

Design with/and/for Value

NATALIA GULBRANSEN-DIAZ

A thesis submitted to fulfil the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Architecture, Design and Planning
The University of Sydney



2025

DESIGN artefacts, tools, services,
systems, and strategies

WITH people, communities, actors,
organisations, and publics

AND practices, approaches,
frameworks, and theories

FOR the articulation, exploration,
cultivation and negotiation of

VALUE and other ways of caring,
and acting in the world.

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Design with/and/for Value

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

AI USE DECLARATION

Generative AI (specifically ChatGPT) was used to assist with the proofreading and copyediting of this thesis. The AI was provided a copy of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (IPEd) to inform its suggestions. All writing, illustrations, research design, intellectual content, and substantive revisions were produced by the PhD candidate with the support of their supervision team.

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SUPPORT

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.

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AUTHOR ATTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The final draft of this thesis was proofread by Amelia Willis who corrected typographical errors, grammatical mistakes and punctuation.

The final formatting of this thesis was made possible with the support of Edward Wyburn and Jesse Morris. Both of whom assisted in developing and customising the Overleaf template used throughout and resolved many of the compilation issues.

The publications listed below have been included in this thesis as separate chapters, following the University of Sydney's policies for a thesis including publications.¹ Each publication makes a research contribution in its own right and comes with its individual subsections of related work, methodology, findings, discussion and conclusions. Below, an authorship attribution statement is included for each respective publication.

In order to capture the contribution from myself as well as my co-authors, I chose to use the first person plural throughout these specific chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 4 of this thesis has been published as Gulbransen-Diaz, N., and Hepburn, L. (2024) Grand narratives of Value and their relationship with design, in Gray, C., Ciliotta Chehade, E., Hekkert, P., Forlano, L., Ciuccarelli, P., Lloyd, P. (eds), *DRS2024: Boston*, 23–28 June, Boston, USA.

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This paper was co-authored with Associate Professor Leigh-Anne Hepburn as part of my doctoral research. I was responsible for the conceptual framing,

1. <https://www.sydney.edu.au/research/graduate-research/current-students/thesis-and-examination/preparing-your-thesis.html#structure>, accessed June 2025

argument development, and writing. Leigh-Anne provided supervisory support, including feedback on framing and critical review of draft manuscripts.

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This paper was co-authored with Dr Erez Nusem as part of my doctoral research. I was responsible for the literature review, data collection, data analysis, conceptual framing, and writing. Erez contributed to conceptual framing, supported the structure of the literature review, refined data synthesis, and reviewed drafts.

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This paper was co-authored with Dr Clare Cooper and Associate Professor Leigh-Anne Hepburn as part of my doctoral research. I led the study design, fieldwork, data analysis, and writing. Clare assisted in establishing partnerships with NPOs, supported the design work and development of visualisations,

and reviewed drafts. Leigh-Anne contributed to data analysis, argument refinement, and provided feedback on draft manuscripts.

Supervisor Declaration

As supervisor for the candidature upon which this thesis is based, I can confirm that the authorship attribution statements above are correct.

Signature:

Name: Leigh-Anne Hepburn

Date: 30/06/2025

For my dad, Bill Gulbransen (1944–2024).

Dad, I love you for being as steady and true as the earth beneath my feet. I love you for every hug that always felt like coming home.

I love you for showing me what devotion looks like – the quiet hours of dusk and the patient rhythm of changing seasons.

I love you for your calloused hands that were so gentle when you held mine as I learnt to walk and to find my own way in the world.

I love you for teaching me that good work, like good soil, requires patience and tender care.

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I love you, Dad, for making me who I am – a dairy farmer’s kid who learnt to look for the stars and became confident enough to reach for them. I love you for making me someone who has always known the invaluable worth of a father’s unchanging love.

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The figure of ‘The Great Man’ is so often imagined as if he were never a child, as if he never reached for another’s hand to balance, never needed to be fed, warmed, taught or soothed. That fantasy of the fully formed, fully capable self is seductive and a temptation I once looked towards. But it is also a lie.

This PhD has been a long and humbling reminder that I did not spring up from nowhere – I was not forged in solitude. I have been carried, accompanied, and made possible by others.

Throughout this work, I have been sheltered in homes that made space for me to unfold and in rooms that encouraged me to grow. I have been fed meals by friends who enjoy the kitchen far more than I do and been nourished by their words of love and support. I have been guided by those who asked better questions, or simply listened at the right time, and challenged by critique offered in good faith and by the discomfort that often precedes growth. I have been steadied by emails, hugs, deadlines, detours, and the encouragement of so many. I have been held in grief and in joy.

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KEYWORDS

design, design practice, value, social design, non-profit organisations

ABSTRACT

Design is increasingly applied across government, business, and policy domains as a means of responding to social and economic challenges. While its strategic potential is celebrated, less attention has been given to understanding how design might support non-profit organisations (NPOs) to achieve their intended visions. This doctoral research explores how design can support Australian non-profit organisations in their pursuit of value – the realisation of their collective ambitions in practice, often shaped by multiple voices, shifting priorities, and layered definitions of success.

Combining theoretical inquiry with practice-led research, this work explores both how value is conceptualised and how it plays out in real-world collaborations. A series of design engagements with non-profit organisations serve as sites of exploration, providing insight into how designers can work with – and within – existing non-profit organisational practices. The research pays particular attention to the conditions, relationships, and design modes that enable design intent to be generative rather than extractive.

The thesis makes two central contributions. First, it develops a critical understanding of value in relation to design praxis – an offering informed by real-world applications and braced by theory. Second, it demonstrates designerly ways of engaging with non-profit organisations that are responsive, situated, and aligned with the evolving needs of non-profit practice. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing conversations about design's role in community and public life – not only as a set of tools or methods, but as a practice of sustaining hope, making space for uncertainty, and imagining more generous futures into being.

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INTERLUDE I: *ON* *BEGINNINGS*

Hello Reader.

What you're holding is a doctoral thesis – but think of it, too, as a voyage.

Some parts of this path are carefully laid. Others meander, loop back on themselves, or blur into the terrain around them. Like any real expedition, it has mess: seams and rips where uncertainty and courage take turns to shine through. It also has drive, a willingness to press forward even when the course is uncertain.

As we move through this work, you'll notice two kinds of pages.

The white pages belong to the ivory towers of academic tradition: denser, more structured, more pointed. They are where I build the formal arguments this thesis demands.

But every tower starts somewhere. The green pages, the *Interludes*, represent the earth beneath my feet as I have written this thesis. They reflect my less polished but more personal position and thinking that made this entire research project possible.

You can think of these *Interludes* as waypoints or rest stops – moments where I step out from behind Natalia the Researcher, Natalia the Designer, Natalia the Student, and meet you as Ordinary Natalia. Within the green, I can speak plainly. I can reflect, guide, and reorient us.

So, when you make it to a green page, congratulations. You've slipped out of the formal frame. You're somewhere quieter, where I can point out landmarks, warn you about the rougher patches ahead, or simply remind

you why we're walking this way. We're going to journey through this together – me and you, Reader.

In the pages ahead, you'll find the formal Introduction, charting of the terrain we're about to cross. Then, a review of the broader context: the shifting landscapes of design, value, and the non-profit sector. And finally, you will reach a laying down of the methodological ground we'll travel across.

So: take a breath, turn the page, and dive in with me.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

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1.1

RESEARCH ARGUMENT

To pursue value is not simply to seek a return – it is to declare something worth doing, holding, sustaining.

As designers, we are frequently in the business of creating, delivering, and measuring value. But rarely do we have the time, desire or power to ask what value actually is, or whose version counts. This thesis takes these questions seriously. It examines design as a relational and social practice, one increasingly celebrated in for-profit contexts for its capacity to drive innovation and economic growth. It argues that this framing, though dominant, is not inevitable. Central to this work is the drive to uncover other ways of understanding what design can do – and other kinds of value it can serve.

This thesis travels across shifting conceptual and practical ground. It begins with the understanding that ‘value’ is not a neutral or settled term, but a site of tension, negotiation, and belief. Nowhere is this more visible than in the work of Australian non-profit organisations (NPOs), where definitions of value are rarely stable, and where articulating impact is often more political than procedural. These organisations, diverse in form and intention, navigate daily pressures to justify their work across economic, ethical, and community-led logics. While socially oriented design practices such as co-design and service design have flourished in adjacent fields, the application of design to the non-profit sector – as a whole – remains under explored¹.

This thesis sets out to investigate that space. It explores how design might assist Australian non-profit organisations in their pursuit of value – not by offering solutions, but by asking different questions. In doing so, it positions design not only as a mode of production, but as a form of inquiry: a way

1. In the non-profit sector, design is usually applied to create or improve specific services (Lemons et al., 2024), experiences (Moulder et al., 2014), or other tangible outputs. Far less attention has been given to how design might support an organisation’s more intangible aims – particularly its pursuit and articulation of value.

of navigating ambiguity, translating between stakeholders, and reimagining what is possible in contexts that often defy standardisation.

The research is guided by three core questions:

- What are the prevalent conceptualisations of value in NPO literature?
- What are the opportunities for design to contribute to value in NPOs?
- What are the practice-based experiences of designers engaging with NPOs for value creation?

These questions emerge from a belief that value is not simply a metric to be captured, but a social and political force that shapes individual and organisational life. This thesis seeks not to define value in absolute terms, but to understand how it is felt, narrated, and acted upon – especially in spaces where stakes are high, resources are thin, and outcomes are not easily measured.

1.2

RESEARCH SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The scope of this research encompasses a wide range of Australian NPOs – from grassroots collectives to national charities. It includes organisations working in women’s health and safety, community justice, and the creative arts, while intentionally excluding social enterprises whose structures rely heavily on business-like models. These boundaries are drawn to focus attention on organisations animated by less tangible and coherent value, such as care, justice, equity, and cultural expression.

This study readily embraces the breadth of its field of study². First, references to design in this work are not limited to a single domain or mode of practice (i.e. user experience design, interaction design, co-design, communication design, service design, or more speculative or emergent forms of practice, etc.). Instead, design is positioned as both a conceptual lens and a practical method that can support organisations to navigate ambiguity, translate between stakeholders, and reimagine work in generative ways. I aim to treat design not as a fixed discipline but as a set of creative, strategic, and relational practices understood by their capacity to shape narratives, build relationships, and make space for different ways of knowing and acting. Second, the notion of value explored here is intentionally left open. As previously suggested, rather than defining value in singular terms, this research seeks to understand how value is felt, narrated, and acted upon – especially when it cannot be easily measured. Third, it engages a gamut of Australian NPOs, across a broad range of sectors (e.g., health, legal justice, community justice, education, religion, animal rights, environmental care, aged care) and organisational sizes (small, medium, large).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to reorient design. At a time when design is increasingly aligned with innovation and commercial growth, this research serves as a reminder that design, too, can be in service of community. By working with and alongside non-profit organisations, this work amplifies design’s potential to act not as an extractive force, but as a strategic and relational partner in shaping more just, imaginative futures. This research speaks to both designers and non-profit leaders, offering language, frameworks, and reflections that might help build stronger bridges between the two.

This inquiry is made possible through the sustained, critical, and creative space that a doctoral study affords. Unlike time-bound consultancy or applied research initiatives, the structure of a doctoral study allows for extended engagement with complexity, ambiguity, and emergence. It enables a deep weaving together of theoretical exploration, practice-based inquiry, and

2. Specific research gaps will be further detailed in Section 2.5.

reflective analysis – each informing and challenging the other. The time, scope, and critical distance offered by this project have allowed for a more nuanced understanding of design’s role in supporting value within the non-profit sector.

1.3

THESIS OUTLINE

In medieval atlases, blank spaces were marked with monsters. Cartographers, uncertain of what lay beyond, drew serpents and krakens into the corners of their maps not as warnings, but as invitations to imagine. These creatures told the reader, “Here be uncertainty, but also, possibility.”

There are journeys where the destination is known, and those where only the direction matters. This thesis belongs to the latter. It begins, as all voyages do, with a desire to uncover realms that were previously unknown. As I have written already, our aim in this work is to understand something difficult to hold: value – a phenomena glimpsed in passing, refracted through language, negotiated through practice, and shaped by generosity.

Design, in this work, is our method of navigation. It is not the ship, nor the compass, nor the sea – but rather, the way we learn to read the sky. Each chapter is a waypoint. Each study, a shifting star. Together, this work forms a navigational guide not towards certainty, but to a way of roaming with attention. Like any long voyage, this thesis is best approached as a practice of orientation: looking up, looking around, noting where we are and where we might want to go next.

This thesis is structured into nine chapters. The opening chapters provide orientation and grounding: establishing the research context, outlining the methodological approach, and clarifying the philosophical and disciplinary positioning of the work. The central body of the thesis comprises four interrelated studies divided into two thematic parts: the first focused on

value, the second focused on design. The final chapters draw these strands together, offering synthesis, reflection, and an opening out towards future directions.

Already, Chapter One has introduced the research problem and outlined the study's core aim: to explore how design can assist Australian non-profit organisations in their pursuit of value. It presented the three research questions guiding the inquiry and clarified the scope and significance of the work.

Chapter Two will situate the research within its broader context. It opens with a reflection on the meaning of value, examining how different theoretical traditions – from philosophy to economics – have conceptualised value as a social, political, and ethical phenomenon. The chapter then considers the role of design practice, focusing on growing interest in design as a mode of engagement with social issues and the notable gap in how design has thus far engaged with the question of value itself. Following this, it traces the evolution of the Australian non-profit sector, outlining the structural pressures and policy shifts that have shaped its operations. Particular attention is given to the influence of neoliberal reforms and the turn towards entrepreneurialism and accountability metrics. Together, these strands establish the conditions under which this research becomes both relevant and necessary

Chapter Three describes the methodological approach and design of the study. It explains the rationale for a multi-study structure and draws on practice-based research, qualitative inquiry, and design-led methods. The chapter details the processes of data collection and analysis across four studies, including interviews, reflective writing, case studies, and two literature reviews. The researcher's positionality is acknowledged and discussed as a key feature of the interpretive framework, and ethical considerations and methodological rigour are addressed.

Chapters Four and Five present the first thematic focus of the thesis: research on value. These studies investigate how value is conceptualised, framed, and made visible in both non-profit and design contexts. Chapter Four

explores how value is articulated by Australian non-profit organisations through a qualitative study of language, framing, and discourse. It introduces the concepts of value perception and value framing, mapping thirty-two distinct perceptions of value and four dominant approaches to framing value within the sector. The chapter delineates between internal and external constructions of value and distinguishes between the value that non-profits propose and the value they are seen to practice. In doing so, it expands the conceptual repertoire available to practitioners and researchers seeking to engage with value in non-profit contexts. Building on this, Chapter Five critically examines how value is constructed within design scholarship itself. It analyses three dominant narratives through which value has historically been framed (economic, sociological, and linguistic), and investigates how each narrative shapes, directs, or limits the ways design practice approaches questions of value in the social sector.

Chapters Six and Seven present the second thematic focus of the thesis: research on design. These studies are situated in a non-profit context and examine the conditions, challenges, and opportunities associated with designing with and for Australian NPOs. Chapter Six presents insights from a survey of NPO leaders and proposes a value ecosystem model to understand how design might be integrated into non-profit contexts. It outlines three interdependent domains – organisational, mediation, and public – and reflects on the limitations and affordances within each. Chapter Seven draws on three case studies of design engagement with local NPOs, combining fieldwork, reflective writing, and interviews. Using Henri Lefebvre's (1991) triad of physical, mental, and social space, it explores how design engagements unfold in real-world settings, and how different forms of value are generated, perceived, or obscured through these collaborative design engagements.

Chapter Eight synthesises insights from across the four studies and presents a structured Discussion in three Acts: (i) conceptualising value, (ii) stabilising value, and (iii) engaging with value. Each Act distils key findings and introduces new theoretical and practical contributions, including tools to support explorations of value, commentary on design artefacts and their role

in communicating value, and proposed methodological strategies for working with value in complex social settings. The discussion integrates reflection with practice-based insights to build a richer understanding of design's potential role in supporting value-oriented work.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by returning to the research questions and summarising the contributions of the study. It outlines implications for design theory, practice, and education, and reflects on the broader potential of design to support organisations committed to non-economic and non-financial good. Rather than offering closure, the conclusion opens up – gesturing towards future questions and new possibilities for working with value through design. This thesis closes not with finality, but with space – for what might still unfold and for what might come next.

CONTEXT REVIEW

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2.1

GETTING SITUATED

This research is positioned across three scholarly domains: value, design, and non-profit organisations.

In the first section, the notion of value is explored. Although the term ‘value’ has been used significantly in this dissertation already, its polysemy proves to be a substantial challenge. Thus, this field of literature (spanning philosophy, business, management, ethics) was chosen to establish an early understanding of what I mean when I talk about value. Within this section, the two prevailing conceptualisations of value (as a guiding principle or as a quality of worth) are introduced and compared. This is followed by discussions of value definition and capture, value creation and operationalisation, and value transfer and slippage.

