies and some university activities in which particular research assumptions, approaches and methods are reproduced. Research is carried out over relatively short-term periods. This research is not subject to the rigours of HEI application processes, peer-review, or academic assessment of its outcomes. Additionally the aim of this research is not usually to contribute to academic knowledge, so the resulting findings rarely make a contribution to existing literature. Distribution through online channels and other publication routes make this grey literature very accessible. Meanwhile, its approaches, methods and analysis remain unchallenged.



## Finding

The current policy landscape opens up historic opportunities for HEIs and the AHRC to build impactful practices through social design research. With its orientation towards and grounding in practice, design research can engage with many other academic disciplines to produce new disciplinary fields and forms of collaboration.

*... Although, strictly speaking, (social) refers to the ties between people and to the organisational forms that characterize a society, it is very frequently used to connote particularly problematic situations, such as extreme poverty, illness or exclusion, and circumstances after catastrophic events.*

*In other words, when used in this way, 'social' becomes a synonym for 'highly problematic condition', which poses (or should pose) the need for urgent intervention, outside normal market or public service modalities.*

*It is precisely in this acceptation that the term 'social' made its entrance into the design debate several decades ago, generating the term: social design.*

– Ezio Manzini, Professor Design and Innovation for Sustainability, Politecnico di Milano, 'Design for social innovation vs. social design', guest contribution to project blog <http://mappingsocialdesign.org>

### 3.3 – The interplay with adjacent disciplines

The difficulty of defining design is a long-standing problem in design research. Similarly in social theory, there are multiple accounts of how the social can be conceptualised and described. It can exist at various scales and locations, can involve different kinds of entity or actor, and can represent differing forms of association, interest and action. To illuminate the emergence of social design, it is productive to turn briefly to two related areas: discussions of social entrepreneurship and social innovation on the one hand, and recent work in sociology on the other. Through this, we can appreciate what is distinctive about a ‘social’ version of design.

#### Social entrepreneurship and social innovation

In their review of ways of defining social entrepreneurship, Roger Martin and Sally Osberg (2007) clarify how social entrepreneurship is distinct from other areas of practice relating to social purposes, in particular the provision of social services and activism, and from other kinds of entrepreneurship. They highlight the agency entrepreneurs bring to an issue in which they see other actors as unable to do things for themselves. They argue that:

...the social entrepreneur aims for value in the form of large-scale, transformational benefit that accrues to either a significant segment of society or to society at large ... the social entrepreneur’s value proposition targets an underserved, neglected or highly disadvantaged population that lacks the financial means or political clout to achieve the transformational benefit on its own (Martin and Osberg 2007: 34-35).

By contrast, an influential effort at defining social innovation by Geoff Mulgan and colleagues at the Young Foundation emphasizes societies’ own capacities to solve their problems, rather than needing entrepreneurs to do it for them. For Mulgan et al, social innovation is simply ‘new ideas that work to meet pressing unmet needs and improve peoples’ lives’ (Mulgan et al 2007:4). Instead of the heroic, well-meaning entrepreneur, here social groups themselves have ‘ubiquitous intelligence’ that can be mobilized. A second distinctive aspect of Mulgan et al’s definition is that:

...social innovations ... leave behind compelling new social relationships between previously separate individuals and groups which matter greatly to the people involved, contribute to the diffusion and embedding of the innovation, and fuel a cumulative dynamic whereby each innovation opens up the possibility of further innovations (Mulgan et al 2007: 5).

Despite these differences, where these definitions of social entrepreneurship and social innovation overlap is in:

- a) the intention to work at a holistic, systemic level;
- b) by creating new combinations of resources in the generation of new solutions to social issues.

Both sets of authors cite early twentieth century economist Joseph Schumpeter, who described entrepreneurship as creative destruction. For example Martin and Osberg see

social entrepreneurs as:

...forging a new, stable equilibrium that releases trapped potential or alleviates the suffering of the targeted group, and through imitation and the creation of a stable ecosystem around the new equilibrium ensuring a better future for the targeted group and even society at large (Martin and Osberg 2007: 35).

For Mulgan et al, 'social innovations are usually new combinations or hybrids of existing elements, rather than being wholly new in themselves' (Mulgan et al 2007: 34).

These discussions about social entrepreneurship and social innovation are useful to understanding social design, in particular:

- questioning who has agency in articulating issues or opportunities and doing something to address them – entrepreneurs v members of a social group v experts v outsiders;
- seeing the process of designing and making change happen as distributed and involving many participants, in particular the people affected by an issue;
- operating across boundaries between organizations and sectors;
- involving the creation of new combinations of resources and making new connections between actors and resources in a social world;
- recognising that people's needs are not given and pre-existing, but that they result from complex interactions between actors and processes in a social world.

### Recent work in sociology

Sociological research over the past two decades, stemming from Science and Technology Studies/Actor-Network Theory, has re-invigorated discussions about how the social is constituted, for example through the object turn in social research. Marres (2014) talks of 'old' and 'new' conceptions of the social. 'Old' conceptions of the social might incorporate more stable usages (as in social housing or social welfare). More recently, there has been a rise of a 'new' form of the social (as in social media, social marketing, social innovation, social enterprise, etc.) that disrupts any feeling of stability around the term. Here, the social is not necessarily taken as a given but may, at times, be ephemeral and performative.

Further, new accounts of the social foreground the role of non-human actors such as digital devices in constituting the social (Marres 2012). These accounts suggest the possibility of design playing an important role in producing emergent social worlds.

### Finding

Research and practice within design fields can bring into view and instantiate these distinct versions of 'the social'. In terms of the AHRC, such fundamental questions may take social design research more closely into the orbit of the social sciences and open up opportunities for further partnerships with the ESRC.

### 3.4 – Social Innovation Labs and Policy Design Labs

One area that seems to offer particular opportunities to understand and practice social design is in policy and social innovation labs. There has been a significant growth over the past decade in government sponsorship of policy labs. Geoff Mulgan (2014) defines these as enabling ‘experimentation in a safe space at one remove from everyday reality, with the goal of generating useful ideas that address social needs and demonstrating their effectiveness’.

Although such labs take many forms, they share an orientation to practical action that develops, explores and tests new approaches to generating and delivering policy. Some explicitly involve the use of design methods or design thinking to develop policy and also train policy-makers and functionaries in this approach. A summary of the international spread of such labs is given in Appendix 6.

Many of the labs have existed or are currently operating work at national or regional levels. Some, such as Denmark’s MindLab and the new UK Cabinet Office Policy Lab, are based in central government. Ben Williamson (2014) notes how

Policy labs are part of a shift to more ‘mobile’ forms of governance in which policy ideas are generated and mobilized by a more diverse range of governmental and non-governmental settings, and moved around and shared across geographical sites and cross-sectoral networks, much of it mediated through software technologies.

Efforts to understand labs include:

- analysis that segments them by specialism (for example design-focussed, psychology-based or technology-based); or by sector (for example healthcare or education) or by their likelihood of leading to systemic change (see Mulgan 2014);
- analysis that segments them by whether they are government-led or government-enabled and whether government’s roles are funding or being a client, and a variety of activities from capacity building to advising (see ‘Gov Innovation Labs Constellation 1.0’, Parsons The New School for Design 2013).

Such labs present new and unique opportunities to understand the intersection of design and public policy. However their heterogeneity means that they do not map easily or directly onto academic research for the following reasons.

1. Embedded within political and governance contexts, such labs are oriented towards impact rather than producing academic knowledge.
2. They operate at very different scales, some addressing individual cities, government departments or specific policy areas, making comparison difficult.
3. Their rapid design and implementation cycles do not fit the temporalities of academic research easily.