The second section of this context review concerns itself with design. This portion constrains what is meant by ‘design’ in this research, and reflects on the boundaries, scope, and potential impact of design in society. A definition of design is debated, with specific attention given to value-centric or value-adjacent design approaches. These conversations contextualise the perceived role of design in society over the last three decades.

Finally, although this research is primarily concerned with the relationship between value and design, its explorations are grounded in the context of Australian non-profit organisations. This is because, although they must navigate the same economic landscape as for-profit organisations, NPOs are viewed by the author as one of the few remaining bastions of non-financial and non-economic value. Key terms related to non-profit organisations are reviewed within the context of the Australian non-profit sector. This is followed by a brief historical account of the significant social, economic, cultural, and governmental factors that have shaped the sector.

2.2

ON VALUE

Centring a multi-year research project on something as vague and paradoxical as ‘value’ has, at times, felt less like a strategic decision and more like a long, slow tumble into conceptual quicksand. Although not impossible, it certainly abides by the common person’s understanding of a challenge. As dramatic as this claim may seem, I want to provide a quick-and-dirty explanation for its relevance. There are three truths that make engaging with the notion of value onerous: (1) the semantic breadth of the word is considered extreme, (2) the idea of value is often attached to, and comprised of, a range of absurdities and contradictions, and (3) although theories of value crop up in a range of academic disciplines, they often fail to retain much significance for any lasting period of time.

To illustrate the extreme semantic range of the term ‘value’, I reference Miller’s (2008) particularly astute argument. He writes,

On the one hand, [value] can mean the work involved in giving a monetary worth to an object, as in valuing an antique piece of porcelain, and thereby becomes almost synonymous with price. On the other hand, [value] can mean that which has significance to us precisely because the one thing it can never be reduced to is monetary evaluation, for example the value we hold dear in relation to family, religion and other inalienable possessions (Miller, 2008, pg. 1123).

To Miller, this semantic opposition is not a mountain of trouble, but rather a goldmine of opportunity. Miller (2008) reasons that perhaps the very point of value’s polysemy is to “create a bridge between value as price and values as inalienable” (pg. 1123), to offer insight into a concept that connects, guides and shapes the way that individuals, companies and governments live and make decisions.

As far as the absurdities and contradictions attached to value go, I offer the following problems as evidence. First, neoclassical economics equated value with the notion of utility, but could not escape Smith’s Diamond–Water paradox – “diamonds are expensive, but they have little practical value; water is cheap, but it has great practical value” (Smith referenced in Poier, 2019). Second, axiologists (philosophers who study the nature of value) are often tangled by the objectivity of value: does value subsist “only within the mind, which upon then proceeds to confer it, in endlessly different ways, upon the various factors in its environment”? (Turner, 1928). Third, Velleman (2008) writes “Value, as we said, is what makes something appropriate to value, but the conditions for being appropriate to value seem almost impossible to pin down” (pg. 411). Although these problems reflect only a few of the many complexities of value, they exemplify some of the most significant (and significantly tangled) debates fundamental to the topic: what even is value, and how does value come about?

At this stage, it wouldn’t be wrong for the reader to think that perhaps a sustained and robust theory of value might help in addressing these fundamental questions. And to that I certainly agree! But alas, poor Yorick¹, sustained and robust theories of value have fallen in and out of favour in many fields. From economics, Mazzucato (2018) states that the disappearance of the concept of value “has paradoxically made it much easier for this crucial term ‘value’ – a concept that lies at the heart of economic thought – to be used and abused in whatever way one might find useful” (pg. 18). From anthropology, Graeber (2001) argues, “it is extremely difficult to find a systematic ‘theory of value’ anywhere in the recent literature; and it usually turns out to be very difficult to figure out what body of theory, if any, that any particular author who uses the term ‘value’ is drawing on.” (pg. 1). Even from axiology, Smith and Thomas (1998) acknowledge “value theory has been eclipsed in recent Anglo-American analytical philosophy”. Although they attribute this to the rise of evolutionary psychology, the dominance of rational decision theory, the dominance of meta-ethical scepticism about the

1. *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 1603, 5.1.168–177)

place of values in the world, the problem of motivational internalism, and finally, certain changes in the modern view of morality itself.

So, where do we find ourselves now? More importantly, where can we reasonably go? In the midst of these difficulties and snags, perhaps the best thing for me to do is to remind you (and myself) as to why the notion of value is so central to research anyway. To remind us both why it may be worth suffering these slings and arrows of outrageous convoluted and take arms against a sea of trouble.

Debates on value have lasted millennia. From Aristotle and Plato to Marx and Smith we have circled around ideas of what is good or bad, how good or bad something may be, and more fundamentally what it means for a thing to be good or bad (Olson and Hirose, 2015). Many agree that this fixation stems from our common understanding that we all value things (and subsequently feel and behave towards them in a certain way) and evaluate things (attribute a sense of goodness, badness, worth, significance, or interest to them). These activities, valuing and evaluating, reflect our attitudes and convictions, and, per Orsi (2015), a “a rich and sophisticated conceptual repertoire” (pg. i).

As designers, we alter, form, develop, craft, and create artefacts, products, technologies, experiences, and systems that mediate our relationship with the world (Winner, 1980). Our practice, and the things which result from practice, are deeply influenced by our value judgements (what we perceive to be good or bad²), through which we not only express our preferences and aversions, but also claim those judgements to be justified, legitimate, suitable, fitting, or appropriate. Gaining a deeper understanding of how designers interact with the concept of value – and negotiate said interactions amongst others in collaborative engagements – enables designers to be more conscientious about their practice.

Although we may not have answers to some of the big questions about value, I find comfort in the knowledge that many of those investigations fall beyond our control and concern. Finding our feet in grounded interpretations

2. Whatever each of those terms might mean.

of value, I begin by describing how value is portrayed as a compass or guiding principle for life, reason, and action. This is juxtaposed with a conversation around value as a measuring stick or quality of worth. Common interpretations of value in Product Management Theory are then explained, as these interpretations are becomingly increasingly frequent in non-profit literature and practice, as well as design. Finally, interpretations of value in design are outlined.

2.2.1. INTERPRETING VALUE(S) AS A COMPASS VS. INTERPRETING VALUE AS A MEASURING STICK

When I first told friends, family, even strangers³, that I am exploring the concept of value many returned with questions akin to, “do you mean like community, security or power?” Although this frequently leads to a discussion distinguishing between value (as a quality of worth) and values (as ideals) in which I have to unflatteringly and repeatedly hiss the additional ‘s’ in their face, their questions reflect the common understanding values as guiding principles or ideals. This sociological conceptualisation of values contributes to our individual and collective understandings of what is ‘good, proper or desirable’ (Kluckhohn, 1951).

Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) conducted a cursory review of literature on human values and determined five features common to their definitions: “(a) concepts or beliefs, (b) about desirable end states or behaviours, (c) that transcend specific situations, (d) guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and (e) are ordered by relative importance” (pg. 551). Providing more specificity, one of the most recognisable cognitive frameworks on, and instruments for, value-measurement is the Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach, 1968; Rokeach, 1973). The survey delineates between 18 terminal values – sometimes recognised as intrinsic values (Brightman, 1943) – capturing general goals or end-states of existence that are desirable, preferable, admirable, or indeed valuable, and 18 instrumental values, which describe modes of being and conduct that contribute to the pursuit of one’s

3. We all hit some level of desperation sometime during our dissertations.

goals (Rokeach, 1973). Examples of terminal values include but are not limited to: wisdom, freedom, peace, happiness, mature love, pleasure or salvation (Rokeach, 1973). Instrumental values include but are not limited to: intellectual, imaginative, loving, self-controlled, cheerful, polite, clean or obedient (Rokeach, 1973).

Essentially, values represent qualities and beliefs that are of high importance to communities, and are “able to unify the apparently diverse interests of all the sciences concerned with human behaviour” (Rokeach, 1973, pg. 3). They inform our reasoning, actions and behaviours. For axiologists, explorations of human and moral values are often synonymous with explorations of normative theory (what is fundamentally right or wrong). Notably, although this work occupies itself with general questions about value, I do not and will not argue for or engage with a particular stance on what is or isn’t fundamentally right.

In contrast to the interpretation of value as ideals exists the interpretation of value as a measuring stick, an evaluator or assessor of quality of worth. These interpretations of value are common amongst economists and business managers who seek to determine the worth of an object (whether that be determined by its material composition, labour investment or personal significance) to effectively evaluate fair and just resource trade or exchange.

Mazzucato (2018) positions the production of new goods and services at the heart of economic value, arguing that “how these outputs are produced (production), how they are shared across the economy (distribution) and what is done with the earnings that are created from their production (reinvestment) are key questions in defining economic value” (pg. 15). The market mediates these processes of production, distribution and reinvestment, and introduces similar economic value-laden terms like cost, price, and wealth. Some economists conflate those terms with the concept of value entirely, while others draw clear distinctions between each. Anderson (1993) sharply warns us about the consequences of using the market as a common measure of value, arguing such an approach would result in “women as commercial baby

factories, nature as an economic resource, life as one big shopping mall”(pg. xi).⁴

However, assessing the value of an object or experience (considering the idea of value as an indicator of worth) is not exclusive to economics or business. Evaluations are common to our ordinary, everyday conversations and thinking. Showcasing the pluralistic nature of our ordinary evaluations, Anderson (1993) writes,

Friendships can be intimate, or merely convenient, charged with sexual excitement, or mellow. A subway station can be confining, menacing, and dumpy, or spacious, welcoming, and sleek. When people attribute goodness or badness to something, a person, relationship, act, or state of affairs, they usually do so in some respect or other: as dashing, informative, or tasty, delightful, trustworthy, or honourable, or as corrupt, cruel, odious, horrifying, dangerous, or ugly. (pg. 1).

Evaluative experiences shed light on the nature of value because they encourage us to determine whether or not we care for things or deem them worthy of our time and attentions. For the common person in an everyday experience, things are deemed to be good or important because we care about them or value them.⁵ To value something is to engage a complex of positive attitudes (informed by emotions, reason, deliberation, social conduct, etc.) towards that thing (Anderson, 1993). Teachers who value their students, for example, may be delighted to see their student succeed in a class, or become alarmed if the student fails an exam. The teacher may then reconsider their teaching materials or educational practice and take what they deem to be necessary corrective action to support the student differently. Fittingly, Oliver (2016) once wrote, “attention is the beginning of devotion” (pg. 13).

4. It is not lost on me how close to reality this is for many individuals.

5. The inverse is also true: for the common person in an everyday experience, we care about and believe things to be important because we deem them good or important.

2.2.2. VALUE CO-CREATION AND OTHER SUCH PHENOMENA

The idea of value co-creation has, since the 2000s, challenged some of the most fundamental pillars of capitalist economies (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). In a radical distinction from the traditional supply and demand model of economics, in which the value of a good or service is determined before market exchange occurs (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), value co-creation “allows companies and customers to create value through interaction” (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014, pg. 653). Value co-creation is a developing paradigm in management literature, informed by service management theories, innovation and management studies, as well as explorations in consumer research. More and more, the language of value co-creation (and specifically phenomena like value creation, value capture and value slippage) has become common in the conduct and organisation of NPOs and design management. As such, the aforementioned value phenomena are briefly described below.

- **Value creation:** Although the phenomenon of value creation is central to management and organisational literature there is little consensus on what it actually is or how it can be achieved (Lepak et al., 2007). The multidisciplinary nature of management studies ensures there is significant difference in the parties who either seek to generate or define new value. Proponents of a resource-based management theories frame value creation from the perspective of use (i.e. use value) and argue that “inanimate resources purchased as inputs to the production process... are incapable of transforming themselves into anything other than what they are. They need to be activated, worked on before they can contribute to the production of new use values” (Bowman and Ambrosini, 2000, pg. 5). Essentially, new value is created when already procured value is acted upon by an individual (usually within an organisation). This use value is activated through work in an organisation. Once a financial value (usually monetary) is assigned during an exchange, it becomes exchange value. Ultimately, this interpretation suggests that “value creation depends on the relative amount of value that is subjectively

realised by a target user...and that this subjective value realisation must at least translate into the user's willingness to exchange a monetary amount for the value received" (Lepak et al., 2007, pg. 182).

- **Value capture:** Scholars in strategic management literature have made a distinction between value creation and value capture in an attempt to recognise that not all organisations who create value are the sole beneficiaries of the created value (Makadok and Coff, 2002). Value capture – largely referring to and evaluated through economic interpretations of value – is considered “as the process of securing financial or nonfinancial return[s] from value creation” (Chesbrough et al., 2018 pg. 933).
- **Value slippage:** This term describes the value phenomena previously mentioned, whereby the individual, party or organisation creating value “does not retain all the new value that is created” (Lepak et al., 2007, pg. 181). Lepak et al. (2007) suggest that value slippage occurs when use value is high, but exchange value remains low. This creates an environment where there is little incentive for said individual, party, or organisation to continue creating value in the long term.

2.3

ON DESIGN

If we go by its historical definition, design refers to a process of planning, creating ideas, and implementing those ideas in order to improve the artificial environment (Simon, 1969). Offering a similarly general definition, Papanek (2019) writes, “all [people] are designers. All that we do, almost all the time, is design, for design is basic to all human activity” (pg. 23). Papanek (2019) continues, “design is the conscious effort to impose meaningful order” (pg. 23). Under those interpretations, the moral and social influence

(and subsequently, the moral and social responsibilities) of design becomes apparent and somewhat alarming.

The framing of design in this thesis can be understood as falling within the Banham's tradition of 'art worry', which argues there is a "direct (and inevitable) link between a society's design and its social health: design is a manifestation of the social, political and economic [or religious] situation" (Whiteley, 1993, pg. vii). This perspective was developed further by Papanek (2019), particularly in his seminal text on social design, *Design for the Real World*. Papanek (2019) describes design's influence on society thusly:

It is important to remember that architecture and design are the social arts par excellence. It is possible to avoid theatre and ballet, never to visit museums or galleries, to spurn poetry and literature and to switch off radio concerts. Buildings, settlements and the daily tools of living however, form a web of visual impressions that are inescapable. (pg. 174).

In this sense, the influence of a designer is so pervasive and expansive that a responsibility to others stems entirely from the inescapable consequence of their craft. As a change-oriented and future-oriented practice, design's influence exceeds the temporal constraints of the present and often seeks to shape society and the world for generations to come.

But I insist we pause for a minute. If you find yourself daunted by the weight of design's significance, you wouldn't be alone. And perhaps you have realised a sudden compassion and empathy for Atlas, he who carries the burden of the heavens on his back!

Thinking carefully, there are few activities in human life that escape Papanek's definition: anything from cleaning your messy room to curating the perfect mixtape could be considered as 'design'. Indeed, Enzo Mari, a highly influential Italian designer and early 'Great Hater' of the design world, said "We all design, every day, when we are forced to make our own decisions, even the seemingly trivial ones. For example, having to cook and finding

in the fridge only a cup of yogurt and two onions” (Mari, 2011, pg. 5). To consider design this broadly raises significant challenges: how might someone become a designer if it’s merely a profession embodied and lived in every human action? By this definition, what isn’t design? If everything is design does nothing become design? I personally find such all-encompassing definitions supremely unhelpful, as they offer little tangible insight or direction for readers and practitioners.

My frustration in pinning down design’s meaning (tackling its breadth is akin to pinning a cloud to a wall) is exacerbated by every look outside. This is because, in all the common actions of my daily life, like buying lunch or finding a new book to read, I am reminded of the already existing global-scale logistics systems and international production chains. Systems which are intricate, planetary and bafflingly large, and are, indeed, designed. Someone evidently had an idea, plans were clearly made, and those concepts obviously implemented for those systems (as well as my lunch and my books) to come into existence. Although I have no concrete answers to this problem of definition I raise it with the intention of clarifying what I mean by design in this thesis, a meaning I rest entirely upon the activities of practitioners of design. Put simply, design is whatever activity people who call themselves designers do, or whatever is generated from their activity.

When it comes to who these practitioners are, this thesis is written with a healthy dose of (radical) openness: I trust anyone who calls themselves a designer to be one. A designer who received a three-year formal education from an approved institution is a designer. A designer who makes their money creating logos and printing shirts for their friends is a designer. A designer who has worked in-house for the same organisation for the last decade is a designer. A business student who calls themself a designer after learning about Design Thinking is a designer. People who call themselves critical designers, graphic designers, product designers, industrial designers, interior designers, service designers, interaction designers, design catalysts, or design facilitators are all designers. The products and services rendered by these specialisms, as

well as the attributes, and cultural and methodological attitudes that extend beyond these specialisms, offer meaning to the term ‘design’ in this thesis.

The following sections describe design approaches that are value-specific and value-adjacent. These conversations showcase a breadth of techniques, approaches, and philosophies that shape design practice, without ever suggesting that one is a better or more meaningful form of design.

2.3.1. DESIGN FOR VALUE, DESIGN WITH VALUE, DESIGN AND VALUE

This section details design practices and approaches that are explicitly concerned with the notion of value. Design’s desire to contribute to social and ethical good has compelled practitioners to grapple with the inherent diversity of value (including terms like wellbeing, justice, and privacy) giving rise to a variety of value-oriented design approaches. Although some approaches have gained momentum and influence for specific interpretations of value (like Value-Sensitive Design and human values), design praxis, methods and approaches generally differ depending on their application and focus. Furthermore, the methods and approaches themselves remain quite fragmented and disjointed from one another, limiting our collective ability to articulate design’s role in value creation. Three prevalent design practices engaging with value (Value-Sensitive Design, Design for Values and Design-Led Innovation) are outlined below.

- **Value-Sensitive Design (VSD)** is now the subject of more than 20 years of investigation, development and refinement. It is considered one of the most comprehensive design approaches to account for and integrate human values into technology design (Davis et al., 2015; Manders-Huits, 2011). Responding to the lack of attention given to moral or human values in design, Friedman (1996) took an active stance in understanding how designers can create and develop computer technologies that “from an ethical perspective – we can and want to live with” (pg. 17). To elucidate, Friedman et al. (2013) compare

design artefacts to an oil painting by Monet or Cézanne: from a distance, they may appear to be whole, but upon a closer look, are made up of many layers of paint applied with a variety of techniques. Although design artefacts (and paintings) are more than the sum of their parts, Friedman et al. (2013) argue that investigating an artefact's parts can reveal much to the audience and is a fruitful place to start. Thus, Value-Sensitive Design, the resulting framework, promotes an integrative and iterative tripartite methodology – consisting of conceptual, empirical and technical investigations – to account for human values throughout the design process.

Conceptual investigations in VSD seek to “clarify fundamental issues raised by the project at hand, and provide a basis for comparing results across research teams” (Friedman et al., 2013, pg. 60). Common questions taken up in the conceptual investigations of VSD include: who are the stakeholders (both direct and indirect) affected by this design? How might each group of stakeholders be impacted or affected? Which values are implicated in the design, and how might they be balanced or compared against each other; for example, should moral values (i.e. a right to privacy or security) trump non-moral values (i.e. aesthetic preferences)? How should competing values be handled throughout the design process?

Friedman et al. (2013) readily acknowledge that conceptual investigations will only get a designer so far. Thus, they champion empirical investigations of the human context in which the design artefact will ultimately be situated or applied. The goal of an empirical investigation is to understand the context of application, and to guide how the ‘success’ of the artefact is evaluated. Questions commonly used to guide these empirical investigations include: “How do stakeholders apprehend individual values in the interactive context? How do they prioritise competing values in design trade-offs? How do they prioritise individual values and usability considerations? Are there differences

between espoused practice (what people say) compared with actual practice (what people do)?" (Friedman et al., 2013, pg. 60-61).

The final component of VSD is technical investigations. On one hand, technical investigations "focus on how existing technological properties and underlying mechanisms support or hinder human values" (Friedman et al., 2013, pg. 61). Concurrently, these investigations encourage the proactive design of systems that support, develop, or amplify values identified in conceptual investigations (Friedman et al., 2013). Technical investigations seek to understand which technologies are most suitable for certain activities or outcomes, as well as how those technologies may undermine or challenge the development of negatively perceived or unwanted values.

- **Design for Values** describes three activities (conceptualisation of value, operationalisation of value and specification of value) that van de Poel (2020) considers essential precursors to any meaningful engagement of value in the design process. If value is to have real bearing in the development of new technologies, designers must first clarify what is meant by value, how that value might be evaluated, and how value can be translated into actionable design requirements. Together, the conceptualisation, operationalisation and specification of value offers a practical scaffold for navigating value complexity within design.

Conceptualisations of value can be understood as providing, developing or articulating a definition, analysis or description of "a value that clarifies its meaning and often its applicability" (van de Poel, 2020, pg. 261). The aim of these conceptualisations is to provide insight, justification or reasoning into why a specific value is considered 'good' within the project, as well as how that value and its 'goodness' might be interpreted. van de Poel (2020) argues that conceptualising value is an activity of differing abstraction: for some, it may be a "largely philosophical activity" (pg. 303) whereby a value's meaning supersedes its context, while for others, a conceptualisation of value must be

developed in direct accordance with its context of application. To evidence this, he provides the example of privacy, which may be conceptualised as the “right to be left alone” (Warren and Brandeis, 1890 in van de Poel, 2020) or “in terms of control over what information about oneself is shared with others” (cf. Koops et al. 2017 in van de Poel, 2020, pg. 303). Although both conceptualisations may be interpreted as broad philosophical engagements, the latter would likely be more relevant to a someone designing an information system.

Operationalisations of value refers to “the process of making values measurable, so that it becomes possible to measure to what degree a state of affairs or a certain design realizes (or meets) a certain value” (van de Poel, 2020, pg. 303). van de Poel (2020) highlights the challenges inherent to measuring value: unlike physical concepts, which can derive descriptive evaluations, value is fundamentally normative and much more difficult to evaluate objectively.

Specification of value describes a process of translating value “into more specific norms and design requirements that can guide the design process of new technology” (van de Poel, 2020, pg. 303). Per van de Poel (2020), specification is the value phenomenon in which contextual information is taken into consideration, further detailing that it means to strive for, respect, meet, satisfy, or achieve value within its applied context. In the example of designing a chemical plant, safety (as a value) may be specified in terms of minimised explosion risk, containment options or crisis contingency plans that prevent hazardous material damaging the environment.

- **Design for Innovation and Design-Led Innovation (DLI)** is another design approach of relevance to this work. Over the last decade, the idea of design for innovation has come to reflect design’s increasing reputation for contributing strategic value to a business (Brown, 2008; Martin, 2009). DLI is the resulting framework and describes a process of business transformation “providing a mechanism where

businesses are able to create an alternative competitive advantage in the fast-paced global marketplace” (Wrigley, 2017, pg. 235). Studies on DLI remain largely fragmented, exploring specific applications in specific contexts such as aviation (Price et al., 2018), aged care (Nusem et al., 2015), energy (Stevenson et al., 2016), and manufacturing (Townson et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the approach’s consistent premise of examining design in business for strategic value grounds it within broader conversations of design and value.

DLI seeks to extend the core elements of Design Thinking – which, according to Beckman and Barry (2007), espouse value creation as the primary outcome of problem-solving activities in the artificial environment – from the locus of user or consumer needs, to include the needs of partners and stakeholders as well. Wrigley (2017) frames the DLI journey in three stages: dissect (understand, reveal, and ask), learn (propose, prototype, provoke and reframe), and integrate (design, share and transform). She acknowledges that framework is non-linear, and the extent to which it is applied depends upon the unique context of each engagement and the partnering organisation.

In one of their original texts on DLI, Bucolo and Matthews (2011) argue that design is not often required to define the value it provides to an organisation, nor is it often asked to define the value it provides to existing and future customers. They write, “Design Led Innovation is a process of creating a sustainable competitive advantage, by radically changing the customer value proposition” (Bucolo and Matthews, 2011, pg. 1). Importantly, what is evident in many DLI texts is that the ‘value’ referred to in each work is synonymous with competitive advantage, customer value, cost and profit. Evidencing this, Wrigley (2017) writes, “in today’s economic environment, design is being viewed as a critical strategic business resource, revealed through the success of design-intensive organisations such as Apple, Proctor and Gamble, and General Electric” (pg. 236).

2.3.2. OTHER APPROACHES TO DESIGNING FOR SOCIAL AND/OR ETHICAL GOOD

Although not as explicit as Value-Sensitive Design, Van de Poel's (2020) conceptualisation, operationalisation and specification of value, or Design-Led Innovation, there are a range of other design approaches that could be considered as value-adjacent. By this I mean that although they are design approaches that engage frequently with notions of value (most commonly a human or moral value), they are not necessarily design approaches fundamentally concerned with the idea of value itself. Although these scholarly agendas may not be considered within the direct scope of conversation on design and value, it is easy to recognise their proximity to our central conversation. These adjacent approaches to utilising design for social and ethical issues help us establish the boundaries of our work, and illustrate what some explorations on the border of relevance to design and value may look like. To illustrate this further, select value-adjacent design approaches are outlined below.

- **Responsible Design:** Eggink (2015) writes, "designing requires enormous social and moral responsibility as we are surrounded by products and services that shape – and simultaneously get shaped by – the way we live" (pg. 713). Because of design's pervasiveness, impact and influence, many authors have argued that the change brought about by design should be for the better. Eggink et al. (2020) acknowledge that this mission derives a slew of essential questions, such as "what is better and for whom (or what)? How to evaluate what's better? And how to deal with unforeseen consequences or unwanted side-effects of design interventions? (pg. 715). Nonetheless, it advocates for (1) design to be organised and conducted in a socially responsible manner, (2) design to operate in such a way that the responsibility of the user is addressed in the design artefact, and (3) the final design artefact (product or service) encompasses social responsibility (Eggink, 2015).

- **Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI):** This approach reflects similar principles as Responsible Design, but finds its footing less in explicit design practice and more in the context of European policy, particularly policy relevant to science and innovation (Jenkins et al., 2020). Fundamentally, RRI embodies “longstanding concerns about the societal role science and technology should have, including how to govern science and technology while acknowledging their unpredictability, and questions about the consideration and importance of (certain) values in scientific and technological developments” (Jenkins et al., 2020, pg. 4). The approach is known to draw on forms of constructive and participatory assessments (Joss and Bellucci, 2002; Schot and Rip, 1997), as well as VSD and anticipatory governance (Barben et al., 2008; Friedman et al., 2013).
- **Design Justice:** In her much-needed text *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need* Costanza-Chock (2020) offers a tentative description of design justice:

Design justice is a framework for analysis of how design distributes benefits and burdens between various groups of people. Design justice focuses explicitly on the ways that design reproduces and/or challenges the matrix of domination (white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, settler colonialism, and other forms of structural inequality). Design justice is also a growing community of practice that aims to ensure a more equitable distribution of design’s benefits and burdens; meaningful participation in design decisions; and recognition of community-based, Indigenous, and diasporic design traditions, knowledge, and practice. (pg. 23).

Although primarily focused on the relationship between design and power, the work of Costanza-Chock (2020) and the broader Design

Justice Network⁶ regularly engage with, examine, challenge, and transform design values, practices, narratives, sites, and pedagogies to disrupt interlocking systems of structural inequality.

- **Universal Design and Inclusive Design:** Both these design approaches reflect designerly focus on accessibility and equal opportunity (Persson et al., 2015). The term ‘Universal Design’ was coined by influential educator, architect and product designer Richard L. Mace, and refers to the concept of design products and environments that satisfy the needs of people, regardless of their age, ability or status in life (Mace et al., 2015). Similarly, Inclusive Design fundamentally advocates for involving the most extreme range of users (regardless of age, body structure, or abilities) into the mainstream audience or user group of designed products (Correia de Barros, 2022; John Clarkson and Coleman, 2015). Much of the efforts of inclusive designers and researchers has been centred on workplace improvement, with research dating back to the 1970s (Myerson et al., 2010).

2.4

ON AUSTRALIAN NON-PROFITS

As mentioned previously, this work aligns itself to non-profit organisations with the view that they are one of the last remaining bastions of value. By this I mean that non-profit organisations, more so than for-profit organisations, explicitly engage in activities and behaviours centred on non-financial and non-economic forms of value creation. Non-financial and non-economic forms of value are of central interest to this research because of their difficulty or resistance to simple quantification.

The followings sections offer foundational contextual information pertaining to non-profit organisations, and more broadly the non-profit sector, in

6. See more: <https://designjustice.org>

Australia. It begins by discussing the definitional issues of the term ‘non-profit organisation’ and is followed by an overview of the significance of non-profit organisations in Australia. A brief historical outline of government policies shaping the non-profit sector is presented.

2.4.1. DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

As with the terms ‘value’ and ‘design’, the term ‘non-profit’ also brings its own definitional complications. This is predominantly due to the interchangeable way Australian and international writers use terms such as these in literature: non-profit or not-for-profit, charity, non-governmental, quango, third sector, voluntary sector, and social enterprises. However, another contributor to this lexical ambiguity are the differing organisational structures that legally define certain organisations and non-profit, nongovernmental or social enterprises. Before any other discussion of Australian non-profits is offered, I briefly outline each of these terms and delineate which are relevant to this research project, and which exist beyond the scope of this exploration.

The following terms are of interest and relevance to this research project: non-profit organisations, not-for-profit organisations, and charities.

- **Non-profit organisations (NPOs)** – or not-for-profits (NFPs) – are the intended focus of this research.

From the broadest perspective, the Australian Accounting Standards Board (2019)⁷ (AASB) distinguish between “for-profit” and “not-for-profit” entities. Pursuant to this, the AASB define a not-for-profit entity as “an entity whose primary objective is to provide goods or services for community or social benefit and where any equity has been provided with a view to supporting that primary objective rather than for a financial return to equity holders” (Australian Accounting Standards Board 102 Aus 6.1). Although the term ‘not-for-profit’ appears to be the legal standard commonly utilised by Commonwealth bodies, its meaning and definition is entirely

7. A Commonwealth entity who develop, issue and maintain Australian Accounting Standards.

transferrable to the common parlance term ‘non-profit organisation’. This is evidenced by the Australian Taxation Office, Australian Securities and Investment Commission and Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC) who, despite all having shared (and sometimes overlapping) legal responsibility for the non-profit sector, utilise the terms ‘not-for-profit’ and ‘non-profit organisation’ without their own statutory definitions.

Lyons (1993), who pioneered the study of non-profit organisations and philanthropy in Australia, depicts NPOs as the institutional manifestation of individuals or groups of people who commit to provide a service, create an activity, or advance a cause. Lyons emphasises the voluntary effort that sustains non-profit organisations, their unique formations and relation to authority (or lack thereof when it comes to government), and the absence of a profit motive.

- **Charities** in Australia are defined by the *Charities Act 2013* and registered by the ACNC. A charity is constituted as an entity that:

“(a) is a not-for-profit entity; and (b) all of the purposes of which are: (i) charitable purposes that are for the public benefit; or (ii) purposes that are incidental or ancillary to, and in furtherance or in aid of, purposes of the entity covered by (i); and (c) none of the purposes of which are disqualifying purposes; and (d) that is not an individual, a political party or a government entity.”

Notably, although the word ‘charity’ derives many of its connotations from ecclesiastical law and the Roman Catholic Church’s notion of ‘pious purposes’ (Jones, 1969), it is the courts of Australia that have, for legal purposes, had the most influence on the meaning of the term (O’Connell and Chia, 2013). Humorously, Chia (2014) likens Australian charities to obscenity, arguing “as with obscenity, we ‘know’ charity when we see it, but we struggle to define it” (pg. 187) and “what is obscene to one

person need not be to another... our understanding of charity is highly contextual and is shaped by time and practice” (pg. 187).

The significance of this debate, and charities more broadly, is that a function of the ACNC is to “[register] *not-for-profit organisations as charities*⁸ through a transparent application process” (*ACNC Act 2012*). In this way, non-profit organisations who abide by a strict set of regulations are – from an institutional perspective – considered as charities in Australia.

The following terms are excluded from the scope of this research project: non-government organisations, quango, third sector, voluntary sector, and social enterprises. I note that while there are no conclusive definitions, a brief description of these terms will provide adjacent contextual perspectives on how public benefit is delivered in Australia outside the boundaries of the market or government.

- **Non-government organisations (NGOs)** operate independently from local, state, federal government, address public, social or political issues and typically represent more widespread or larger scale inter/national development projects. Through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, NGOs accredited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade may receive supplementary funds from the Australian Government. In Australia, NGOs play a vital role in international development, with only a select group of NGOs receiving funding. At the time of writing,⁹ only 43 NGOs have full accreditation and another 16 have base-level accreditation.
- **Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations (Quango)** according to van Thiel (2000) are “organisations which as their main task, are charged with the implementation of one or more public policies, and which are funded publicly but operate at arm’s length of

8. Emphasis added by author

9. September 2024. See here for details:

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/development/who-we-work-with/ngos/list-of-australian-accredited-non-government-organisations>

the central government, without an immediate hierarchical relationship existing with a minister or a parent department” (pg. 5). The term makes rare appearances in Australian writing and is more commonly associated with a UK and European perspective (Bertelli, 2006; Bonavia, 1978; Kramer, 2000).