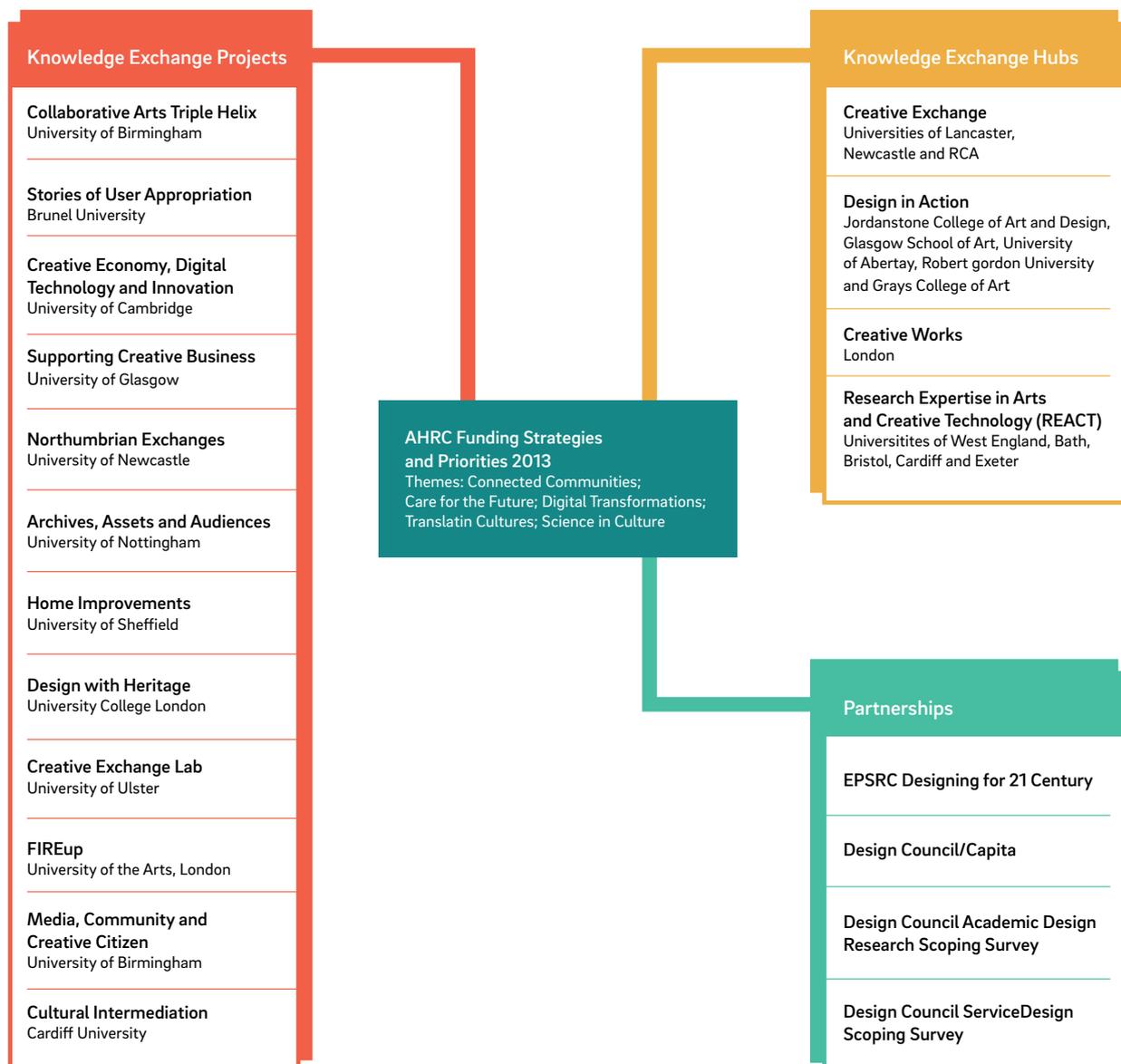
These difficulties can be addressed by careful research design and they do not preclude academic researchers partnering or collaborating with these kinds of labs.

### Finding

These labs demonstrate the growing interest in and hopes for bringing design practice, the social sciences and policy-making together. Yet, they are very recent and in some cases, short-lived. Their impact over the longer-term is still to be evaluated and understood, as is their relationship to academic research.

## 3.5 – Research Funding

Academic research in social design has been supported through a variety of channels including from RCUK, EU and non-academic sources. The main activities that have taken shape in relation to social design have been within design departments of HEIs. Although there have been projects that involve collaboration across academic disciplines, the expertise in social design research in UK HEIs is dominated by individuals or small teams in design-based institutions.



Some of the initiatives in research relating to social design in HEIs have been shaped by:

- the influence of research centres such as the Helen Hamlyn Research Centre (Royal College of Art), ImaginationLancaster (Lancaster University) and Design Against Crime Research Centre (Central St Martins, UAL);
- foregrounding of design activism and social design in international conference series such as NORDES, Design History Society, Design Research Society and Cumulus;
- the influence of the research impact agenda within the Research Excellence Framework coupled with a growing focus on local and social relevance among some universities;
- RCUK programmes such as AHRC/EPSRC ‘Designing for the 21st Century’ and AHRC ‘Connected Communities’;
- student demand for social and sustainability issues to be embraced in mainstream undergraduate and postgraduate teaching

The diagram on page 42 shows the variety of research that has been recently supported by the AHRC that overlaps with social design research. It demonstrates strengths in forging collaborative research programmes with non-HEIs. Opportunities for funding in which collaboration and impact is heavily embedded have existed with a number of European Union initiatives. These include:

- Horizon 2020;
- Clusters 2020
- EU Design Innovation
- EU Design Innovation Platform 2013.

## Finding

There has not been a concerted RCUK or EU programme to support social design research. Instead research calls around social design have been implicit in or embedded in other programmes. This means that social design research is fragmented. There has not yet been a systematic effort to bring projects together, compare and evaluate their processes, outcomes and impacts and identify the important future research questions.

## 3.5 – Collaborating with non-HEI organisations

There are several challenges and opportunities in the tensions between research funding and collaboration between HEIs and other stakeholders and partners. This is not entirely unique to social design (e.g. Dillon et al 2014). However, a number of specific features emerge.

1. **Projects v. programmes** As already noted in this report, in addition to RCUK research, there has been some applied or semi-applied research that has brought HEI design departments into collaboration with NGOs and local, regional and national government departments. This has often been situated on the border between HEI consultancy and research. In the former case, projects have often been derived from the creation and maintenance of long-term relationships with, for example, local government officers, health specialists or other consultants in the private sector. The benefits of such consultancy work are numerous to HEIs. However, this can also result in a fragmented, project-oriented approach by departments within which opportunities for longer-term programmes that innovate, test and disseminate new knowledge through HEI networks may be missed while they primarily have a client focus.
2. **Problem-solving v. Infrastructuring** Social design research that is engaged with groups of participants and users outside of universities typically has two kinds of output. The first is design as problem-solving that addresses specific local issues. The second is strategy reports aimed at changing future policy. However there is another way of thinking about the role and activity of social design research which is to see it as engaged in what might be termed ‘infrastructuring’ (Ehn 2008). This is about making the socio-material architectures of social processes, public services, issues and their publics more explicit, observable and understandable for participants. By bringing such infrastructures and collective issues into view, social design research makes available a social world. One result is that participants in a social world may be more able to engage in active participation, dialogue, and innovation to address complex collective issues.
3. **Timeframes** Part of the problem here is a perceived disconnect between the rapid, shorter-term nature of consultancy work and the longer-term nature of RCUK funding models. Conversely, RCUK programmes rarely allow the flexibility for spin-off projects to be undertaken within their own funding models. Thus, opportunities for greater research-driven experimentation and testing are also missing.
4. **Knowledge transfer** A further challenge is in the way that social design research is communicated. As already stated, non-HEI research, which is accessible to a wide audience but which may not build on previous contributions or be of international quality, has had some influence on practice. Meanwhile, social design practitioners view academic research – particularly in the social sciences – as being of value but largely inaccessible, both in terms of the concepts and language used, and also in terms of getting hold of it.

*...what appears to be lacking in the current understanding of design activism is a firmer theoretical hold on how and why design activism matters? How does design activism work? What is the impact of design activism on people's everyday life and what makes it different from its closely related 'sister arts' – political activism and art activism?*

- Thomas Markussen, (2013)  
'The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design between Art and Politics',  
Design Issues, 29(1): 38–50.

### 3.7 – The problem with social design research: detailed findings

Over the course of the project the team has catalogued our observations and findings as we progressed. Here we present a detailed list of those reflections, some of which we have already highlighted in the preceding discussion. In Section Four we present suggested responses to these challenges.

	Findings: where we are now
Research context	Social design has become a global phenomenon, especially in the past five years. While much of its language and levels of intervention are shared, it also has different registers, drivers and accountabilities in politically- and culturally-specific contexts. Innovation projects that are promoted, for example, by NESTA, the TSB, the Design Council and the Catapults argue for attending to people’s experiences, and sometimes aim at social impact. But design research is in service mode here, not aiming at building knowledge.
Research capacity	Policy shifts -- particularly driven by austerity measures and changing modes of governance such as open policy-making and nudge -- have meant that demand for social design expertise outstrips supply and heightens the need for researchers to be able to navigate in complex organisational and multi-disciplinary contexts.. The research agenda is currently dominated by non-HEI bodies that have their own organisational agendas and are not academically orientated. There is an absence of a recognizable pipeline through undergraduate teaching to post-doctoral research.
Research practices	Design sector and academic research is fragmented, mostly dominated by ‘problem-solving’ projects. Research skills in user observation and behavioural interpretation are strong, while understandings of the macro-economic, social and policy drivers are weak. There is limited understanding in the social sciences of social design practice and research. Many social design challenges are so acute that design practitioners find it difficult to engage with them. Belief in their agency is often weak.
Research outputs	Lack of criticality in this new area gives rise to emblematic research outputs such as project reports, which are not intended to be academically rigorous, assuming importance. High quality research is inaccessible to non-HEI users. Low grade research is accessible. Rendering of the object of social design for people to engage with is challenging. The objects themselves are diverse in their forms, platforms, politics and registers. The politics of social design continue to be hidden (contra design activism where the politics are made more explicit).
Research environment	HEI research is often framed as ‘servicing’ non-HEI sectors. Social design produces different sites and temporal formats from mainstream design practices, sometimes cutting across traditional HEI and non-HEI structures.