- The ‘**Third Sector**’ is a catch-all term commonly encapsulating all non-profit, non-government, voluntary sector or community service organisations in Australia. The term will be used in broader, contextual conversations pertaining to non-profit organisations; however, explorations of the sector in its entirety are beyond the scope of this work.
- Similarly, ‘**Voluntary Sector**’ is an umbrella term for community service organisations outside of government and the private profit-seeking sector (Onyx et al., 2016).
- *A note on Social Enterprises (SE)*. Like non-profit organisations, there is no formal legal structure called ‘social enterprise’ in Australia. However, the Victorian Government (2021) offer a description, asserting social enterprises are organisations that “(i) are driven by a public or community cause (social, environmental, cultural or economic), (ii) get most of their income from business trade, rather than from donations or grants, and (iii) use at least 50% of their profits to work towards their social mission” (pg. 8). Although Australia has seen a recent increase in the prevalence of Social Enterprises, they are intentionally excluded from this research given the significant attention they still give to trade, the market, and traditional for-profit business conduct.
- *A note on Benefit Corporations (B-Corps)*. Against the backdrop of growing interest in how organisations might meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, the ‘Certified B Corporation’ designation has emerged. Nigri, Del Baldo, and Agulini (2020) describe B-Corps as for-profit organisations committed, beyond profit, to leveraging positive

environmental and social impacts. As with Social Enterprises, B-Corps are intentionally excluded from this research given that they stem from (and heavily leverage) traditional for-profit business conduct and management practices.

2.4.2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR IN AUSTRALIA

Australia espouses to be a country of helpers.¹⁰ To such an extent that “compassion for those in need” (Department of Home Affairs, 2020, pg. 8) – a more refined expression of the Australian cultural idiom ‘mateship’ – is promoted by the Australian Government as a value “central to our community remaining a secure, prosperous and peaceful place to live” (Department of Home Affairs, 2020, pg. 6). The value is described thusly, “In this spirit of mateship, Australia has a strong tradition of community service and volunteering – to look out for each other and strengthen the community” (Department of Home Affairs, 2020, pg. 8). It therefore seems unsurprising that the non-profit sector plays a significant role in Australian society and the economy.

Justly, describing the significance of the Australian non-profit sector can be challenging due to the sector’s rapid growth, lack of consistent reporting, and diverse ad hoc activities. However, major legislative reform at the beginning of the 21st century

(namely developing the *Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth)* and *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Consequential and Transitional) Act 2012 (Cth)*) spurred a raft of government agencies to assess the sector and offer quantitative estimates of these contributions.

In 2010 the Australian Government Productivity Commission (hereafter PC) were tasked with assessing the contribution of the not-for-profit sector

10. Admittedly, having witnessed community resilience in response to the devastating 2019 bushfires and been a direct recipient of grassroots community support in the face of natural disaster, I see some truth in this claim. Although, like always, it ought to be taken with a grain of salt.

and identifying any impediments to the sector’s overall development. In their report, the sector’s notable contribution to the national economy was undeniable. The PC estimated the existence of 600,000 non-profit organisations – although the Australian Bureau of Statics only noted 59,000 of economic significance – who contribute \$43 billion to Australia’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and make up 8% of Australia’s workforce in 2006–07 (Productivity Commission, 2010). They further reported 4.6 million Australians (approximately 1 in 5 in 2006–07) volunteered with a non-profit, contributing a wage equivalent value of \$15 billion. More recent reporting by the ACNC (looking at annual information statements from 49,402 charities in the 2021 reporting period) describe a total revenue of \$190 billion, an increase of \$14 billion from the last year (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, 2022). From a philanthropic perspective, Australians “give generously” (Productivity Commission, 2024, pg. 3). Many Australians regularly provide money, time, skills, assets or their voice to people and communities in need – over \$13 billion was donated to charities in Australia in 2021, 77% of citizens donate goods each year, and 2022 saw 6 million people volunteering (Productivity Commission, 2024). According to the PC (2024), these contributions are expected to increase in real terms by 48% (\$6.4 billion) by 2030.

In their 2009 submission to the PC, the Australian Council of Social Service (2010) (ACOSS) outlined the contribution of the not-for-profit sector, highlighting core features and benefits of a strong, diverse and effective non-profit community. Commenting on the sector’s contribution of essential services, ACOSS (2010) write “the mission and altruistic purpose generates goodwill which mobilises additional human and material resources including valuable networks and relationships” (pg. 2). Furthermore, ACOSS stress the importance of having proverbial ‘skin in the game’, arguing “the [non-profit] sector can be more responsive to previously unrecognised needs resulting from market or government failure – the initiative is far more likely to come from organisations which have a stake in that need, than from government departments or commercially engaged service providers” (pg. 2). Acting

beyond the political sphere, non-profit organisations are uniquely positioned to provide services which may be considered too politically sensitive for Government support (e.g., assistance for asylum seekers or sexual health workers, or sites for medically safe needle injection centres) (Australian Council of Social Service, 2010). Further valuable contributions from the sector include: (a) holistic and flexible community response strategies; (b) long term commitment to specific causes, issues, clients or communities; (c) practice-informed innovations that may either anticipate or respond to community needs; and (d) cultivating community and social cohesion through meaningful community involvement (Australian Council of Social Service, 2010).

Steering us towards a perspective beyond the opinions of government agencies, I wish to close this section with an excerpt from Mark Lyons' (2001) *The Third Sector: The Contribution of Nonprofit and Cooperative Enterprises in Australia* – what is considered by many as the definitive text on the Australian not-for-profit sector. For all the usefulness there is in referencing influential reports, I personally find Lyons' writing to reflect the more fundamental and human significance of the non-profit sector. Writing emphatically on their social and political contributions, Lyons (2001) argues that non-profit organisations are:

manifestations of the ability of individuals to join together, to work with others and to achieve a benefit for themselves or others. They provide service, they give voice, they bestow identity. They are expressions of people's enthusiasms and their commitments. Society would be palpably poorer without their ubiquitous presence. So too would be politics, because it is through beginning or joining an organisation that most people register their views on the particular matters of public policy that affect them. (pg. 204)

2.4.3. A CURSORY HISTORICAL ACCOUNT: NEOLIBERALISM AND THE MORE BUSINESS-LIKE TURN

This final section seeks to provide a cursory historical account of non-profit organisations in Australia in order to explain how Australian non-profit got to where they are now. In doing so, I track the transformation of non-profit organisations from small associations reliant on charitable (often churchgoer) funding to organisations increasingly dependent on business relationships and for-profit modelling.

- **Charity in the time of Federation (1860–1900).** Australia has barely been known as such for 220 years. In 1901 six self-governing colonies of Great Britain federated to form a single nation.¹¹ Despite sharing the laissez-faire liberal views of 19th-century England, the government of Australian colonists firmly encouraged business enterprise and provided all children with access to education (Lyons, 2001). However, beyond business and education, government would rarely provide direct support to individuals who were either poor or sick. Instead, they left this up to leading colonists, whose wives often formed and supported ‘public charities’ that would offer these services in the government’s stead (Lyons, 2001). Although these initiatives were supported by government

11. Before colonial accounts of ‘charity’ and ‘non-profit’ emerged in the 19th century, this continent – now known as Australia – was already home to intricate, interdependent systems of care, responsibility, and resource stewardship. These systems were shaped by tens of thousands of years of continued custodianship by Aboriginal, Indigenous and First Nations peoples. As Pascoe (2014) and Gammage (2012) have shown, agriculture, aquaculture, and seasonal land management were practiced with an ecological intelligence rooted in reciprocity, kinship, and obligation to Country. Colonisation interrupted these systems violently, and although it is not within the scope of this research to explore these implications in detail, their importance should be understood and held in mind by the reader. Any account of communal care or non-commercial life in so-called Australia must begin from this recognition: that long before colonisation, complex, place-based systems of responsibility, reciprocity, and care existed (and endure) across Aboriginal, Indigenous and First Nations lands.

Key texts to help contextualise the colonial project in so-called Australia include: Tyson Yunkaporta’s *Sand Talk* (2020), Chelsea Watego’s *Another Day in the Colony* (2021), Claire G. Coleman’s *Lies, Damned Lies* (2021), and Alison Page and Paul Memmott’s *Design: Building on Country* (2021). These works foreground First Nations ways of seeing, knowing, and designing, and are essential companions to more widely cited texts like Bill Gammage’s *The Biggest Estate on Earth* (2012) and Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu* (2014).

(frequently on a dollar-for-dollar basis) their responsibility remained up to members of the public.

Horne's (1968) phrase 'the Lucky Country' has commonly been applied to praise Australia as a land of economic opportunity and bountiful natural resources. Although Horne originally used the phrase as a damning critique of, in his opinion, a lazy derivative society lacking in both innovation and enterprise, it is true that Australia gained significant prosperity through the natural advantage of a thriving wool industry, wheat and gold. As a result of this, Australians enjoyed some of the highest and equitably distributed income in the world (Lyons, 2001) and almost half of the population were members, or dependents of members, of friendly societies (a form of association imported from Britain). Cordery (1995) describes friendly societies as "democratically managed insurance clubs offering sickness and burial coverage and sociable activities in return for regular payments" (pg. 36).

- **A war on poverty? (1900–1950).** Although the spirit of mutual aid continued through the end of 19th century, Australia was powerfully affected by the First World War. Recessions during the 1920s and 1930s meant that living standards improved very little, and conservative notions of business management became increasingly utilised for social organisation. The post-war decades saw a notable growth in both ex-service groups (like Rotary¹²) and professional and trade associations. During the Second World War, the governing Labor Government extended the Commonwealth income tax (applied to no more than 20% of the population) to the entire Australian working class. In exchange, wartime Labor dramatically expanded government pensions and benefits and invested heavily in state health services. This expanded presence of the government in social services, along with a consistent gradual increase in personal income tax, led many Australians to believe that the sick and poor were taken care of – leading

12. See more here: <https://www.rotaryfoundationaustralia.org.au>

to the popular (yet false) assumption that poverty had been eradicated entirely in Australia (Lyons, 2001).

- **Menzies, migration and more and more NPOs (1950–2000).** The election of the Liberal–Country Party in 1949 began 23 years of conservative government reluctant to follow in the exact steps of its predecessor. Rather than expanding state-provided services, Robert Menzies¹³ reinvigorated non-profit organisations in the community, subsidising their expenses in order for them to provide an extensive range of social services. In a similar vein, the government transformed friendly societies into formal health insurance organisations. Although this arrangement could never insure the whole population, it delayed what seemed to be the inevitable decline of an essential public service.¹⁴ The 1970s saw a returning Labor government heavily influenced by second wave feminism, community development movements, and labour rights movements; these ideologies spurred another significant expansion of social services, and the formation of arts-oriented non-profit organisations (e.g., professional theatre, opera and ballet companies). Notably, these initiatives broadened the recreational enjoyment of the arts from the exclusive purview of paying members to the general public.

During the second half of the 20th century, major waves of immigration changed the ethnocultural makeup of the Australian population. This newfound diversity resulted in another increase of community organisations, such as cultural and educational associations, religious organisations, and welfare societies. It also marked a period of major political and social transition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A significant network of non-profit organisations supported this activity, providing cultural and social services, legal, medical, housing and employment support. Local land councils and development

13. The 12th Prime Minister of Australia.

14. The entire arrangement was replaced in 1975 by Gough Whitlam's Labor government, who introduced Medibank as a national health insurer. These days Medibank is better known by its later evolution Medicare.

corporations were also established to represent the will and wishes of remote communities, replacing the paternalistic and repressive policies of governments.

- **The turn of the millennium (2000–2025).** The ‘welfare state’ of many Western democracies, including Australia (Jamrozik, 2009), had been expanded throughout the 20th century in line with Keynesian economic theory (Keynes, 1937) (advocating for government intervention and regulation to stabilise an economy) and Beveridge’s (1942) social policy (abolishing squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease and offering “national compulsory insurance for all classes for all purposes from the cradle to the grave” (Section 5)). Up until the 1990s government welfare provision saw consistent growth, but the turn of the millennium marked a determined paradigm shift. One in which a microeconomic reform agenda, characterised by all the hallmarks of neoliberalism – “privatisation, free trade and reductions in public expenditure and taxation” (Quiggin, 2005, pg. 5), outsourced direct service provision from government to not-for-profit and for-profit providers.

This commitment to economic rationalism (i.e. performance measures, accountability for outcomes, and value-for-money) reflected the government’s renewed pledge to austerity and forced significant structural changes upon non-profit organisations. Now more than ever, Australia non-profits are scrambling to develop income-generating strategies that allow them to achieve or maintain reasonable economic stability. The consequences are manifold and reflective of a dangerous new orthodoxy purporting that the way of neoliberal way of business (Bloom, 2017) is appropriate beyond business contexts. Green and Dalton (2016) specifically target practices of philanthrocapitalism and shared value¹⁵ for perpetuating the “hegemonic idea that a business-oriented model is the ‘right way of doing things’ even in the pursuit of a social mission” (pg. 301). They further argue, “neither

15. A principle of “[transformational] business thinking” which involves “creating economic value in a way that *also* creates value for society” (Porter and Kramer, 2011, pg. 4)

philanthrocapitalism nor shared value appears to recognise, and certainly do not acknowledge the depth of knowledge, skill, and experience in the understanding and delivery of social justice that is the core of not-for-profit social service industries” (Green and Dalton, 2016, pg. 302). This signals a broader shift in how value is being defined and pursued within the non-profit sector, one that risks displacing long-held forms of social knowledge with market-driven logics.

2.5

FOUNDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLORATION

This chapter has outlined common interpretations of ‘value’, defined the scope and meaning of ‘design’ within this project, and provided a brief historical account of charity and non-profit organisations in Australia. Each of these perspectives clarify the context of this study and reveal the essential threads that shape, guide, and colour this investigation. Below, I re-iterate the essential takeaways from each domain and then discuss gaps in knowledge and opportunities for further exploration.

When it comes to our understanding of *value*, we ought to remember:

- The word ‘value’ has **extreme semantic range** and contains a multitude of distinct meanings. This breadth constitutes a number of entanglements, and there is **no sustained or consistent theory of value** to remedy these challenges.
- Two of the most consistent and accessible interpretations of value understand the concept as either (1) **an ideal** or guiding principle, or (2) as a measure or **quality of worth**.

- Value as an ideal is highly contextual and subjective.
- Value as a quality of worth can be dangerous if the wrong measures are applied.
- While scholarship often distinguishes between ‘value’ (as a measure or quality of worth) and ‘values’ (as ideals), this thesis **takes the position that there may be analytical and practical potential in conflating these interpretations**. This is to recognise that designers and organisations often blur these boundaries to intentionally legitimise particular directions across economic, social, ethical, cultural, or environmental domains. Attending to these entanglements can help surface where this blending is *generative* and where it may *obscure* tensions or *defer* important conflicts.
- Our reasoning and actions are closely intertwined with the notion of value and our value judgements. Design, and that which results from design, ought to examine **which ideas and judgements of value relate to or influence our practice**.

When it comes to our understanding of *design*, we ought to remember:

- The scope of design in this thesis is determined with **radical openness**: if you call yourself a designer, I trust you to be a designer and to understand what design is.
- Value-Sensitive Design investigates human values from **conceptual, empirical** and **technological** positions.
- Van de Poel outlines **conceptualisation, operationalisation** and **specification** as essential actions to integrating value into design process.
- Although Design-Led Innovation frames value through an economic lens, it describes principles and conditions essential to **sustained design integration in business**.

- A range of **other social, ethical, and community-oriented design approaches** assist in establishing the boundaries and potential impact of design.

When it comes to our understanding of *Australian non-profit organisations*, we ought to remember:

- Charity, goodwill and **community-support has been a central tenet** of Australian society.
- Although non-profit organisations are difficult to define, they can easily be considered as **an organisation that provides services to the community and does not operate for the profit, personal gain, or other benefit of its members.**
- There are **60,572¹⁶ registered non-profit organisations in Australia**, and approximately 51% of those organisations operate without any paid staff, relying entirely on volunteers.
- A neoliberal economic agenda implemented in the early 2000s has forced **more and more Australian non-profit organisations to become ‘business-like’.**

With these foundations in mind, a range of potential explorations become apparent. Four research gaps, determined to be most relevant to this research, are visualised in Figure 2.1 and described below.

Research Gap #1: Minimal articulation of the theory, knowledge and methods for engaging with value in design. In order to orient and apply design practice effectively, it is necessary to understand its relationship to value. While existing value-oriented approaches such as Value-Sensitive Design (Friedman and Hendry, 2019, May) have made significant strides in bringing values into the design process, they remain centred on a small, predefined set of human values.¹⁷ Even more recent work, like that of

16. As of the 1st of February 2024 (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, 2024)

17. 12 specific values considered to be of ethical import.

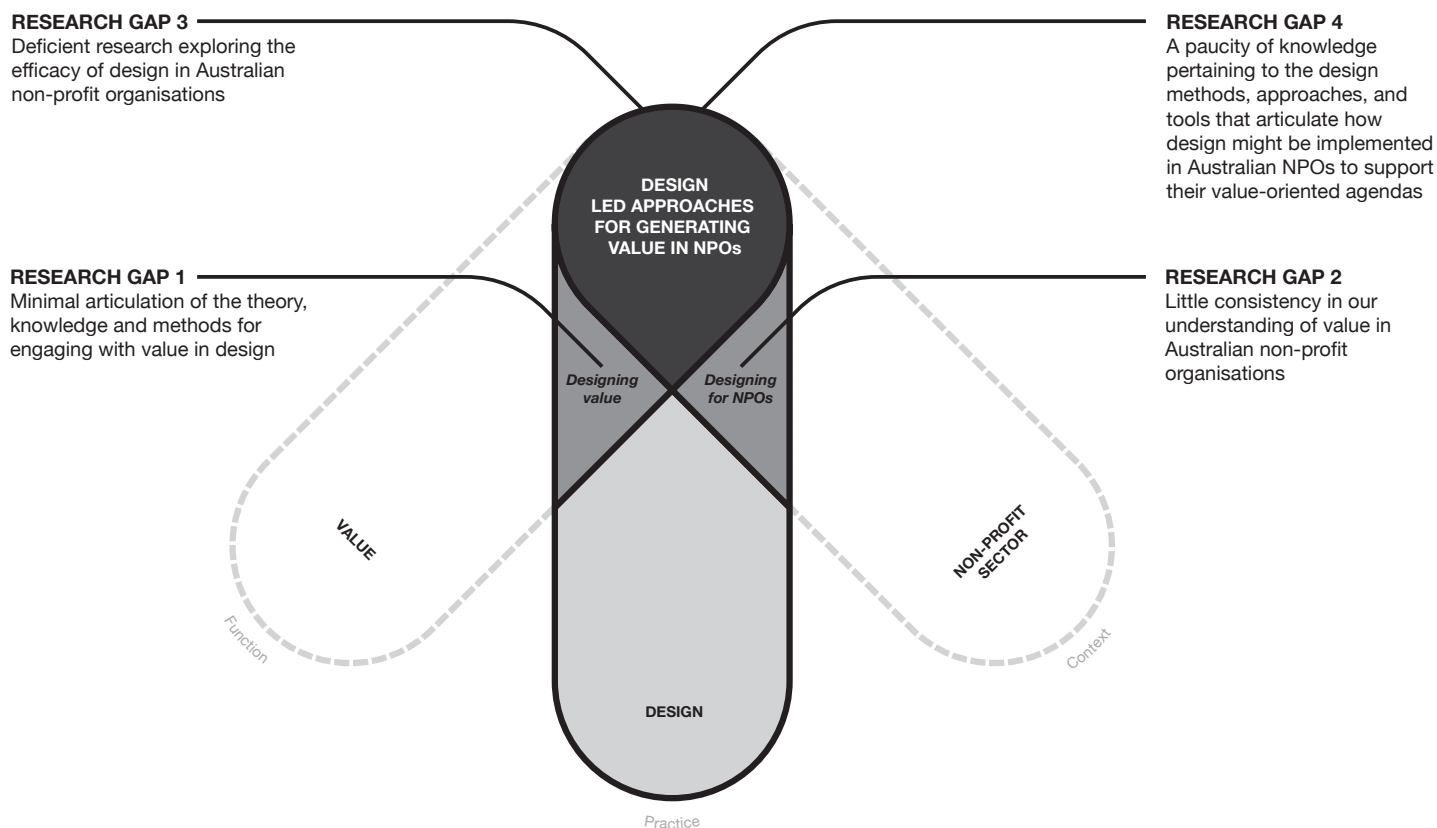


Figure 2.1: Visualising research gaps

Kheirandish (2018), which maps over 200 values for designers, still reflects an anthropocentric orientation. This research situates itself alongside non-ethically anthropocentric interpretations of value – that is, interpretations which: (1) include the intrinsic worth of non-human entities (Owe et al., 2022), and (2) decentre human perception as the sole measure of what is important or worthwhile. In doing so, this work seeks to expand the value discourse in design beyond frameworks that prioritise only human needs or ethical systems, similar to the calls for more-than-human design by Tomitsch et al. (2021). While Van de Poel’s (2020) activities – conceptualisation, operationalisation, and specification of value – offer a compelling theoretical foundation, their practical application across diverse design contexts remains underdeveloped. Recent efforts such as the *Value Language & Methodology Project* at the Delft Design for Values Institute (Bos-de Vos, 2020; Bos-de Vos, 2024; de Koning and van der Bijl-Brouwer, 2024) take important steps towards bridging this gap by building shared vocabularies and offering toolkits to guide value-informed design processes.

Research Gap #2: Little consistency in our understanding of value in Australian NPOs. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1921) put forward that the “limits of my language are the limits of my world”. Without a shared understanding of value informing non-profit organisation or design practice, uniform progress becomes challenging. While some efforts have been made to develop concrete or robust taxonomies of value itself (e.g., Parfit, 1984; Rabinowicz and Österberg, 1996), fewer efforts have been made within the Australian non-profit context. Some attempts include Noh’s (2020) analysis of Shared Value – a business’s capacity to address societal needs and challenges while enhancing competitive advantage and profitability – in Australia, and resources shared by the Shared Value Project.¹⁸ This research aims to address this gap by developing a more nuanced understanding of value tailored to the specific contexts and goals of Australian NPOs.

Research Gap #3: There is deficient research exploring the efficacy of design in Australian non-profit organisations. In a non-profit context, most applications of design pertain to the design and delivery of an experience or service (Lemons et al., 2024), HCI intervention (Moulder et al., 2014) or some other ‘tangible’ output (such as a product, experience business model, etc.). However, little focus has been given to the more general application of design practice in relation to non-profit’s pursuit of their ‘intangible’ organisational aspirations (i.e. value). Yet, since the benefits of design – namely its success in realising both economic and social outcomes – has been documented through both for-profit and public sector organisations (Brown and Martin, 2015; Verganti, 2009), there is significant opportunity to explore design’s potential to benefit non-profit organisations (Mutanen, 2008). Recent efforts by Tawansi (2025), who examines the role of non-profit leadership in digital transformation and service design, and Lemons et al. (2024), who explore experience design practices within NPOs, both gesture towards this gap – one from a leadership perspective, the other through design execution. However, the broader question remains of how design can meaningfully support non-profits in pursuing their intangible goals.

Research Gap #4: There is a paucity of knowledge pertaining to the design methods, approaches, and tools that articulate how design might be implemented in Australian NPOs to support their value-oriented agendas. As outlined in Research Gap #2, the absence of a shared understanding of value in the non-profit sector complicates the development of design methods that align with the missions and logics of these organisations. Although the increasing managerialism and professionalisation of non-profits may render them more amenable to design-led integration – as seen in frameworks like Design-Led Innovation (Bucolo and Matthews, 2011) – these approaches are primarily shaped by commercial priorities and often prioritise growth, disruption, or market differentiation. Consequently, many of the tools, metrics, and narratives associated with strategic design remain tethered to for-profit contexts.

That's not say that there aren't attempts to challenge this dynamic. Den Ouden's 2012 *Innovation Design* highlights the need to move beyond user-centred design towards value networks that consider stakeholders and systemic impact – an approach that resonates with non-profit complexity. More recently, Becares Mas (2023) explored value-oriented cooperatives to provide insight into how design can be reframed to support shared governance and collective care. Meanwhile, articles such as *Unlocking Australia's Design Potential* (Good Design Australia, 2024) advocate for a broader national investment in design capabilities across sectors, but tend to focus on economic productivity rather than civic or social impact. This research responds by interrogating how design methods and practices might be reimaged for non-commercial, value-led contexts such as the Australian non-profit sector.

By investigating the notion of value in relation to both design practice and non-profit organisations, this research responds to the theoretical and contextual gaps outlined above. In addressing Research Gaps #1 and #2, it contributes to emerging conversations about how value is conceptualised and communicated in both design and non-profit contexts. In addressing #3 and #4, it offers grounded insight into how design practices might be reconfigured

with and for Australian NPOs, attending to both the organisation's purpose and existing practice.

Although this research is situated within (and stems from) design research, it draws from ethics, organisational studies, and non-profit management to offer an interdisciplinary lens on value. This work, engaged in both academic inquiry and practical application, is compelled by the potential for design to help non-profit organisations hold steady to their visions, missions and purpose in an increasingly economised landscape.

So, Reader, are you ready? It's time to cross the Rubicon.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 3

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This chapter describes the research design and methodological approach leveraged to address the research gaps identified in Chapter 2. Before detailing the underlying philosophical stance or overarching research approach, I'd like to remind you that the aim of this research is to understand how design can assist Australian non-profit organisations in their pursuit of value. Table 3.1 presents the specific research questions addressed, as well as their corresponding research objectives.

Table 3.1: Research questions and objectives

#	RESEARCH QUESTION	#	RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
1	What are the prevalent conceptualisations of value in NPO literature?	I	To explore how value is represented in NPO literature
		II	To understand existing use of value-oriented language and create foundational knowledge for future design activity
2	What are the opportunities for design to contribute to value creation in NPOs?	I	To develop informed speculations on the potential remit of design in NPOs
3	What are the practice-based experiences of designers engaging with NPOs for value creation?	I	To design and embed a novel value-centric pedagogical framework for designers engaging with NPOs
		II	To understand the reflective accounts of designers engaging with NPOs
		III	To understand and explore how modes of practice and contexts of application inform the experience of designers engaging with NPOs

The upcoming sections proceed as follows: first, the underpinning philosophical stance informing this work is described; second, the overall research structure is outlined. Third, specific data collection methods are outlined, and their respective purposes in addressing the research questions are foregrounded. Fourth, I outline my positionality as a researcher, and fifth, outline the overarching analysis method used. Finally, I present the ethical approval for the research.

3.1

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Design practice and design research are fundamentally bound to uncertainty. Catalysed by considerable thinking and writing from designers with an engineering background in the 1960s-1980s (Archer, 1965; Cross, 1982; Jones, 1970), it was found that any serious study of design (or any serious study at all) ought to be founded in scientific objectivity and positivist formulae. Although this positivist scientific approach was well suited to the modernist view of the world at the time, it has since been challenged by postmodernist philosophies encouraging more tolerant and pluralistic approaches (Swann, 2002). Unlike scientific research, which seeks to realise new knowledge from the existing world, design aims to realise a new world from existing knowledge (Verkerke et al., 2013). As clearly argued by Grant (1979), “the act of designing itself is not and will not ever be a scientific activity... designing is itself a non-scientific or a-scientific activity” (pg. 45). Furthering Grant’s argument, Swann (2002) attributes design’s a – scientific nature to its teleology, writing “design is for human consumption and not bounded by the quantifiable ‘certainties’ of the physical world... [it] deals in human interactions with art[e]facts and situations that contain a great deal of uncertainty” (pg. 51). Because of design’s relationship with ambiguity and the behaviours and/or sensitivities of human beings, it is more appropriate to leverage interpretative and qualitative research approaches to understand how design can assist Australian non-profit organisations in their pursuit of value.

It has been argued that the pith of exploratory research is a desire to discover something novel and interesting by working through a research topic (Swedberg, 2020). Per this argument, it wouldn’t be remiss for one to assume that all good research is a result of exploratory endeavours. However, such a perspective reveals the complicating definitional breadth of exploratory research. As a work around, this research has drawn methodological

inspiration from different forms of exploratory study – a more narrowly defined concept in social sciences. Although a project’s goals and means will influence the form of an exploratory study, Swedberg¹ (2020) describes six forms of exploratory study:

(1) a version of what may be called the standard exploratory study, which has as its goal to make a first inroad into an area that is currently little known; (2) a second version of the standard exploratory study, which has as its goal the development of new hypotheses for a topic that is already known; (3) the informal exploratory study that aims at maximizing the development of new ideas; (4) the high-risk exploratory study, which aims to develop highly innovative ideas in cases where the risk of failure is significant, (5) the informal exploratory study/ pilot study for dissertations; and, (6) exploratory studies used in student exercises, to learn theorizing. (pg. 40)

The underlying research philosophy of this work could be considered to adhere to the principles of a Type 1 exploratory study, “the goal is to explore a topic that is little known, and to produce a publishable work... a multi-method approach is helpful,” or a Type 4 high-risk exploratory study, “the goal is to develop highly innovative ideas in cases where the risk of failure is also high... to be proven valuable the innovative idea should be evaluated with the help of standard methods” (Swedberg, 2020). My reasoning for this is such: (i) although significant attention has been given to exploring the role, responsibilities, impact and integration of design in for-profit businesses, this attention has not been extended to non-profit organisations and as a result there is little existing foundational knowledge in this domain; (ii) the sheer diversity of missions, actions, behaviours,

1. Despite exploration being a key tenet of all research, Swedberg is one of the few social science researchers seeking to formalise exploratory research approaches. In his chapter on exploratory research in *The Production of Knowledge: Enhancing Progress in Social Science* he writes, “[I] have looked at around thirty textbooks in social science methods and found that none contains anything close to a full discussion and presentation of exploratory studies. A few mention the topic, but that is all (e.g., Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2008; Gerring, 2011; Gray et al., 2007; King et al., 1994; Lewis-Beck et al., 2003; Somekh and Lewin, 2011).”

and services in Australian non-profit organisations makes it impossible for any single research endeavour to appropriately account for every nuance, potential or eventuality, so contributions offered, however significant, cannot be conclusive; and (iii) although the risk of failure is higher (per (ii)), it is meaningful to explore design from the holistic context of the non-profit sector in a way that differs from meaningful explorations of design in a non-profit organisation contributing to a specific sector(/s).

More than those reasons, an exploratory research philosophy is a product of my own practice as a designer-researcher-educator. My experiences as a design researcher are mutually shaped by, and give shape to, my experiences as a design practitioner. An intentionally exploratory approach in my research nurtures the same processes of reflection, iteration, and discovery that exist within my design practice. Similarly, the academic context of this endeavour offered space, motivation, and means for thoughtful contemplation and reflection. This orientation naturally aligns with an inductive research approach. Rather than beginning with fixed hypotheses or theoretical claims, the research was structured to allow concepts, themes, and frameworks to emerge through ongoing engagement with theory and practice. The tripart orientation of designer-researcher-educator catalysed opportunities for me to strategically leverage distillations of theory in higher education and see the impact of such efforts.

The multifaceted nature of individuals similar to myself (design practitioners conducting research) is expounded by Yee (2017) in her essay *The Researchly Designer/The Designerly Researcher*. She writes, “a ‘researcherly designer’ is a practising designer trained in research and a ‘designerly researcher’ is a practising researcher trained in design” (pg. 155). Although I also consider myself a design educator, having taught for seven years, Yee’s symbiosis of designer and researcher (and the often-ensuing multi-faceted hybrid practice) feels particularly pertinent. Although they are closely intertwined, I draw inspiration from Yee’s own experiences and explicitly articulate how my practices as a researchly designer and designerly researcher intersect.

Underlying principles of exploration, reflection and discovery are emphasised as they contribute significantly to my overall research philosophy.

3.1.1. RESEARCHERLY DESIGNER: HOW A RESEARCH LENS INFORMS MY DESIGN PRACTICE

- **Articulating the why, how and what (of design practice):** Yee reflects on how design and the creative arts are talked about as ‘black box’ processes – both difficult to describe as whole entities, and poorly articulated constitutive activities. She writes, “one of the most important skills I developed through my PhD research training is the ability to shine a light into my own ‘black box’”, and that “a fundamental principle of research practice is to make the research process explicit so others can interrogate and learn from the process” (Yee, 2017, pg. 156). Similarly, my research experience applying design in interdisciplinary contexts has helped me articulate not just my own, but other common approaches to and justifications for, design practice to diverse audiences.
- **Developing critical thinking skills through writing:** Despite a passion for literature and writing, I, like Yee, find writing to be a difficult and tedious process. However, I readily acknowledge that my critical thinking skills have been reinforced through academic writing (“which focuses on presenting a point of view and supporting evidence” Yee, 2017, pg. 157) and research documentation. The exercise of writing allows me to record my thoughts and connect previously disparate ideas, reflecting, evaluating and revising the resulting arguments.

3.1.2. DESIGNERLY RESEARCH: HOW A DESIGN LENS INFORMS MY RESEARCH PRACTICE

- **Embracing uncertainty and ambiguity:** Yee (2017) describes a designer’s ability to accept (and thrive in) the complexity, messiness and disorder of people and circumstances, and this has been a unique advantage for me in conducting community-based research. Despite how it has been reported, this research exploration has remained

constantly dynamic and messy. Navigating my PhD as a design project, where the only expectation is to face the unexpected, developed my resilience in the face of difficulty and gave me comfort in the face of uncertainty.