*Design which is focused on 'wicked problems' (as is social design and social innovation) is always inconclusive ... This sits uneasily with many design practitioners, and with academics in an assessment regime which requires identifiable measures of success and impact.*

*Social innovation is also a mode of design predicated on distributed creativity and open participation, beyond more familiar empathic or user-centred design. Again this may be difficult for many designers and academics to accommodate.*

– Paul Micklethwaite, Course Leader, MA Sustainable Design,  
Kingston University, personal communication,  
7 July 2014

## Section Four

# Social Design Futures: Vision and strategy

In this section we set out a vision for where social design research could go, a suggested strategy for how to get there, and some interim actions.

## 4.1 – Vision

Following on from the table in the previous chapter setting out and categorising problems in the field, we now propose recommendations for how social design research might be better realised in the future.

The future landscape of UK social design research	
Research context	A strong presence in the emerging global research-led social design network. Local, deep understanding of contextual factors shaping research and practice.
Research capacity	A clearer understanding of the relationship of research to policy infrastructure and cycles. A critical appraisal of non-HEI institutional capacities, functions and agendas. Recognition of distinctions between theoretical, conceptual, empirical, action, foundational and applied research. Recognition of fuzzy boundaries with closely related research areas e.g. policy, social innovation and entrepreneurship, behavioural economics, climate change. Long term capacity building in research-led curricula and post-doc development.
Research practices	Multiply-funded, multi-stakeholder and multi-outcome research programmes addressing cross-disciplinary and cross-sector issues over a variety of timeframes. Stronger, broader and more exploratory integration of social, political and economic sciences into design research. Conditions for pro-active engagement with social design from the social sciences. Opportunities to involve researchers at the very early stage of creating new models/ services/initiatives.
Research outputs	A broader base of peer review. New conceptualisations of impact that recognise the role of research users in co-constituting the outcomes of research over different timeframes. New ways to conceptualise the accountabilities and ethics of social design research projects. Quicker, earlier and better research communication to a wide constituency. Research into making objects of social design more readable and reflexive.
Research environment	Good conditions for co-research: co-funding and co-outputs where HEI and non-HEI stakeholders are engaged together which might include local and central government projects, commercial providers of social-based services. Opportunities to use academic knowledge to shape social projects in which new policies, systems, ventures, practices and institutions are being designed with implications for wider social contexts (i.e. research shaping doing, not just doing research while doing). Locating social design research in third spaces (e.g. museums, libraries, community action centres).

## 4.2 – Strategy: building a new infrastructure

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Here we propose a strategy for actively nurturing and maturing research around social design. These suggestions respond to the findings and research requirements.

At present, the infrastructure around social design research is hidden and fragmented. We believe there are four pillars to developing a more robust research ecosystem:

1. We think that there should be a research-led institute or network for social design that coordinates between HEIs and non-HEI bodies.
2. Given the importance of knowledge transfer, we think that alternative modes of communicating, sharing and disseminating social design research should be sought.
3. Social design research involves multiple co-researchers (both HEI and non-HEI), a variety of outputs and time frames and scales. We need to rethink research funding frameworks to address this.
4. Career pathways for emergent researchers in social design in the UK are not clear or visible enough. They need reimagining, and actively developing.

In collaboration with our Advisory Group and other experts who participated in our Expert Workshop, we developed four scenarios around each of these requirements.

These are presented in more detail in the following ways:

- the findings about the research landscape which it addresses;
- some detail about the proposal;
- possible implications.

## 1– *A research-led institute or network*

### Scenario: Social Design Research Observatory

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Although this scenario was developed in response to a question about what a new research institution in the social design landscape might look like, we felt that another institution is not what is needed, there already being a good number of institutions operating in this space. The proposed Social Design Observatory is a light touch intervention, working between and with those institutions to improve the quality of research.

#### Relevant findings

1. The research community around social design is highly international, but the research community just within the UK comprises a very small number of people. As social design activity is so context-specific, we feel the UK needs to develop a healthier research community within the context of national and administrative boundaries.
2. There is a general paucity of high quality theoretical and empirical research in this area. Instead, there are many action-led projects taking place within and outside of HEIs without research/ reflection/ discussion/ evaluation happening alongside or afterwards.
3. There is a lack of criticality around research in this area, partly because much existing work has been produced by non-HEI actors whose aim has been to promote or develop practice rather than reflect deeply on it, or evaluate it.
4. There is a lack of transparency about funding for research in this area, and at present it's difficult to get a picture of which organisations are getting what percentage of funding for research about which social challenges focused in what part of the country.
5. Research that does happen can be piecemeal in nature, with a failure to build on existing knowledge leading to repetition; and collaboration and connectivity between institutions could be improved.
6. The funding available could be used better to leverage other funding, maximising impact, and to increase the visibility of outcomes.
7. There is a need for an institution that 'builds the field rather than itself'.

#### Proposal

The Social Design Observatory is intended to play a 'critical observer'/ impartial third party role in the social design research ecosystem, and act as a catalyst and cultivator of improved research activity and outcomes.

It comprises a small group of experts selected from across the social design research ecosystem: academics from design and adjacent fields, non-academics from relevant fields, and representatives from donor/ funder organisations, the public sector and civil society. These individuals are employed on a part time basis for a fixed term.

Their task while in post is to:

- critically observe existing research activities across the various institutions in the field;
- provide research support to significant action projects to help capture and disseminate knowledge;
- conduct their own research and review process to provide transparency about what research is being funded where, and to look holistically at the impact of the system;
- use their helicopter view of the system to try and join up overlapping initiatives;
- provide feedback to funders about research funding calls – i.e. what is needed and where?

Over time, the Observatory should both inform existing players in the field, and help them continually improve the quality of their work.

The membership of the Social Design Observatory rotates regularly, in order to prevent any long-term bias, and to allow a variety of actors within the ecosystem to be involved at one time or another. The Observatory is governed by a strict code of conduct and a set of guiding values: the objective is to build the field rather than ensure the perpetuation of the Observatory itself, and interests of members must be declared.

The Observatory's members are drawn from multiple disciplines, (not solely design), and accordingly the reporting relationships go across Research Councils (not solely AHRC), to help facilitate jointly funded research programmes. The Observatory itself is funded by AHRC and other Research Councils as an important instrument for leveraging bigger gains from existing research investments, and as a useful feedback mechanism around future research needs. However it maintains some institutional independence from the Research Councils. It must also maintain independence from the currently-dominant organisations in the field.

### Implications

In the immediate term, this idea needs further development with appropriate partners. The governance, administration and funding of this entity is not necessarily simple and requires some consideration.

However, if successful, we would see almost instant returns in terms of the identification of overlapping initiatives and opportunities for collaboration, and increased research output from action-led projects.

Over the long term, we will see sustained collaborations, and new ways of doing research. A more mature, diverse and richer research community will emerge, one that has contributions from a range of disciplines, greater rigour and criticality, as well as a broader view of the types of research outcomes that are valid and possible.

## 2– *Communicating Social Design Research* Scenario: Social Design Research Archive

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### Relevant Findings

The following proposal responds directly to the findings of our research, which identified the following issues.

1. There is a lack of rigour and criticality in social design research.
2. There is no shared open or transparent space to present research and knowledge exchange between academics and practitioners. Practitioners in particular find it hard to access academic research.
3. There are blurred boundaries between research and practice in social design.
4. The context-specific and often locally-situated nature of social design research and practice can make it difficult to communicate and share.
5. The infrastructures of social design research and practice are sometimes hidden or invisible.
6. There is a need for greater understanding of the histories and trajectories of social design in the UK and internationally.

### Proposal

We considered the following to be key issues.

1. **Open access** is a priority in the sharing and dissemination of social design research. While this might be a goal for all future research, this is particularly critical to the development of social design, since it is currently rooted in multiple disciplines, practices and communities. A research platform might facilitate a stronger dialogue between and across these groups. Taking into account the various voices and levels of interest in social design, academic journal articles should be considered only one method of communicating research outcomes in this field. Practitioners and researchers should also be encouraged to share research by other means, including video, visual evidence, blogs, events and short reports. This might better reflect the dynamic and textured nature of social design research. While these outputs already exist and are circulated within different social design communities, they are often not visible to the field as a whole. An open access site to manage and disseminate this work would therefore be helpful.
2. **Peer review** The function of peer review is of greater importance in an open-access research platform, in order to maintain standards and advance research, and to create a public conversation about research quality and impact. Leadership in social design sits in a number of communities and not in only one field of research. Research leaders should therefore be encouraged to validate and peer review this space. In addition to academic researchers who may peer review a journal article, there should be an appointed board of 'peer reviewers' embedded in practice, commercial organisations and NGOs, policy

and education. In this expanded practice of peer review, quality and standards should be maintained as appropriate to different levels and for different audiences.