- **Adopting a bricolage approach:** Leveraging Lévi-Strauss (1966) notion of ‘bricolage’ (loosely translated to ‘making-do’), Yee (2017) outlines how the “propensity to borrow and adapt strategies, tools and materials at hand has served designers well” (pg. 161). She goes on to describe how in many of her research projects, Yee adapts existing research methods to suit her way of working or the context of her investigation. In a similar vein, many of my selected methods are borrowed from social science, project management, psychology and nursing disciplines – adapted to suit the contexts and participants of this project. These hybrid research tools creatively contribute to new insights and ways of knowing in both designerly and applied contexts.

3.2

RESEARCH APPROACH: TWO PRONGS

Building on this exploratory philosophical foundation, a two-pronged research approach was chosen to address both theoretical and practice-based understandings of value in relation to design and NPOs. A generalised illustration of the research structure is offered in Figure 3.1 below.

The intention of the first prong, *Part I: On Value*, is orientation. Before any generative design activity can take place with and for value or Australian NPOs, there is a need to investigate conceptualisations of value in literature on (a) design practice (Study 1) and (b) non-profit organisations (Study 2). The learnings developed from these studies offer broad, contextual understandings

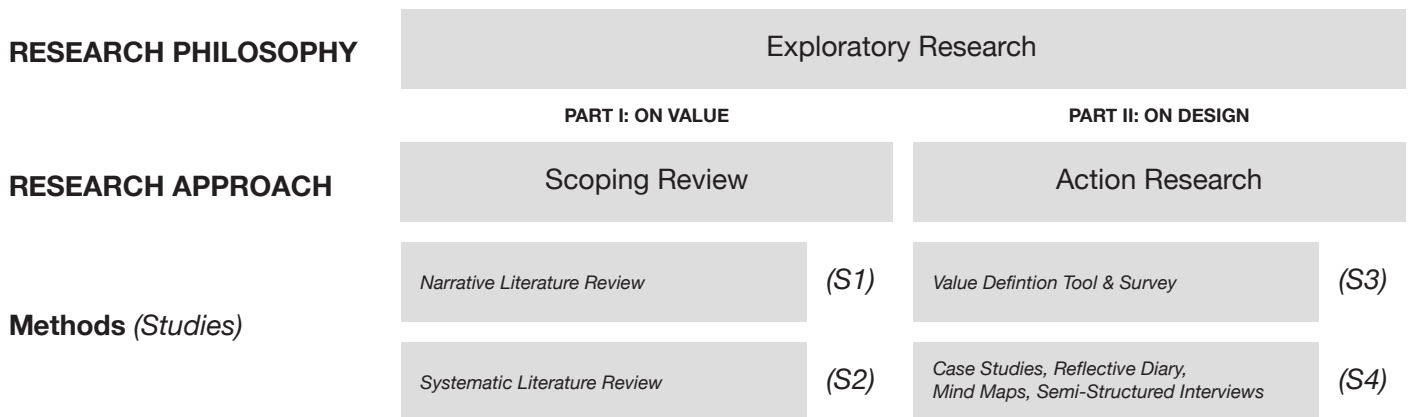


Figure 3.1: Overview of research philosophy, approaches, methods and studies

of value to guide the second prong. *Part II: On Design* shifts the research from orientation to practice and investigates how design might use ideas of value in engagements with Australian non-profit organisations. It leverages a survey of Australian NPOs to generate evidence-based speculations on the potential remit of design in Australian NPOs (Study 3) and an Action Research methodology to explore the practice-based experiences of designers engaging with NPOs (Study 4).

Holistically, the learnings developed in *Part I: On Value* provide the research with breadth, while insights generated in *Part II: On Design* offer depth. The specific relationship between these two parts, and the studies they encompass, is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

3.2.1. PART I: ON VALUE

The first part of the research undertakes what is essentially a linguistic and conceptual consideration of the term value. It begins with the premise that value is not only an ambiguous term, but a consequential one, frequently invoked but inconsistently defined across disparate fields (including both design and non-profit literature). In design, where practice is often directed towards shaping the conditions of future worlds, our ability to articulate what we are aiming for – and how we judge the adequacy or success of our efforts – is necessarily tethered to how we understand value. Without this clarity, we risk building towards goals that remain conceptually unstable or ideologically obscured.

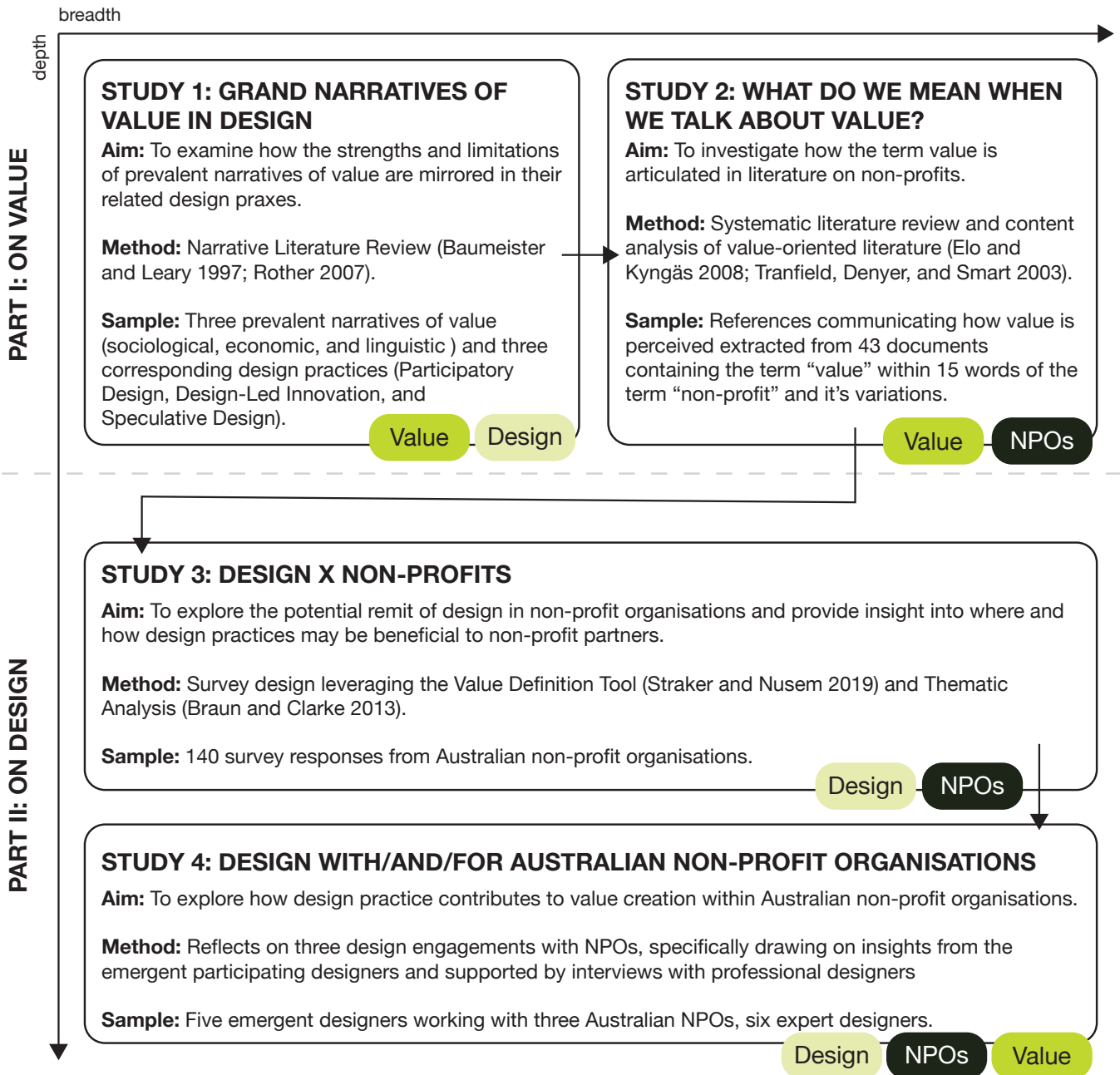


Figure 3.2: Detailed overview of research studies

Part I: On Value employs a twofold review strategy: a narrative literature review of dominant narratives of value in design (Study 1) and a systematic literature review of popular conceptions of value in non-profit literature (Study 2). The narrative literature review (Baumeister and Leary, 1997; Rother, 2007) explores the less codified, more interpretative terrain of value within design practice. This approach supports a more flexible and critical reading of value across disciplines, and aims to make visible the subtle ideological positions, conceptual ambiguities, and orientations inherited by certain design

practices. In contrast, the systematic review provides a structured, transparent method for locating, analysing, and synthesising non-profit literature that mentions value. The established protocols of this approach (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008; Tranfield et al., 2003) ensured methodological rigour, allowing for the identification of prevailing interpretations. Together, these two approaches enable a layered understanding of how value is understood and enacted across non-profit and design literature. The key tensions, overlaps, and absences identified in Study 1 and Study 2 go on to shape the inquiries pursued in *Part II*.

3.2.2. PART II: ON DESIGN

While the first part of this research examines the concept of value through literature on non-profit organisations and design to establish foundational understandings of such a vague topic, *Part II: On Design* takes instruction from Wittgenstein (1953), for whom the “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (Section 43) . In *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies after Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell* Toril Moi boldly proclaims “ordinary language philosophy has the power to transform the prevailing understanding of language, theory, and reading in literary studies today” (2017, pg. 15). I argue that the scope of ordinary language philosophy extends into design practice, as the implications of value (as both a word and concept) play a significant role in the way designers approach design problems, employ design methods or conduct their design practice, and evaluate the ‘effectiveness’, ‘satisficing’ or ‘successes’ of a design artefact or solution. Therefore, it is instructive to consider the following research studies from two perspectives: that of (1) research on design (i.e. a simple and somewhat strict exploration on how design may be used in a non-traditional and interdisciplinary context), and (2) designerly research, (i.e. a design-led exploration of the notion of value).

Part II: On Design utilises Action Research – a form of inquiry merging theory and practice – to underpin the overall research design and structure of Study 3 and Study 4. By explicitly linking reflection with practice, Action Research has

a close association to Frayling's notion of research through design: whereby the methods and processes from design practice constitute a legitimate form of inquiry (1994). Groat and Wang (2013) characterise Action Research as an approach that (a) constructs knowledge through a process of change, and (b) develops practical results by improving specific situations. Described by Kemmis et al. (2013), a particularity of the approach is its spiralling, cyclical steps of "(1) planning a change, (2) putting the plan into action, (3) observing what happened, and (4) re-formulating the plan in the light of what had happened" (pg. 18). Zuber-Skerritt (1992) has written extensively on Action Research and explicates these steps further:

The plan includes problem analysis and a strategic plan; action refers to the implementation of the strategic plan; observation includes an evaluation of the action by appropriate methods and techniques; and reflection means reflecting on the result of the evaluation and on the whole action and research process, which may lead to the identification of a new problem or problems and hence a new cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. (pg. 112)

Three foundational principles informed the selection of Action Research as the formal method of inquiry for this research. Consistent with the reasoning of Herr (2015), it was important to me as a design researcher and researcher of design that the selected research method would (i) encourage an actively involved researcher, (ii) account for various modes of action, and (iii) accommodate ambiguities common to the design process like unexpected, dynamic or changing results. Action Research is apt in accommodating these needs and enabled the researcher to explore how certain actions or behaviours produced changes as they happened. *Part II: On Design* consists of two cycles of Action Research, detailed in Table 3.2 and illustrated in Figure 3.3.

Table 3.2: Two Cycles of Action Research

Cycle // Outcome	Task	Objective	Execution
Cycle 1 – Informed speculations on how design might be integrated in Australian NPOs to support their pursuit of value	Survey	Explore the potential remit of design in Australian NPOs and map how notions of value are situated in a NPO's ecosystem.	Thematic analysis of 140 survey responses from Australian non-profit organisations. Survey design leveraging the Value Definition Tool (Straker and Nusem 2019) to investigate the types of value a NPO can create, the contexts in which value is situated, and the broader ecosystem of value articulation and operationalisation.
Cycle 2 – Provided insight into how design engagements with Australian NPOs are produced and maintained.	Case Studies	Explore the practice-based experiences of designers working with and for Australian NPOs. Investigate how different design practices and non-profit contexts influence design engagements.	Five emergent designers (final year undergraduate Bachelor of Design students) participated in design engagements with three local NPOs. Emergent designers addressed problems established by their NPO partners.
	Reflective Diary (Textual Vignettes)	Capture impromptu considerations the emergent designers may have had regarding the application of their design methodology.	Weekly construction of a textual vignette describing a 'significant moment' in which the notion of value was foregrounded in their design engagement.
	Reflective Diary (Mind Maps)	Illustrate conceptual, thematic or actual relationships within the design engagement that might be difficult to describe textually.	Weekly construction of a mind map outlining key activities, considerations, theories, moments, or ideas and their relationship to each other, design practice and the notion of value.

Continued on next page...

Table 3.2 (continued): Two Cycles of Action Research

Cycle // Outcome	Task	Objective	Execution
Cycle 2 – Continued	Reflective Diary (Pre-determined questions)	Capture reflections from emergent designers on what their design practice and impact has been, and how that might be perceived by their NPO partners.	Thematic analysis of weekly responses to two questions: (1) What value did your work generate for the NPO this week, and how did it do so? (2) What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?
	Reflective Essays	Understand the first-person perspective of the emergent designers engaging with NPOs.	Thematic analysis of five reflective essays, shared by emergent designers after their design engagements.
	Semi-Structured Interviews (Emergent Designers)	Systematically gather information on how emergent designers perceive their design practice to have created value for their NPO partner and speculate on how that value was perceived by their partner.	Thematic analysis of five interviews with emergent designers. Identification of skills, activities or behaviours that were most impactful in design engagements with Australian NPOs. Descriptions of specific moments in which they think the value of their work was particularly evident.
	Semi-Structured Interviews (Expert Designers)	Systematically gather information on how expert designers perceive their design practice to have created value for their NPO partner and speculate on how that value was perceived by their partner.	Thematic analysis of six interviews with expert designers. Identification of skills, activities or behaviours that were most impactful in design engagements with Australian NPOs. Descriptions of specific moments in which they think the value of their work was particularly evident.

PART II: ON DESIGN

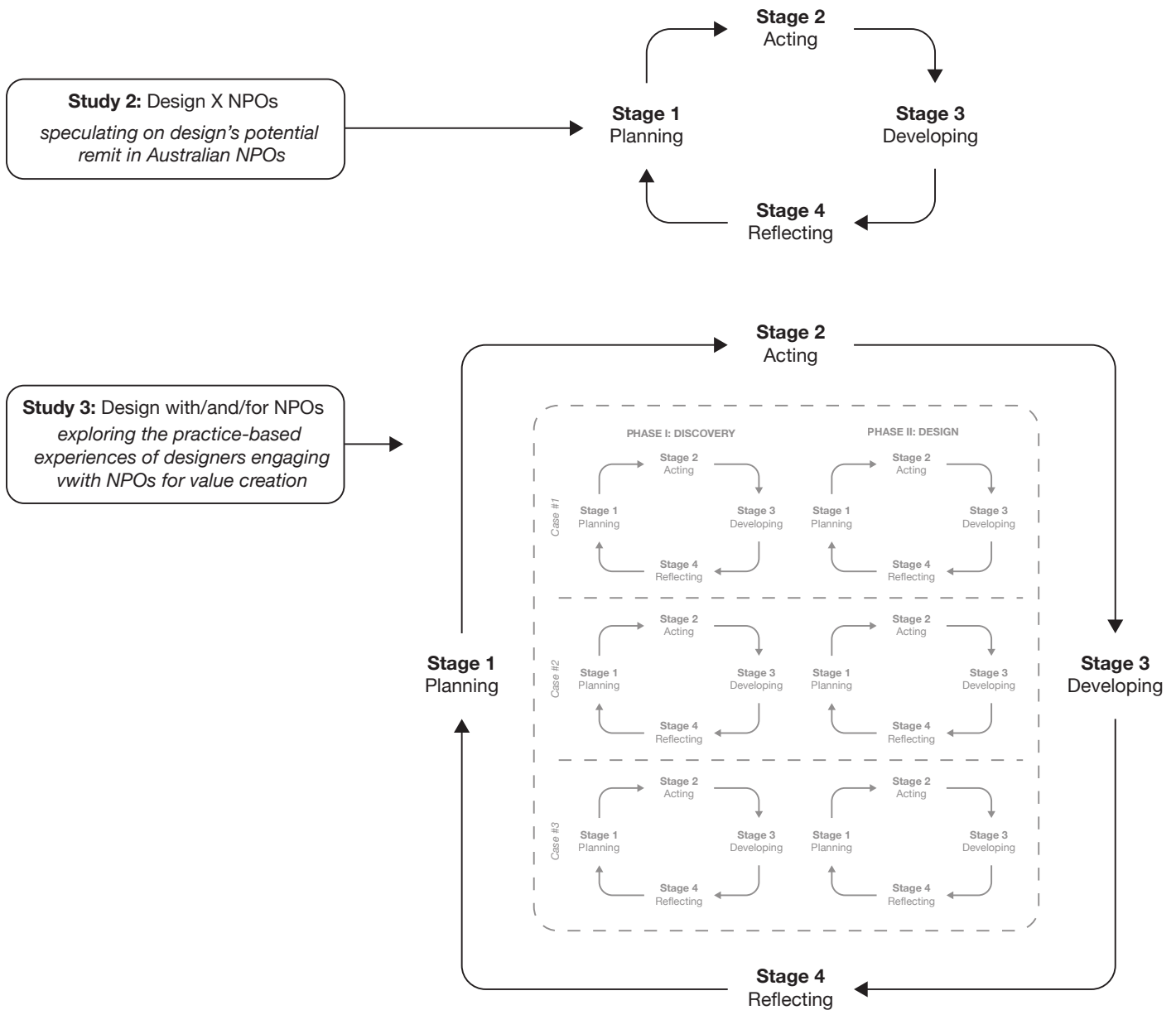


Figure 3.3: Illustrating the Action Research cycles of *Part II: On Design*

3.3

METHODS IN DETAIL

A central theme of this research is the exploration of how design might engage with the obscure and metamorphous concept of value. *Part I: On Value* utilised literature reviews (Narrative and Systematic), and *Part II: On Design* leveraged a survey, reflective diary entries with textual vignettes and concept maps, and semi-structured interviews. Methodological triangulation allows for the

cross-validation of insights, enhancing the rigour and robustness of findings offered in this research. The methods described below navigate the tension between developing knowledge and understanding without prescribing a singular taxonomy. Similarly, they seek to extend our understanding of value beyond meaning and situate the concept in use and practice.