3. **Dissemination** In order for peer-reviewed research to build and reach its audiences, dissemination should work at different speeds. While it should provide a rich body of rigorous written or visual research reports, it should also have the capacity to respond to ongoing work in social design practice within a much shorter time frame. A process of digital ‘tagging’ by the peer reviewers and leaders would facilitate this. Given the often locally situated nature of social design research, a geographical mapping tool could also be used.

### Social Design Research Archive

How and where should this content be managed? Building on the key elements outlined thus far, this space should be easily accessible, clearly visible, reviewed and endorsed by experts. It should also be responsive to live developments in the field. To accommodate this, the institution of a digital archive space, a Social Design Research Archive, would serve two functions.

- a) The process of interactive archiving, which involves digital tagging systems and allows researchers to upload and showcase the new activities as they happen, would enable the consolidation of this research for the future, providing deep and rich content from which to objectively view the evolution of the discipline.
- b) It would also provide a touch-point for academics, practitioners and policy-makers to share and critique research. This would contribute to a more critical, transparent and expert-led space for social design.

### Implications

If instituted, this communication platform would involve the following short and long term research implications:

#### Short term

- Illuminates existing research activities in a shared space so that it might be evaluated and studied more clearly
- Identifies and engages existing communities of social design research and practice and invites new ones
- Acts as an immediate point of communication between research and practice
- Introduces a culture of storing, archiving and reflecting upon research in this area

#### Long term

- Ensures development of a deeper and more critical reflection of the evolution of social design activities
- Institutes a process of peer review across research and practice
- Moves towards an international perspective on social design
- Contributes to a longer term commitment to the exchange between research and practice
- Provides a platform on which to view the moving histories of social design

### 3– Funding Framework

## Scenario: New Questions for Funding Application

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#### Findings

Our findings identified mismatches between AHRC research funding processes and future ways by which social design research might operate. The issues were as follows.

1. Social design research often lacks reflexivity in being explicit about its actual societal context and impacts and in its positioning.
2. Social design research that involves external collaborations often emerges out of long-term relationships between the HEI and other bodies -- the depth and sustainability of social design research often springs from this.
3. Collaborative research in social design often involves multiple actors in co-research mode rather than smaller, hierarchical teams inside HEIs.
4. Collaborations may have various temporal cycles involving, for example, short-term work as part of longer-term engagements that make up the overall programme.
5. All social design research has unintended consequences. The potentially negative outcomes on stakeholders and communities raise serious political and ethical issues.
6. HEIs may take a strategically staged approach to building capacity, making small bids early on but with a view to larger programmes in the future.
7. The breadth of the field means that proposals may have distinct specialisms calling for high-level, specific expertise and understanding of the scope of a proposal.

#### Proposal

We developed a series of questions that could be included in the grant application process in order to address the above challenges. In essence, they represent a greater flexibility of approach to bidding for funding than in what current exists, promoting a reflexive, self- questioning mindset among applicants and reviewers.

New question to be included in funding applications	Reason for including it
What is your vision? And, how will you make a contribution to social design?	In order to avoid being merely presented as a problem-solving exercise, it is important that applicants are able to articulate the impact their proposal will have in broader societal terms. Equally, how the work will develop research in the social design field must be clearly presented.
What is the history of your engagement with this context?	Social design research may spring from long-term engagement with outside collaborators which may not necessarily have been research-led. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge this background and its role in establishing the research context.
What is the role of risk in the proposal? How will you manage this?	Social design practice is beset with pressures to demonstrate efficacy and value. In contrast, social design research may more easily embrace risk in its quest for new knowledge while remaining accountable and managing that risk.
Why do you see social design as an appropriate vehicle for the project? And, why do you suggest working at the scale you are proposing?	It does not necessarily follow that taking a social design approach to an issue is the most appropriate response. The choice of field and approach must itself be rationalised. While it is essential that social design research is not parochial, inward looking or merely small-scale problem-solving, it may involve prototyping at intimate scales with communities and groups. This should not be penalised. A critical understanding of the efficacy of working at a particular scale is important.
What is your plan for research capacity building (either individual or collective)?	Given that social design is often developed through small-scale collaborations, building capacity towards more ambitious programmes, it is important that the application process allows for a discrete proposal to be reviewed in the context of a longer-term capacity building activity.
What are the likely follow-on outputs?	Recognizing that social design research often involves long-term relationships with multifarious actors, outputs may be generated outside the time-frame of the proposed project.
Who are the multiple Co-Investigators (HEI and non-HEI)?	Social design research may engage multiple stakeholders and researchers. In order to stimulate co-research and co-creation that is meaningfully collaborative and equitable, the application process should be able to include many more Co-Investigators than presently allowed.
How will co-creation be delivered by this project and what is your vision of collaboration?	Developing collaborative models within the research may be a significant part of it and the researcher's approach to this may be a significant part of the application.
What academic and non-academic outputs do you plan to deliver and why?	Non-traditional outputs that are not central to the research may also be vital in materialising, implementing and testing the project. Knowledge transfer may not necessarily always take place through, for instance, reports or seminars, but through a variety of means including finished designs. It may also follow that in a co-funding model, non-academic outputs may be costed through other, non-RCUK funding sources.

What academic specialisms/centres would be able to evaluate this project?

Given the emergent, cross-disciplinary and experimental nature of social design, as well as its variety of approaches and contexts, it is important that the applicants are able to help the evaluation through identifying cognate specialists who will be able to critically and objectively review the proposal.

### Implications

If these questions were included in future funding calls, the following might be likely.

1. Social design researchers would continue to build links within and across their own institutions and with other HEIs and with external collaborators such as local and central government departments, social ventures, NGOs, SMEs and corporations, community groups, think tanks and consultancies. HEI research managers would have to develop ways of understanding, assessing and supporting such relationships and relationship-building.
2. Researchers would focus on addressing collective, societal problematics. In contrast, where individual HEIs are competing for resources, HEI research managers would focus on institutional capacity building. This might result in tensions between these internal and external orientations.
3. Social design research takes place in a continually changing policy and practice landscape in which it speculates, takes risks, and prototypes, tests and evaluates future policies, practices, services and products. Such research may anticipate but also produce futures which are harmful and have negative consequences. This needs to be addressed.
4. The question of demonstrating impact in social design research is particularly challenging, given the many qualitative variables at stake and the many actors involved in designing. It may be difficult for researchers to anticipate what these are and how they can be analysed. In the current funding regime which stresses the need to have impact, researchers may feel pressurised not to admit that some of these might be unknown; indeed, it may be a positive indicator of some proposed research that these are not known at application stage.
5. If some of the questions listed above were introduced into funding calls, specialist training for reviewers might be required.

## 4– Career Pathways for Social Design Researchers

### Scenario: Social Design Researcher CVs of the Future

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#### Findings

This section considers the implications for research careers shaped by our findings as follows.

1. There is a weak academic research base relating to social design in the UK with a limited pipeline of future researchers.
2. There are specialist hubs focusing on specific areas such as the Design Against Crime Research Centre at Central Saint Martins, but social design research is diffused across HEI design departments, programmes and institutions.
3. There are and will remain fuzzy boundaries with specialisms such as social entrepreneurship, healthcare/well-being, social policy and other fields.
4. There is an opportunity to see the practice orientation of social designing as a key way for AHRC research funding to have impact.

#### Proposal

Appendix 7 presents four imaginary CVs posted on a future web service called Research-Link in the year 2030. Borrowing elements of the design of social media sites and of LinkedIn, this research service imagines people post CVs to look for work and to share their activities and contributions, accompanied by citations, embedded links and recommendations.

The concepts that are built into the three CVs are that:

- a) research careers are less about institutions, jobs and publications, and more about projects, roles, outputs and impact. So the CVs give space to reports, videos and frameworks (and how they have been cited, recommended and linked to/embedded and used) as well as more traditional academic outputs such as journal papers;
- b) research careers are international but also very localised, based on connections between HEIs, corporate partners and SMEs, funders, and communities and policy agendas;
- c) practice-based PhDs and research in social designing are a major way that social design research takes place. This does not exclude or diminish the need for conceptual or theoretical research, but it does recognize the distinct opportunity that emerges from understanding designing as constituting new sets of relations between actors resulting in some kind of change and impact.

#### Implications

If future researcher careers went in the directions suggested above, the following might be likely.

1. An expanded notion of practice-based research in designing would emerge.

This would refocus designing as taking place in an expanded field involving communities, activism, policy contexts such as healthcare, care or development, social innovation, social entrepreneurship, local and central government, third sector and corporate organizations. A generation of design researchers working in relation to these fields would be strongly oriented towards exploring, creating, testing and analysing new policies, systems, services and products. It would require them to develop and sustain deep knowledge of a specialist area such as ageing as well as the processes and methods of designing typically associated with design HEIs.

2. Such career pathways would involve extensive field-spanning and institution-spanning. Social design research would not just live in HEIs that have design departments or schools, but would be diffused across many different academic fields and kinds of research organisation.
3. The shift to recognizing careers based on projects, roles, outputs and impact rather than institutions, jobs and publications would present challenges for HEIs in building and sustaining research capacity. For example it would require changes to HR processes such as researcher recruitment and retention strategies, and to doctoral training and supervision.

### 4.3 – Strategy: New Research Themes

At present, the subjects and kinds of research taking place within the orbit of social design are limited to a few very specific areas. The following table sets out some potential new research themes, of varying breadth and focus, some of which may coincide with existing AHRC priorities. They are either:

- recommended as cases which may show how and where design can act as an interlocutor between other disciplines and approaches, or
- build on current UK HEI research strengths, or
- represent an area where there has been little work to date.

For each theme, we suggest a theoretical or conceptual research topic, a potential area of empirical or applied research, and possible collaborators.

Theme	Theoretical/conceptual research	Empirical/applied research	Potential collaborators
Impact	Conceptualising the impact of design-based approaches within policy contexts and between design and action	Designing and testing metrics systems and evaluation processes; understanding the impact of particular designs that have been developed that might be scaled	Nesta; ESRC
History	Understanding the instantiations of social design from historical perspectives	Identifying, documenting and communicating the diverse histories of design activism and social design	V&A; Design Museum; Oral History Society; University of Brighton Design Archives
Local/Central Government policy	How political theories and modes of governance contribute to and require different kinds of social designing	Scale, temporalities, accountabilities and governance of design-driven policy labs	ESRC; Local Government Association; MacArthur Foundation Network on Opening Governance
Participation and collaboration	The ethics and ontologies of participation and collaboration	Understanding the implications of different modes of participation and collaboration, including via digital networks	Local authorities; EPSRC; OpenIDEO; DESIS Network
The object of social design	Exploring approaches to designing for behaviour change and changes in social practices	Temporality and the objects of designing	ESRC

Theme	Theoretical/conceptual research	Empirical/applied research	Potential collaborators
Student and professional skills, knowledge and tools	Non HEI-based teaching and learning and curricula, professional identity formation	The generation of new approaches, methods and tools for designing around thematic knowledge	Local Government Association, Rockefeller Foundation, Nesta, Design Council; DESIS Network
Innovation management and entrepreneurship	Concepts and approaches to design for/with smart cities, open data, network governance and austerity	Early stage co-research and co-design with stakeholders, distributed participatory prototyping	Skoll Foundation; TSB; EPSRC; Social Innovation Exchange
Development and humanitarian aid	Challenging conceptualisations of development and evidence in social design	Design research in development contexts	UNIDIR/Policy Lab; DESIS Network; IDEO; Frog
Ageing	How ageing is understood and constituted through the design of services, policies, systems and products	Critical review of HEI design for ageing projects	ESRC; MRC; TSB
Criminal justice	Conceptualising deviance, marginality and difference in relation to the design of policies, systems, services and products	Design and its relationship to offending and prisoner behaviour	ESRC; Ministry of Justice

## 4.4 – Strategy: Interim Actions

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Social design is at a critical point. Strong growth in student demand, professional practice and interest among non-HEI stakeholders has meant that practice has outstripped research capacity. Further, government interest in the potential of design-based approaches to sit within policy-making and implementation puts pressure on it to perform successfully. This presents the AHRC with the challenge of mediating between the urgent requirement to build a strong research base while attending to the enormous potential to create positive social impact through knowledge transfer and co-creating new solutions to address contemporary issues.

There are several interim activities which should be invested in to drive this agenda. The aim should be to find a way to institutionalise and embed this research agenda and to further explore and realise its potential in collaboration with other stakeholders.

We recommend that the following activities happen within one year.

1. A research symposium to critically review the moment of social design research across disciplinary perspectives including sociology, policy studies, and healthcare and social care.
2. Produce research calls based on themes recommended in this report.
3. Set up working groups to further explore and shape the four infrastructure initiatives outlined in this report, to produce a roadmap to develop them along with a project plan and budget:
  - a) observatory;
  - b) communication platform and archive;
  - c) funding application;
  - d) pathways for career support.
4. Experiment with new kinds of collaboration between AHRC and other research councils and non-HEI bodies such as Nesta.
5. Create counterfactual case studies of completed research projects. This could take the form of speculative research to consider and evaluate how outcomes might have been different if methods and approaches drawing on social design had been adopted.

*In social design, we now have a broader sense of purpose and sense of capabilities of design but we don't have clarity about its financing and the ways of professionalising it as a process that someone will pay for and where it might be done and who might do it.*

– Katie Hill, AHRC Connected Communities Researcher,  
Sheffield Hallam University,  
interview 05/12/2013

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## Section Five

# Supporting Material

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## Appendix 1 – Interviews

Katie Crepeau	Design Affects	10/11/2013
Lee Davis	MICA Centre for Social Design	11/11/2013
Mary Rose Cook	Uscreates 13/11/2013	
Pelle Ehn and Anders Emilson	MEDEA, Malmö University	22/11/2013
Vinay Venkatraman	Leapcraft, Copenhagen	23/11/2013
Derek B Miller	Director of Policy Lab and Senior Fellow UN Institute for Disarmament Research	27/11/2013
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Ted Matthews	AHO Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Social Innovation Unit, Centre for Design Research	28/11/2013
Heidi Dolven and Siri Eggesvik	Norskform, Oslo	28/11/2013
Katie Hill	PhD Candidate, University of Brighton and Connected Communities and Connected Communities Researcher, Sheffield Hallam University	05/12/2013
Alison Thomson	PhD Candidate, Goldsmiths	06/12/2013
Leeor Levy	live work06/12/2013	
Sarah Mann	British Council	09/12/2013
Tom Farrand	Founding Partner of Swarm and Good for Nothing	10/12/2013
Marci Cooperman	IIT Institute of Design	10/12/2013
Alison Black and Sue Walker	Centre for Information Design Research, University of Reading	12/12/2013
Bas Raijmakers and Geke van Dijk	STBY 12/12/2013	
Rachel Pascual	Open Policymaking Team, Cabinet Office	13/12/2013
Eric Levine	Girl Hub, Nike Foundation	16/12/2013
Louise Armstrong	Forum for the Future	18/12/2013
Lorraine Gamman and Adam Thorpe	Design Against Crime Research Centre, UAL	19/12/2013

Haidee Bell	Nesta	19/12/2013
Melani Oliver	Innovation Lab, NESTA	10/01/2014
Jonty Oliff-Cooper	Independent	12/13/2014 & 10/01/2014
Noel Hatch	Research and Design Manager at Kent County Council	10/01/2014
Lynne Maher	Formerly NHS Innovation Unit	15/01/14
Mat Hunter, Ailbhe McNabola, Yvonne Harris	Design Council	17/01/2014
Ed Gardiner	Behavioural Design Lab, Warwick Business School/Design Council	17/01/2014
Nat Hunter	Co-Director of Design, Royal Society of Arts	23/01/2014
Claire Webb	Formerly Head of Strategy Southwark Council	23/01/2014
Andrea Siodmok	Head of Policy Lab, Cabinet Office	24/01/2014
James Duggan	Manchester Metropolitan University	03/02/2014
Tatjana Schneider	School of Architecture, University of Sheffield	07/02/2014
Sarah Drummond	Snook, Glasgow	24/02/2014
Satu Miettinen and delegation	Lapland University	19/03/2014
Sevra Davis	RSA Student design awards manager	25/03/2014
Ezio Manzini	Politecnico di Milano, International Co-Ordinator, DESIS	07/04/2014
Owen Jarvis	Clore Social Leadership Fellow	12/04/2014
Alison Prendiville	Course Leader MDes Service Design Innovation, LCC	14/04/2014
Natasha Reid	Architect, London	14/04/2014
Martin Roach	Designer, Epitype, London	23/04/2014
Sarah Wigglesworth	University of Sheffield, Architect	05/05/2014
Javier Aguirre Ramos	Universidad ICESI, Cali, Colombia	08/07/2014