- **Literature Review (Narrative)**

Narrative literature reviews similarly seek to evaluate and interpret existing studies but differ in their methodological foundations and broader intentions. Unlike systematic literature reviews, still coloured by their quantitative origins, narrative literature reviews tend to offer qualitative interpretations of prior knowledge without seeking generalisations of or cumulative knowledge from the reviewed content (Sylvester et al., 2013). Although the method has been critiqued for its unstructured approach – whereby the subjective inclusion of primary articles without an explicit criterion might generate to biased interpretations (Green et al., 2006) – it is still considered the ‘traditional’ way of reviewing extant literature and recognised for usefulness in gathering and synthesising a volume of literature from a specific subject area. Cronin et al. (2008) further argue that narrative literature reviews are primarily developed to “provide the reader with a comprehensive background for understanding current knowledge and highlighting the significance of new research” (pg. 38). Consequently, these reviews can identify critical research gaps and inspire future work or detail the strengths, weaknesses, contradictions, controversies or inconsistencies of theories, hypotheses, research methods or results.

The narrative literature review is employed in this research because it attends to the interpretive flexibility needed when examining how value is implicitly constructed in design praxes. The ability to surface conceptual ambiguities or theoretical/disciplinary assumptions, is well-suited in a field where value is often enacted rather than explicitly defined.

- **Literature Review (Systematic)**

Vom Brocke et al. (2009) characterise science as a cumulative endeavour, asserting “new knowledge is often created in the process of interpreting and combining existing knowledge” (pg. 1). This has long served as a foundational argument favouring systematic literature reviews, a method which seeks to rigorously evaluate and interpret existing studies related to a particular topic or phenomenon of interest (Bennet and Bennet, 2004). Although the approach originates from medical research, Denyer and Tranfield (2006) have argued convincingly for its use in, and inclusion of, qualitative domains (such as social sciences or project management) citing its capacity to “convey essential collective wisdom from existing research studies to professional practice” (pg. 223).

In this research, the Systematic Literature Review is used to rigorously map how value is explicitly defined and operationalised in literature on non-profits. The structured process supports the identification of recurring definitions, dominant frameworks, and gaps in existing discourse. Templier and Paré (2015) identify six generic steps employed to conduct a review: (1) formulating the research question(s) and objective(s), (2) searching the extant literature, (3) screening for inclusion, (4) assessing the quality of primary studies, (5) extracting data, and (6) analysing data. Clear and transparent reporting of how each step proceeds lends the method its rigour and validity. Paré and Kitsiou (2017) are quick to acknowledge that although the six generic steps are presented in sequential order iteration is common within the process and often find that steps initiated in the planning stage are later refined during the conduct or reporting phases of the stages.

- **Survey**

Groves et al. (2009) address the lexical ambiguity of the term ‘survey’ by offering the following precise definition: “a survey is a systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purpose of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the large population of which the entities are members” (pg. 2). Academics

and researchers alike are no strangers to the public opinion industry, and have utilised surveys to ascertain things like individual demographics characteristics, economic condition of households, attitudes and behavioural patterns, market preferences or election opinions, or extending the research to capture wider personal experiences or perceptions of life (Ornstein, 2013). Surveys derive their usefulness from their flexibility, allowing for a variety of (i) recruitment methods (e.g., random sampling, convenience sampling, purposive sampling, etc.), (ii) data collection approaches (e.g., qualitative strategies, quantitative strategies, mixed-method strategies), and (iii) methods of instrumentation (e.g., questionnaires or interviews) (Ponto, 2015).

The survey implemented in this research was developed to explore how Australian non-profit organisations conceptualise and articulate value. Adapted from the Value Definition Tool (VDT) by Straker and Nusem (2019), the survey guided participants through structured reflections on what their organisation does, how it delivers value, and why it pursues its core goals. This design enabled the investigation of value from multiple levels (operational, strategic, and relational) while allowing for internal and external perspectives to be compared. The method was particularly suited to this project's aims because it combined conceptual depth with scalable data collection, producing a broad yet nuanced dataset.

- **Reflective Diary Entries**

Writing down ideas, experiences and reflections through the diary method allows researchers to “capture phenomena of interest on a regular basis, in context, and over time” (Hyers, 2018). Broadly, this extends data collection from a “reliable” (Bolger et al., 2003, pg. 581) first-person description of researcher's experiences to include the researcher's own reflections on their actions, decision-making and behaviours. A critical component of the diary method leveraged was reflection – a systematic and rigorous process of meaning-making, with roots in scientific inquiry (Rodgers, 2002, p. 845). Reflective

diary entries allows researchers to engage in an ongoing dialogue with themselves: focusing on exploring what they know, how they came to know it, and why they believe that information to be true (Tann and Griffiths, 1992). Importantly, researchers utilising reflective diary methods record their experiences close to when the event or phenomena occurs, offering longitudinal data and potentially minimising retrospection bias (Bolger et al., 2003). This perspective is a stark contrast to other qualitative methods commonly used in social sciences, like interviews, whereby a participant must rely on their recollection or interpretation of a past event.

The flexible and longitudinal nature of reflective diary entries captures the evolving thoughts, considerations and positionalities of emergent designers as they engaged in real-world projects with Australian NPOs. The immediacy of the data collection helped mitigate retrospection bias and supported the tracing of key themes as they emerged and were negotiated in real time.

- **Textual Vignettes**

Vignettes are a diverse method commonly used across health and social sciences to address a vast range of research topics and aims. Originally, textual vignettes were employed as a quantitative method, whereby researchers integrated vignettes in surveys to capture a participant's general perception, attitudes or beliefs regarding a specific scenario (outlined in the textual vignette) (Finch, 1987). The use of textual vignettes to complement other data collection methods is common, with vignettes serving as (i) a warm-up exercise to inspire conversation amongst participants (Hazel, 1995), (ii) an elicitation technique to guide conversations towards specific topics (Gray and Manning, 2014), or (iii) a technique for exploring issues in depth or a unique perspective (Jenkins et al., 2010). Gray et al. (2017) explore the unique use of textual vignettes as a stand-alone method, the specific technique used in this research. Per their technique, short written accounts (of varying levels of

realism) are written by individuals, and these accounts offer researchers a window into a participant's interpretation of said phenomena.

In this research, textual vignettes were authored by emergent designers as short, narrative reflections crafted immediately after key design moments. These vignettes offer a window into each designer's interpretation of their practice and their shifting understanding of certain themes or situations. This method is particularly useful for illuminating how meaning is constructed in situ – not just as a reflection of what happened, but how designers make sense of what occurs.

- **Mind Maps**

Crafting visual representations of knowledge and mapping the relationship between key concepts is by no means a new approach. However, it wasn't until the 1970s that knowledge mapping (whether it be through mind maps, concept maps, spider maps, or cognitive maps) were coherently defined and developed as a research approach (Wheeldon and Åhlberg, 2014). Despite the polysemy of knowledge mapping, each of the myriad of approaches provides a visual representation of a person's dynamic understanding of concepts, scenarios, situations or topics (Mls, 2004). This research specifically utilises mind maps, a less rigid and formal approach than concept maps – defined by Novak and Gowin (1984) as graphical tools that “represent meaningful relationships between concepts in the form of propositions” (pg. 15). Rather than remaining wedded to the form of propositions, mind maps diagrammatically represent any words, themes, tasks or concepts deemed relevant the creator and highlight the unique associations between those elements and a central theme. Importantly, the construction and visual language of a mind map remains up to the unique discretion of the maker, but might include images, illustrations, bold lines or a range of colours (Buzan and Buzan, 1996). Wheeldon and Åhlberg (2012) argue that qualitative researchers may implement mind maps as a means of investigating perceived relationships and unfiltered associations in personal or user-generated data.

Within this research, mind maps served as a visual tool for designers to externalise their thinking over time. The flexibility of the method supports the emergence of thematic and conceptual linkages that may have otherwise remain tacit or unspoken. Producing mind maps at regular intervals throughout a design engagement can reveal how designers understand the evolving terrain of their engagement, highlighting shifts in focus, priority, or interpretation.

- **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews, as an approach, reflects an ontological position fundamentally concerned with “people’s knowledge, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions” (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003, pg. 2). Contemporary semi-structured interviews have developed greatly as a practice and reflect a range of traditions. Mason (2002) suggests a series of qualities which characterise the method, including: a relatively informal style of dialogue exchange; a thematic, topic-centred or narrative approach; and the belief that the interviewer’s role is to offer relevant contexts and situations to the interviewee to bring forth the participant’s situated and contextual knowledge. Describing the role of the interviewer further, Lewis-Beck et al. (2003) argue that the interviewer’s role is just as active, reflective and constitutive as the interviewee’s – with data being a result of the interaction rather than merely answers. Adjustable interview protocols are frequently developed by researchers before a semi-structured interview is conducted, to ensure some guidance and focus to the entire sample of interviews. Protocols often combine open-ended and theoretically driven questions, and give room to follow-up questions ad-libbed as needed.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this research to access the reflective and experiential knowledge of designers. The interviews enabled participants to articulate the tools, strategies, approaches, and frameworks that shape their engagement with NPOs, and generates a

rich account of practice: connecting abstract notions of value to concrete decisions, behaviours, and design outcomes.

3.4

DATA ANALYSIS

Thorne argues that data analysis is “the most complex and mysterious of all of the phases of a qualitative project, and the one that receives the least thoughtful discussion in the literature” (Thorne, 2000, pg. 68). There are a slew of consequences resulting from this. Sandelowski (2010) asserts that even when data analysis approaches are included, they are frequently used imprecisely or mislabelled. Further, Nowell et al. (2017) argue that lexical inaccuracy results in a lack of transparency, making it difficult for a reader to understand how data analysis was performed and thus, how findings ought to be interpreted. In an attempt to avoid these consequences, this section describes how thematic analysis was used as the primary data analysis approach in this research.

Thematic analysis is a data analysis method used commonly in qualitative research. It is used to identify patterns and themes within a data set, interpret said themes, and generate new insights or understandings (Boyatzis, 1998). Importantly, Braun and Clarke (2013) conceptualise themes as “patterns of shared meaning underpinned or united by a core concept” and not data domains. They instead describe as domain summary themes that only capture the diversity of meaning extant in an area of focus rather than the meaning itself. Other academics in this space also warn researchers conducting thematic analysis to avoid letting preconceptions interfere with theme generation (Patton, 2015 - 2015), arguing that goal-free (as much as possible) evaluation is well aligned with inductive research.

Summarising the growing body of literature on thematic analysis, Kiger and Varpio (2020) offer five helpful ‘practice points’ for researchers using the method (emphasis added):

1. Thematic analysis is a *powerful yet flexible method for analysing qualitative data* that can be used within a variety of paradigmatic or epistemological orientations.
2. Thematic analysis is an *appropriate method of analysis for seeking to understand experiences, thoughts, or behaviours* across a data set.
3. Themes are *actively constructed patterns (or meanings) derived from a data set* that answer a research question, as opposed to mere summaries or categorizations of codes, and themes can be generated inductively or deductively.
4. The most widely accepted framework for conducting thematic analysis involves a six-step process: *familiarizing* yourself with the data, *generating* initial codes, *searching* for themes, *reviewing* themes, *defining* and naming themes, and *producing* the report.
5. Given the flexibility of thematic analysis, *researchers using this method must clearly outline their paradigmatic orientations and assumptions* to ensure the trustworthiness of their findings and interpretations. (pg. 846)

Thematic analysis was selected for its capacity to engage with rich, qualitative material in a way that accommodates complexity. Given the diverse range of data generated across studies – from reflective diaries and visual artefacts to interview transcripts and survey responses – this method supports a consistent yet flexible approach to identifying patterns of meaning. Its focus on inductively constructing themes allows for the emergence of insights grounded in practice and supported by theory.

In line with any inductive approach, it is important to acknowledge the perspective from which interpretation occurred. The following section outlines my positionality as a researcher, and the personal and professional experiences that informed the framing, conduct, and analysis of this work.

3.5

POSITIONALITY

The catalyst of my obsession with value can be attributed to the following statement: Australia reported a total of 4,163 dairy farms in 2022 (Dairy Australia, 2022), a significant decline from the 12,896 registered in 1999/2000 (Dairy Australia 2014). My positionality begins this way because my dad is was a dairy farmer, and I grew up on one of those 4,163 farms.

From a young age, this meant trying to wrap my head around the logic of Australia's 2013 \$1 per litre of milk initiative – an initiative that grossly devalued the labour involved in producing milk. Even in 2024, when water is sold for \$3 a litre, soft drink is sold for \$4 a litre, and juice is sold for \$5 a litre, selling milk for \$1.10 per litre fails (in my opinion) to attribute appropriate economic value to the labour invested in production. Second, the opening statement also meant that I have never known the world without climate anxiety. On a farm, the first 11 years of my life were defined by the Millenium Drought.² Years that were typified by four-minute showers, weeks of searching the sky in hope of rain, and dwindling days of watching platypi in the farm dam until lower and lower water levels exposed their nests and it couldn't be a home for them anymore.

2. From 1997 to 2009 a significant portion of southern Australia and South-East Queensland experienced a prolonged period of dryness, with particularly severe conditions affecting the densely populated southeast and southwest regions of the country. The Murray–Darling Basin was particularly affected, and long periods of without major wet episodes or sustained above-average rainfall prevented water storages from recovering (Bureau of Meteorology, 2004).

As a designer, my work and practice has always been socially oriented. When I was an Honours undergraduate student my research and practice investigated digital technologies to support positive wellbeing for nurses, and later research explored the various roles and experiences of individuals interacting with existing or emergent technologies. Admittedly, during these years I was drinking the Kool-Aid; I firmly believed in design as a panacea, a silver-bullet to some of the world's most significant challenges (Brown and Martin, 2015; Liedtka et al., 2017). This opinion quickly changed after professional design experience in a service transformation branch of one of Australia's 'Big Four' banks.³ I came to realise that in a for-profit context the idea of design success – which I had envisaged as improving the workplace experiences of bank employees – was actually evaluated by market acceptance and economic profit. Slowly, and then suddenly, I understood that traditional conceptualisations of 'profit' ignores many of the things that we truly value, and many of the things that contribute to our flourishing on this planet. Profit often ignores the value of our physical and mental health. It can ignore our relationships with the ones we love. It can ignore the care of our communities, the value of clean air and unpolluted water. The value of biodiversity and a stable environment.

Thus, with a (enjoyably recalcitrant) resistance to the capitalist veneer of profit and pernicious market fundamentalism, alongside a critical and cautious investigation of the limits of design, this work investigates how design can assist Australian non-profit organisations in *their* pursuit of value.