## Appendix 2 – Attendance

Date	We Attended	Not Attended
November 2013	DESIS Workshop, Camden Council Social Design Talk 13, Thomas Markussen. UAL Desis Lab	SDN Global 2013, Cardiff
December 2013	Book launch: Design Transitions, London	
January 2014	'Designing Publics, Publics Designing. Design Roles in Social Innovation', Stockholm Social Design Talk 14 Vinay Venkatraman, V&A Museum	
February 2014	'The Value of Design', AHRC/Glasgow School of Art	
March 2014	Region27e Seminar, Innovation Unit Social Design Talk 15: Bo Reimer, V&A Museum	Global Service Jam 2014
April 2014	Social Design Talk 16: Nesta/STBY/ Quicksand Toolkit, CSM, UAL	ServDes Conference 2014, Lancaster
May 2014	Encouraging Design Driven Public Sector Society of Turkish Design Historians: 'Resistance'. 'Exploring the total beauty of sustainable design', University of Southern Denmark	'New Public Goods: Labs, Publics and Practices', New York  'Labs for Systems Change', Toronto  'Designed to Improve', HafenCity University, Hamburg
June 2014	Inventing the Social, CSISP, Goldsmiths, London	DMY International Design Festival, 'Social Design Focus', Berlin  'Design with All, Participatory Methods for Social Inclusion', Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design, Denmark

## Appendix 3 – Workshops

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### Practitioner Workshop

Innovation Unit, London, 27 Feb, 2014, 1400-1600h

#### Participants

Joel Bailey	Director of Service and Experience Design, Capita.
Aviv Katz	Partner and Co-Head of Service Design, Innovation Unit
Megha Wadhawan	Design Research Assistant, STBY, London.
Leeor Levy	Senior Service Designer and Project Lead, live work, London.
Joseph Smith	Designer, Makerversity.
Kate Burn,	Service Development Lead, Participle.
Mary Rose Cooke	Co-Founder and Managing Director, UsCreates.
Catherine Greig	Architect, MakeGood

### Expert Workshop

Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Monday 2 June, 2014, 0930-1730h

#### Participants

*Lee Davis	Scholar-in-Residence, Maryland Institute College of Art
James Duggan	Research Assistant, Manchester Metropolitan University
Lorraine Gamman	Professor of Product and Spatial Design, Central St Martins, University of the Arts London
Joe Harrington	Partner and Co-Head of Service Design, Innovation Unit
*Sabine Junginger	Associate Professor, Kolding School of Design, Denmark
*Peter Lloyd	Professor of Design, University of Brighton
Ezio Manzini	Professor of Design Politecnico di Milano, Visiting Professor Central St Martins, University of the Arts London
*Daniella Sangiorgi	Senior Lecturer, Service Design, University of Lancaster
Adam Thorpe	Creative Director of Design Against Crime Research Centre, Central St Martins, University of the Arts London
Cameron Tonkinwise	Director of Design Studies, Carnegie Mellon University

Note-taker: Lilian Sanchez Moreno, Visiting MA Student, University  
of Brighton/Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

*\*denotes Advisory Group member. Other members, Pelle Ehn, MEDEA, Malmo University and Gordon Hush, Glasgow School  
of Art were unable to attend the workshop.*

## Appendix 4 – Speculative Brief Contributors

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### Speculative Digital Research published on [mappingsocialdesign.org](http://mappingsocialdesign.org)

Andrea Botero	Aalto University, Helsinki
Joanna Saad-Sulonen	
Mariana Salgado	
Heath Bunting	Artist, Irrational.org
Cara Courage	PhD candidate University of Brighton
Sarah Desmaris	PhD candidate, Falmouth University
Heidi Dolven	Advisor, Norwegian Centre for Design and Architecture (NorskForm)
Ted Matthews	PhD Fellow Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO)
Adrian Paulsen	Lecturer AHO
Fiona Hackney	Associate Professor, Design Cultures and Community Engagement, Falmouth University
Cigdem Kaya	Associate Professor of Design and Design Research, Istanbul Technical University
María del Carmen Lamadrid	Design Researcher at LA-Más
Daniel Olmos	PhD candidate sociology University of California, Santa Barbara
Maria Prestes Joly	Federal University of Rio de Janeiro
Kakee Scott	Lecturer in Strategic Design and Management, Parsons The New School of Design, New York
Yifan Zhang	Shanghai
Wezeit Editorial Team	



## Appendix 5 – Timeline of related initiatives, 2005-13

	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Conferences, networks and seminars</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and the Social Sciences seminar series, Centre for the Study of Invention and Social Process, Goldsmiths, London.</li> <li>• Emergency Service Design Conference organised by Carnegie Mellon University.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rockefeller Bellagio symposium on design for social impact.</li> <li>• Changing the Change, Torino.</li> <li>• Better world by Design, Rhode Island (USA).</li> <li>• Service Design Network Conference, Amsterdam.</li> <li>• Service Design Network (SDN) UK.</li> </ul>
<b>University courses and research networks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design Against Crime Research Centre, UAL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illinois Institute of Technology launches dual Master of Design and MBA</li> <li>• MBA Design Elective, Said Business School, Oxford.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Design Leadership program, Oslo School of Architecture and Design</li> <li>• MBA Design Strategy, California College of the Arts</li> <li>• Agency, Architectural Research Centre, University of Sheffield.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing out Medical Error, Helen Hamlyn, RCA</li> <li>• Design London (RCA-Imperial): MA Innovation Management.</li> <li>• MA Innovation Management, Central Saint Martins, UAL</li> </ul>
<b>Policy initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MaRS Solutions Lab, Toronto, (Canada).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Innovation Lab for Kent SILK, (UK)</li> <li>• Design Council RED project ends (UK)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation Unit (UK).</li> <li>• GoodLab, Hong Kong.</li> <li>• Mindlab (Denmark) expands role.</li> <li>• DOTT 07: Design Council and Northumbria University School of Design.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• La 27e Region, (France).</li> </ul>
<b>Design consultancies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uscreates (UK)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leeds Love it Share It, (UK).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Futuregov (UK).</li> <li>• Project H (USA).</li> </ul>

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ServDes Conference, Oslo.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSE and UK Design Council Public Policy seminar series.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHS: Design Activism and Social Change, Barcelona</li> <li>• Participation Innovation Conference, (PINC), Denmark.</li> <li>• Global Service Jam.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Design Talks (V&amp;A).</li> <li>• Social Impact Design Summit, Cooper Hewitt Museum.</li> <li>• Global Service Jam.</li> <li>• ServDes conference as part of World Design Capital Helsinki.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DN Global Conference, Cardiff.</li> <li>• Social Innovation Camp (UK)</li> <li>• Designing Publics, Publics Designing Conference, Stockholm.</li> <li>• Global Service Jam.</li> <li>• Social Design Talks, (UAL/V&amp;A)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stanford Change Labs</li> <li>• RCA Helen Hamlyn Student Program</li> <li>• MEDEA: Design Led Research Centre for Collaborative Media at Malmo University</li> <li>• Design Innovation MA Glasgow School of Art</li> <li>• Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability (DESIS) network.</li> <li>• LCC MDes Innovation and Creativity in Industry.</li> <li>• Design and Rehabilitation Initiative, RSA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MA Social Design at Maryland Institute of Art, Baltimore</li> <li>• MFA Transdisciplinary Design at Parsons, NY</li> <li>• Behavioural Design Lab, Warwick Business School and Design Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MFA Design for Social Innovation at School of Visual Arts, NYC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MA Design for Services at DJCAD, Dundee</li> <li>• LCC change name from MDes Innovation and Creativity in Industry to MDes Service Design Innovation.</li> <li>• MA Service Design RCA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA/MDes Design Futures, University of Brighton,</li> <li>• Institute of Design Innovation, Glasgow School of Art</li> <li>• Servicedesignresearch.com</li> <li>• Masters in Service and Experience Design Domus Academy</li> <li>• Masters in Public Policy (MPP) at Cambridge University</li> <li>• California College of the Arts MBA in Public Policy Design and MBA in Strategic Insight</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) (Australia).</li> <li>• NESTA Innovation Lab (UK)</li> <li>• DOTTO7 Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Design Council, University College Falmouth and Technology Strategy Board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Society program (UK)</li> <li>• Open Government License (UK)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Localism Act</li> <li>• Young Foundation appoints Head of Social Design</li> <li>• Public Policy Lab New York.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design.gov.au</li> <li>• Human Experience Lab, (Singapore)</li> <li>• NESTA innovation in Giving Fund</li> <li>• Design Commission enquiry into design for public services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre for Social Action -- NESTA and Gov.UK</li> <li>• Design without Borders becomes independent NGO, (Norway).</li> <li>• Laboratorio para la ciudad, Mexico.</li> <li>• Plans set for Cabinet Office Policy Unit</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snook (UK)</li> <li>• Free Design Clinic (USA)</li> <li>• Participle (UK).</li> <li>• Sidekick Studios (UK).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IDEO.org</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Lab, Oslo.</li> <li>• AIGA Design for Good (USA)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design Affects (UK)</li> <li>• American Institute of Architects (AIA) launches Public Interest Design</li> <li>• OpenIDEO web platform</li> </ul>

## Appendix 6 – Social Innovation Labs and Policy Design Labs Worldwide

Name and Location	Goal	Founded
Design for Change Centre, Stanford, USA.	Aimed at 'directing design thinking towards creating new strategic paradigms that bring about rapid change in some of the larger problems facing mankind including energy, climate change, water and global health'. <a href="https://web.stanford.edu/group/designforchange/index.html">https://web.stanford.edu/group/designforchange/index.html</a>	2009
SociaLab, Chile.	'Seeks solutions to the major problems that affect the most vulnerable and least opportunities of the world people. To identify opportunities that social entrepreneurship and pose challenges for those wishing to submit proposals to take charge of solving them'. <a href="http://www.socialab.com/">http://www.socialab.com/</a>	2012
Kennisland, The Netherlands	An independent think tank with a public mission focusing on social innovation in education, government, heritage, creative economy and culture. <a href="http://www.kennisland.nl/en/about-kennisland">http://www.kennisland.nl/en/about-kennisland</a>	1999
Mind Lab, Copenhagen, Denmark.	'A cross-governmental innovation unit which involves citizens and businesses in creating new solutions for society'. <a href="http://www.mind-lab.dk/en">http://www.mind-lab.dk/en</a>	2002
Institute Without Boundaries, Toronto, Canada.	An 'educational program and studio that works towards collaborative design action and seeks to achieve social, ecological and economic innovation'. <a href="http://www.institutewithoutboundaries.com/">http://www.institutewithoutboundaries.com/</a>	2003
Social Innovation Labs (SILs) at the Organisation for Awareness of Integrated Social Security, (OASiS), India.	Labs across India addressing problems in the areas of disability, social security, urban education, rural education and volunteering.	2003
MaRS Solution Lab, Toronto, Canada.	'Driving economic and social prosperity by harnessing the full potential of innovation'. <a href="http://www.marsdd.com/systems-change/mars-solutions-lab/mars-solutions-lab-approach/">http://www.marsdd.com/systems-change/mars-solutions-lab/mars-solutions-lab-approach/</a>	2005
Lien Centre for Social Innovation, Singapore.	Partnership between the Lien Foundation and Singapore Management University to 'advance thinking and capacity of the social sector'. <a href="http://centres.smu.edu.sg/lien/">http://centres.smu.edu.sg/lien/</a>	2006

Innovation Unit, UK.	Not-for-profit social enterprise committed to ‘using the power of innovation to solve social challenges’. <a href="http://www.innovationunit.org/">http://www.innovationunit.org/</a>	2006
DESIS Labs: Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China (x7), Colombia (x2), Denmark, France, India, Italy, Japan (x3), Kenya, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden (x2), Turkey, UK (x4), Brasil (x3), South Korea (x2), USA (X4)	‘Groups of professors, researchers and students who orient their design and research activities towards social innovation. They can operate at the local scale with local partners and, in collaboration with other DESIS Labs, they can also engage in regional and global large-scale projects and programs. They are based in Design Schools and design-oriented universities and can be extensions of already existing entities or new, specifically established ones’. <a href="http://www.desis-network.org/">http://www.desis-network.org/</a>	2006
Good Lab, Hong Kong.	‘Facilitating cross sector collaborations and setting up of entrepreneurial ventures and projects that bring new solutions to social problems’. <a href="http://goodlab.hk/">http://goodlab.hk/</a>	2007
Social Innovation Lab for Kent (SILK), UK	The Social Innovation Lab for Kent (SILK) was set up ‘to provide a creative environment for a wide range of people to work together on some of the toughest challenges the county faces. And by drawing upon best practice from business, design and social science, as well as our own experiences in Kent’. <a href="http://socialinnovation.typepad.com/silk/">http://socialinnovation.typepad.com/silk/</a>	2007
Helsinki Design Lab (HDL)	Helsinki Design Lab ‘helped government leaders see the “architecture of problems’, by assisting decision-makers to view challenges from a big-picture perspective, and provide guidance toward more complete solutions that consider all aspects of a problem’. <a href="http://www.helsinkidesignlab.org/">http://www.helsinkidesignlab.org/</a>	2008-13
La 27e Region, France	A ‘laboratory for new public policies in the digital age’ <a href="http://blog.la27eregion.fr/">http://blog.la27eregion.fr/</a>	2008
The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, (TACSI), Australia.	Innovation lab ‘tackling Australia’s tough social challenges’. <a href="http://www.tacsi.org.au/">http://www.tacsi.org.au/</a>	2009
Nesta Innovation Lab, UK.	Works with innovators in government, public services, civil society and business ‘to develop radical new responses to some of the most pressing social and economic challenges’.	2009
I-Zone, New York, USA.	A community of schools committed to ‘personalizing learning environments to accelerate college and career readiness for students’. <a href="http://izonenyc.org/">http://izonenyc.org/</a>	2010

The Studio, Dublin, Ireland.	The Studio is an 'innovation team of seven people from different areas of Dublin City Council and with skills that include planning, architecture, area management, community development, risk management, communications and marketing.' It aims 'to grow DCC's capacity to innovate and improve the quality of services. <a href="http://thestudiodcc.com/">http://thestudiodcc.com/</a>	2010
Unicef Innovation Labs: Kosovo, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Copenhagen.	Founded to reach out to help vulnerable communities and families, the unicef lab is 'a space and set of protocols for engaging young people, technologists, private sector, and civil society in problem-solving'. <a href="http://unicefinnovation.org/">http://unicefinnovation.org/</a>	2010
Brac Social Innovation Labs, India.	Aim to build a space for learning, capacity and innovation all across India. <a href="http://www.brac.net/content/social-innovation-lab#.U8UFvPldV8E">http://www.brac.net/content/social-innovation-lab#.U8UFvPldV8E</a>	2011
Public Policy Lab, New York, USA.	The Public Policy Lab 'helps Americans build better lives by improving the design and delivery of public services'. It is a not-for-profit organization. <a href="http://publicpolicylab.org/">http://publicpolicylab.org/</a>	2011
The Human Experience Lab (THE), Singapore.	'Helps Singapore's public agencies design and develop public policies, services and experiences that are more human-centred'.	2012
DesignGov, Australian Public Service.	An 18 month experimental pilot to 'meet the challenges of delivering innovative, practical solutions to today's complex problems and to explore new methods in solution formulation, development and delivery'. <a href="http://design.gov.au/">http://design.gov.au/</a>	2012
The Office for Personnel Management (OPM) Innovation Lab, USA.	'A distinct physical space with a set of policies for engaging people and using technology in problem solving. The goals of OPM's innovation lab are to provide federal workers with 21st century skills in design-led innovation, such as intelligent risk-taking to develop new services, products, and processes'.	2012
New Urban Mechanics, Boston and Philadelphia, USA.	'Collaborating with Boston residents and organizations to deliver a new generation of civic services'. <a href="http://www.newurbanmechanics.org/">http://www.newurbanmechanics.org/</a>	2012
Innovate SF, San Francisco, USA.	'To create an environment that allows innovation to flourish in City Hall'. <a href="http://innovatesf.com/">http://innovatesf.com/</a>	2012

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GovLab, USA	'Founded in 2012, with funding from the MacArthur and Knight Foundations, the Governance Lab (the GovLab) brings together thinkers and doers who design, implement, and study technology enabled solutions that advance a collaborative, networked approach to reinvent institutions of governance. The GovLab aims to improve people's lives by changing how we govern'. <a href="http://thegovlab.org/">http://thegovlab.org/</a>	2012
Behavioural Design Lab: Warwick Business School and Design Council, (UK)	Aims to unite behavioural science and design-thinking to solve society's biggest issues.	2012
Laboratorio para la ciudad, Mexico	'Creates dialogue and complicity between government, civil society, private sector and NGOs in order to reinvent a whole, some areas of city and government'.	2013
InWithForward, Rotterdam, The Netherlands	'We like to build teams in homes, neighborhoods and systems with people, professionals, and policymakers. To make, test, and realize interventions that get to the bottom of social challenges and move lives forward'. <a href="http://inwithforward.com/">http://inwithforward.com/</a>	2013
Policy Lab, Cabinet Office, UK.	Works with policy teams to test how design principles and methods can improve the 'pace, quality and deliverability of policy in the Civil Service'.	2014
Innovation Laboratory, Northern Ireland, UK.	'The first Innovation Laboratory project, which will be undertaken in conjunction with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, will focus on the operation of Regulatory Impact Assessments, and will consider how these can be made more effective in delivering a robust assessment of the regulatory impact on businesses'.	Due 2014

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## Appendix 7 – Speculative CVs for 2030

### CV posted on Research-Link, 2030

Name	Parveen S.
Location	Mumbai/Lancaster
Last updated	December 2029

#### About me

I'm a researcher who brings academic rigour to the early stages of social innovation projects, and real world impact to academic research.

#### Looking for

Qualitative research opportunities within social care and public sector innovation, with a particular focus services for older people in poor, rural contexts in the Global South. I've recently started a PhD-by-practice and am looking for projects to use as part of my comparative study about designing elder care in India, the US and Thailand.

#### Project contributions

- I helped Maharashtra State's Social Care Team develop its strategy for designing and delivering older people's care services. (11 recommendations, 2 academic papers, 3 reports).
- I am a trainer, reviewer and mentor for the SIX Social Innovation Academy's Accelerator Programme. (21 recommendations)

#### My research outputs and publications

2028	Conference paper: Co-designing care in multi-lingual and non-literate contexts. Care Management Conference, Sydney.
2027	Conference paper: Participation frameworks for the rural poor. Elder Care Innovation Conference, New York.
2026	Video paper: Designing services for visually-impaired people in rural India. Video article in Social Service Innovation Review. (4 citations, 2 recommendations, 214 embeds).
2025	Panel discussion. Elder Care Innovation Conference, Singapore.
2024	Conference paper: Participatory social care design in low-literacy contexts. Participatory Design Conference, Bangalore.

#### My education

2016-2020	BSc Social Work, University of Mumbai with one year work placement in rural India and an exchange at Stanford.
2021-2023	MA Service Design at RCA, London.
2024-2028	SIX Academy professional modules on qualitative research for innovation, co-research and co-design.
2029-	Lancaster University. PhD in Design Policy. Distance learning/practice based.

#### Research appointments

2026-2028	Indian Social Research Institute. Frugal Innovation Fellowship.
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## CV posted on Research-Link, 2030

Name Laura P.  
Location Brazil/UK  
Last updated April 2030

### About me

Media editor 10%      Shared child-care 30%      Social design researcher 60%

### My education

2014-2017 BA Media Design. PUC-Rio. Brazil  
2019-2020 MSc Climate Change and Policy, Sussex University, UK  
2022-2025 PhD Distributed Sharing Services. UCL. UK.

### Project contributions

- I helped design and set up a new car sharing service launched in Rio in 2017. My role was user interface design and user research. (114 recommendations, 3667 embeds, 3 films).
- I contributed to the behavioural change framework that underpins the Social Investment Seed Fund, against which its investments are rated. (21 citations, 3 recommendations, 2 reports).
- I helped research and design a new climate change curriculum for primary schools in the UK. (19 citations, 2 films, 1 report, 2871 embeds).

### My research outputs and publications

Films Car sharing in Rio (2017)  
Climate change for primary education (2020).

Reports Get them early, get them for life. Behaviour change at primary school. (2023)

Academic papers 2024. Conference paper: Frameworks for understanding sharing services and behaviour change. Behaviour and Policy Transitions Conference, London.  
2023. Journal paper: A literature review on sharing services. Design Issues.  
2021. Conference paper: A socio-cultural lens on sharing services. ServDes Conference, Stockholm.

Book Forthcoming, 2026. Designing for sharing services. Sage.

### Employment

Arup Transport Services, UK. (2027-)  
Department of Transport, UK. (2025-2027)  
Social Investment Seed Fund. Analyst. (2020-22)  
ZipCar (Europe). Consultancy. (2023-25)  
Rio CarSharers Service. User researcher (2025-2017). Advisory board. (2021-).

## CV posted on Research-Link, 2030

Name	Mario R.
Location	UK/Sweden
Last updated	April 2030

## About me

Researcher in place-based social innovation, with a specialism in digital systems design.

## My interests

How to create digital ecosystems that nurture inter-personal relationships and support well-being.

## Project contributions

Field 1	Participated in the design of a new digitally-enabled system that supported Digital systems design social cohesion in urban neighbourhoods.
Field 2	Design researcher in the Milano Living Lab Consortium involved in creating scenarios Place-based innovation for future community interactions, budgeting and decision-making processes and community action

## Education

2014-2017	BA Digital interaction design. Plymouth University
2020-2022	MA Communication Design. Central Saint Martins, UAL
2023-2027	PhD Digital Social Design. Politecnico di Milano

## Research appointments

2017-2020	Accenture Interactive, digital designer.
2019-2020	Digital research fellow. Sheffield School of Architecture.
2027-2030	Post-doctoral research fellow, Living Lab, Malmo University working on the European Framework 25 funded project Places and Well-being Programme

## Outputs

Contributions to open source code sites.  
 Blog posts.  
 Journal articles in HCI and computing journals.  
 Conference papers at HCI and services science conferences.  
 Book chapters.

## CV posted on Research-Link, 2030

Name Rebeca J.  
Location UK  
Last updated July 2030

### About me

Sociology teacher Doctoral student  
70% 30%

### Education

2014-2017 BA Management and Design Culture, London College of Communication 2019-2020 MSc Inventive Methods, Goldsmiths, University of London  
2021- PhD candidate 'Anarcho-Materialist Philosophy, Micro-Devices and the Failure of Behaviour Change Politics', UniM-62 Social Innovation Network in collaboration with the Ridings Regional Government, Design Citizenship Dept.

### Projects

- I helped design and set up a new car sharing service launched in Rio in 2017. My role was user interface design and user research. (114 recommendations, 3667 embeds, 3 films).
- I contributed to the behavioural change framework that underpins the Social Investment Seed Fund, against which its investments are rated. (21 citations, 3 recommendations, 2 reports).
- I helped research and design a new climate change curriculum for primary schools in the UK. (19 citations, 2 films, 1 report, 2871 embeds).

### My research outputs and publications

I help run an alternative social centre and community action hub in Huddersfield, exchanging citizen-research, knowledge, skills and tools with similar organisations in the M62 region.  
I convene the Ridings Philosophy-in-Action Salon.

### Employment

2025-9 West Park Comprehensive, Huddersfield, subject leader for A-Level Social Innovation and Local Politics (part-time)

### Looking for

Collaborators to help create an online historical map of the individuals, institutions and corporations through the rise and decline of design activism and social design, 2005-2020. I'm particularly interested in understanding the dynamics of their agglomeration and dissipation and how their politics and networks might be revived

## Research Team

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### Professor Guy Julier (Principal Investigator)

Guy Julier is Professor of Design Culture and the University of Brighton/Victoria & Albert Museum Principal Research Fellow in Contemporary Design and Visiting Professor at the University of Southern Denmark. Previously, he directed DesignLeeds, a research and consultancy unit at Leeds Metropolitan University specializing in community projects, sustainability and regeneration. Guy is the author of several books including *The Culture of Design* (3rd revised edition 2013) and is co-editor of *Design and Creativity: Policy, Management and Practice* (2009).

g.julier@vam.ac.uk

### Dr Lucy Kimbell (Co-Investigator)

Lucy Kimbell is a designer, researcher and educator. She is Associate Fellow at Said Business School, University of Oxford, and Principal Research Fellow at the University of Brighton and at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. Lucy has published on design thinking and service design. She was previously Head of Social Design at The Young Foundation where she developed the organisation's internal design capability. Her PhD at Lancaster University developed an inventive practice perspective on design for services and design for social innovation. Lucy is the author of *The Service Innovation Handbook* (forthcoming 2014).

hello@lucykimbell.com

### Jocelyn Bailey (Researcher)

Jocelyn Bailey is a researcher and consultant in the design and creative industries sector. Whilst at Westminster think tank Policy Connect, she worked closely with Parliamentarians and the design community to develop ideas around design policy, including writing the Design Commission report 'Restarting Britain 2: Design and Public Services'. Alongside the Mapping Social Design Research and Practice project, she has more recently been working for BOP Consulting, with a range of clients in the creative and cultural sectors. In the autumn Jocelyn will commence a PhD at the University of Brighton looking at the political implications of design entering into matters of politics and governance.

joss.bailey@gmail.com

### Dr Leah Armstrong (Research Assistant)

Leah Armstrong is Research Officer at the Victoria and Albert Museum and University of Brighton. In April 2014, she completed an AHRC Funded Collaborative Doctoral Award PhD with the University of Brighton Design Archives and the Chartered Society of Designers, which examined the structure, organisation and identity of the design profession in Britain, 1930-2010.

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*Leah Armstrong*

*Jocelyn Bailey*

*Guy Julier*

*Lucy Kimbell*

– London, July 2014

In the UK, and globally, we are currently witnessing a 'social design' moment.

This has emerged from the confluence of several factors including the increasing visibility of strategic design or design thinking, social innovation and entrepreneurship, austerity politics and policy shifts towards open or networked governance.

This report was commissioned by the AHRC to help guide its future plans for supporting design research, one of the Council's priority areas.

It presents the findings of a 9-month study of opportunities and challenges for research in social design.



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