3. Notable for being the focus of the 2017–2019 Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry (Hayne, 2019).

3.6

LIMITATIONS

As a child of the late 1990s, there is no better reference to encapsulate this section than “Nobody’s Perfect”, a song written by American musician and actress Miley Cyrus (credited as her character Hannah Montana from the eponymous television show). In the same vein, but perhaps more appropriate to the spirit of this doctoral research and academic context, Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) write, “regardless of the format scholarship assumes, from qualitative research to clinical trials, all studies have limitations” (pg. 261). They further, “the goal of presenting limitations is to provide meaningful information to the reader... [and] an ethical element of scientific inquiry [that] ensures transparency of both the research and the researchers, as well as provides transferability and reproducibility of methods” (Ross and Bibler Zaidi, 2019, pg. 261). In an effort to abide by their instruction, I note the following limitations of my research:

- **A single drop in the very big ocean:** From the outset, it has always been understood that understanding how any form of design might assist any Australian non-profit organisations in their pursuit of ‘value’ is beyond the reasonable expectation of a single researcher. Time, as much as scope, placed limitations on this inquiry. In an ideal research scenario, I would have worked with multiple teams, across multiple timelines, to generate a broader and more comparative understanding of design engagement in different non-profit contexts. Although an exploratory approach was implemented – with the hopes of gleaning some learnings to inform future research – this approach is not without disadvantages, such as inconclusive results, small sample populations, or a lack of standardised data collection or analysis. Nonetheless, I hope this small exploration of a very broad scenario generates more precise learnings that can be used as a basis for prediction in future

work. After all, “ideas come from previous exploration more often than from lightning strikes” (Tukey, 1980, pg. 23).

- **The voice of one is not the voice of the many:** Quantitatively inclined researchers may be quick to critique the sample size of this research. There are some 60,000 small, unincorporated organisations, who contribute to life of civil societies in Australia (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, 2022), and some 160,000 Australians with qualifications in aesthetic-based design vocations (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Despite those numbers, the total sample size of this research is less than 200. Although Sandelowski (1995) highlights that the adequacy of a sample size in qualitative research is relative – “a matter of judging a sample neither small nor large per se, but rather too small or too large for the intended purposes of sampling and for the intended qualitative product” (pg. 179). As a secondary consequence of the above limitation (a single drop in the very big ocean), I note that the findings of this PhD could never be conclusive to the entire non-profit sector or represent all facets and practices of design.
- **Many cooks and (only one sous-chef!) in the kitchen:** As the old adage goes, ‘too many cooks spoil the broth’. This dissertation has been an effort of six individuals: one PhD student (myself – the author) and a rotation of five supervisors. Considerable involuntary changes to the supervisory team of this project (averaging one new supervisor every year⁴) occurred due to career changes and career progressions of supervising academics. Griffiths et al. (2015) present supervision as a fundamental component of learning that, in the case of a PhD supervision team, ensure the research student’s skills are developed to the level appropriate to the institution’s acceptable standard. Although involuntary changes to a research student’s supervision may result in a disruption of the student’s progress or wellbeing and support needs (Griffiths et al., 2015), I found many of these supervisory transitions came at opportune times with little risk to the broth. For example,

4. At what stage ought I consider if I am the problem?

when one supervisor moved to another academic institution, I was able to enlist another academic with significant experience in community engagement right before a community-based action research study occurred. Similarly, finding a new primary supervisor 18-months before submission afforded an opportunity to reconsider the narrative of the project with a fresh audience.

3.7

ETHICS

The research contributing to this thesis was given ethical clearance (University of Sydney HREC: 2021/787) and confirmed as meeting the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023). All participants were provided with participation information statements and ethical consent forms with signed forms being collected and kept on file.

PART I: ON VALUE

GRAND NARRATIVES OF VALUE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH DESIGN

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT VALUE? UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS AND FRAMES OF VALUE IN THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR

INTERLUDE II: ON VALUE

Welcome back to the green.

We've covered some ground now: questions, context, methods. We're now approaching one of the big ideas pulling us forward: value.

Before we dive too boldly into design practice, we need to orient ourselves within this murky terrain. What does value mean to designers? What does value mean in design? How does it show up? The aim of *Part I: On Value* is to figure out what we need to be paying attention to as we move forward.

This first study begins that orientation work by examining how value is positioned in design discourse. Drawing on three value narratives from the social sciences, it traces how these dominant narratives may influence and inform design praxes. The aim is not just to critique these narratives and praxes individually, but to understand a larger story that helps clarify how inherited or synthesised narratives of value shape the assumptions, orientations, and boundaries of design practice itself.

It almost becomes a kind of ghost hunt: a search for the inherited legacies and unspoken assumptions that quietly circulate within design practice. What kinds of value are embedded in our language, our approaches, our tools of practice? Where do those ideas come from?

Although these questions may not yield simple answers, they will help us locate ourselves and prepare us for what's to come.

I'll see you on the other side.

GRAND NARRATIVES OF VALUE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH DESIGN

Natalia Gulbransen-Diaz, Dr. Leigh-Anne Hepburn

CHAPTER 4

ABSTRACT

We all use value speak in our everyday conversations. Within the field of design, the implications of value are even more integral: we expose and negotiate value in order to create artefacts perceived as desirable and avoid those deemed bad. Our respective ideas of and about value guide our actions and judgements, acting as legitimations of what might be considered worthwhile or important. Yet despite its prevalence, our understanding of value is often ambiguous and subjective. In this research, we examine three grand narratives of value and ascertain how each representation relates to design. We argue that the strengths and limitations of sociological, economic, and linguistic value are mirrored in their related design praxes. We propose that this holistic awareness enables a more critical and expansive assessment of design methods and practices.

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4.1

INTRODUCTION

We often suspect that the appeal of the term value is its ambiguity. Everyone uses value differently, but it is nonetheless a common aspect of conversations. We all *speak* of value – “that song is wonderful,” “she is a great dancer,” “those results are worthless” – and we all *value* things – a family photograph, a wedding ring, a much-needed refrigerator bought at a great discount – but attempting to synthesise the common ground between these objects, relationships and ideas is challenging. A sceptic may suggest even if they all have something in common, that ‘something’ must be so vague and abstract it’s meaningless to point it out in the first place. However, like many researchers before us (Dorst, 2011; Friedman et al., 2013a; Halstrøm, 2016; Le Dantec and Do, 2009; Winner, 1980), we are motivated by the belief that evaluating the language and relationships of value serves as a window into the putative truths *about* value.

Prior investigations seeking to understand the concept of value in design research have mirrored the endeavours of value theorists of the last thousand years. That is to say, their efforts have been beholden to the fads of research cycles: celebrated during periods buoyed by theoretical popularity before slipping into obscurity and dormancy when we supposed we could go on without exact clarity.

In this research, we examine three of the most prevalent articulations of value and ascertain how each representation relates to design. We argue that the strengths and limitations inherent in the sociological, economic, and linguistic narratives of value are mirrored in their related design praxes and do so in the hope of revealing the cultural assumptions which shape these value narratives, in order to better understand their impact in design.

4.2

ON VALUE

When it comes to discussing the concept of value, we ought to begin our journey by resting on sandy shores with Mr Palomar. The eponymous hero of Italo Calvino's 1983 novel is first introduced to the reader as he is engaged with a deceptively simple task – he stands at the edge of a beach where he is vacationing and hopes to observe a wave. However, as Calvino reveals to the reader, Mr Palomar is specific: “in his desire to avoid vague sensations, he establishes for his every action a limited and precise object” (Calvino, 1983/1985, pg. 3). Palomar stands on the sandy shores focused not on “the waves”, but on the precise object of “a wave”. But differentiating a single ocean wave from the wave that immediately follows, “which seems to push it and at times overtake it and sweep it away”, is a challenging perceptual task given that a wave is never in isolation, it is constantly responding to the complex features that concur in shaping and originating it (Calvino, 1983/1985, pg. 3). As such, Mr. Palomar's desire to *see* a wave requires him to perceive “all its simultaneous components without overlooking any of them” (Calvino, 1983/1985, pg. 4).

Even if we find Mr. Palomar's enterprise somewhat futile, his dedication, specificity and particularity are admirable. Our own perceptual talents may not extend as far as Palomar's (and we note that the subject of our inquiry is somehow vaguer than the ocean), yet we too must try to see as many simultaneous components of value as possible, without overlooking any of them. We will begin this investigation by focusing on three specific grand narratives of value that exist within social sciences. According to Graeber (2001), each narrative of value alludes to not just how our culture defines the world, but what we find beautiful, worthwhile, and important about it.

4.2.1. ON 'VALUES' IN THE SOCIOLOGICAL SENSE

The first major stream of thinking refers to “values” in the sociological sense. That is, ‘values’ are conceptions of what is ultimately ‘good, proper or desirable’. One of the most notable efforts to systematise values across cultures was the Harvard Values Project, led by Clyde Kluckhohn and a team of allied scholars. During the 1940s and 50s, Kluckhohn’s *Comparative Study of Values in Five Cultures* was situated in the county of Rimrock, New Mexico (USA), an area occupied by Navaho, Zuni, Mormon, Texan, and Mexican-American communities respectively (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961). This location, and the distinct communities who lived there, provided Kluckhohn with an opportunity to see how five contiguous groups of people, each with their own profoundly unique system of value, adapted to the same environment.

A significant result of the study was the identification of value orientations, explicated as “ordered principles that are employed in selecting alternatives to action” (Kluckhohn, 1951). Conversely, a mainstay of Kluckhohn’s work was his constant re-defining of ‘values’. Central to many assumptions was the notion of desire, and the idea that values were “conceptions of the desirable” (Kluckhohn, 1951). This belief firmly aligns the project with the core tenets of axiology – an area of philosophy centrally concerned with classifying what things are good, and how good they are (Smith and Thomas, 1998). Both axiology and Kluckhohn’s project recognise that “conceptions of the desirable” are not limited to present moment (people want a whole range of things) but rather allude to values being representative of that which we *ought* to want.

If we return to the voice of the sceptic who seeks to understand the meaning of life, we can suggest: values are ideas if not necessarily about the meaning of life, then at least about what one could justifiably want from it. Values become the criteria by which we deem desires legitimate, important, worthwhile, or not. This was, for Kluckhohn, indicative of the concrete implications of value: value is not just an abstract philosophy of life but something that has very real and direct impact on people’s behaviour. The issue lay with determining *how* values did so. Common ‘value analysis’ consists of identifying and interpreting

key terms (e.g., liberty, equality), figuring out exactly what those terms mean and situating these terms within their broader cultural context. In the Rimrock project, this looked like understanding and interpreting highly valued terms within the respective communities: the Navajo notion of ‘harmony’, or the Texan idea of ‘success’. However, as Kluckhohn soon discovered, in an attempted *comparative* study of values, the incredibly idiosyncratic nature of these concepts was deeply problematic.

Chang (2015) supplies two helpful terms for understanding the challenges of comparing idiosyncratic concepts: incomparability and incommensurability. Put simply: Two items are *incomparable* when “they fail to stand in an evaluative comparative relation, such as being better than or worse than or equally as good as the other” (Chang, 2015, pg. 205). Two items are *incommensurable* when they “cannot be put on the same scale of units of value, that is, there is no cardinal unit of measure that can represent the value of both items” (Chang, 2015, pg. 205). It was both the incomparable and incommensurable nature of value that led to a fundamental breakdown of Kluckhohn’s project, as abstract representations of value could never be distilled into a mundane context. Kluckhohn and his collaborators could never quite translate the supposed key patterns, symbols and themes holding society together with the everyday decision-making of individuals.

4.2.2. ON ‘VALUE’ IN THE ECONOMIC SENSE

At the risk of both oversimplification and overgeneralisation, we’d like to suggest that the foundational tenets of economics are relatively clear. Economics is firstly premised on the belief that society is made up of individuals. It then assumes that all individuals have a relatively clear idea of what they want out of life. Finally, it argues that said individuals are trying to get as much of their wants as possible for the least amount of sacrifice or effort. This is commonly regarded as the ‘mini/max’ approach or referenced per Mill’s *Homo economicus* which posits people want to minimise their output and maximise their yield (Mill, 1836). Yet, the economic behaviour of individuals in the Trobriand Islands highlight how “fallacious [of a]

theory” the Primitive Economic Man was: “prompted in all his actions by a rationalistic conception of self-interest and achieving his aims directly and with the minimum of effort” (Malinowski, 1922, pg. 60).

Trobriand men are yam growers par excellence, defined by their success in gardening and exchanges of yams and kula shells (Weiner, 1976). Gardening as an act serves not just to provide food security, but to reflect the endless energies Trobriand men could dedicate to their garden, to making it tidy, attractive, and prosperous. The aesthetic and political significance of gardening – the depth of the experience – is impossible to overstate. In the eyes of the Primitive Economic Man, Trobriand men actively perform unnecessary labour and then give the fruits of that labour to their sister’s family without reciprocation (his family is not fed by his sister’s family, but the brothers of his wife).

In this way, the economic behaviour of Trobriand men complicates the models of maximisation economics hold dear: it relates to a system of exchange whereby the most important figures in society seemed focused not on necessarily *accumulating* wealth but rather *giving* to the most away.

Some may argue that the ‘mini/max’ approach still stands, and that what the Trobriand men are trying to maximise is not food but rather social standing, honour, prestige or even self-worth. Even if each were to be disproven, if someone was sufficiently determined they would attempt to continue to identify *something* that was to be maximised. While this argument may seem circular, and perhaps rather silly, it still produces an interesting side effect: in order for this faux economic analysis to take place one inevitably needs to map out a series of “values” (akin to the sociological sense of the word) and define them in a manner fundamentally similar to economic ones. In this sense, when economists discuss a value (e.g., power, prestige, moral purity, etc.) they are, in actuality, discussing an abstraction of said value (e.g., “power”, “prestige”, “moral purity”, etc.) and reifying it in order to treat it as an object not fundamentally different from a jar of strawberry jam or ingots

of gold. This is because economic theory ultimately tries to describe all of human behaviour on the basis of a certain notion of desire, which in turn, is presupposed on a certain notion of pleasure. It is the promise of pleasure that economists call ‘value’, and the economic notion of value refers to the extent to which an object may be desired and what may be given up in exchange.

This does, however, feel like an opportune time to remember Ursula K. Le Guin, who argued “Reason is a faculty far larger than mere objective thought. When either the political or the scientific discourse announces itself as the voice of reason, it is playing God, and should be spanked and stood in the corner” (Le Guin, 1989, pg. 148). Yet, no matter if we undergo or avoid the suggested spanking and corner standing, we are still left to ponder why individuals determine how and which objects afford them more pleasure than others.

4.2.3. ON ‘VALUE’ IN THE LINGUISTIC SENSE

Linguists have a long tradition of describing the meaning of a word as it’s ‘value’, a Structuralist idea which invariably can be traced back to Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), the founding father of modern, structural linguistics. Saussure – whose work found wider circulation in 1915, two years after his death – proposed the following germinal tenets: firstly, language ought to be seen as a system of signs (Saussure himself never used the word ‘structure’); secondly, those specific signs are arbitrary in their initial instance and “have not taken their specific form because of what they mean, but to be different from other signs” (Bertens, 2012, pg. 49). In his *Course of General Linguistics* (1916/1983), Saussure introduces the principle of differentiation and states, “language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others, as in the diagram” (Saussure et al., 1916/1983, pg. 117). He expounds, a word’s most “precise characteristic is being what others are not” (Saussure et al., 1916/1983, pg. 117).

While this example may seem self-evident, it is his next argument that seems most counter-intuitive. In the same way that the principles of difference give rise to the signs (words) that comprise a language, they *also* give rise to *meaning*. The principle of difference is used to not only distinguish words as spoken or written (referred to as *signs*) from each other, but to simultaneously distinguish *meanings* (*signifiers*) from each other. This ultimately suggests that in order to understand the meaning of something (ascertain its value) we must understand its place in a larger context or identify some kind of total system. Discovering this hidden code, or symbolic system, which (language-like) tied everything together became the hallmark of Structuralism. Saussure (1916/1983, pg. 115) writes:

[values are paradoxically] composed: (1) of a dissimilar thing that can be exchanged for the thing of which the value is to be determined; and (2) of similar things that can be compared with the thing of which the value is to be determined. Both factors are necessary for the existence of a value.

Having originally set out to do what economic and exchange theories of value could not, it becomes evident that the principle of difference did not just emphasise how two objects may be different, but rather, it often implied that one was worth *more* than the other. The lack of clarity around the comparative components of Structuralism have long been accepted as the approach's greatest weakness. Many have pointed out, for example, that Structuralist literary critics have often provided brilliant analyses of the formal principles underlying a novel or a poem, discovering all sorts of hidden patterns of meaning, but that they provided no insight at all into whether the novel or poem in question was any good (Kuper, 1991). Similarly, Structuralist approaches in anthropology – as exemplified in the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966; 1969) – tend to focus on how members of different cultures understand the nature of the universe, and for this they can be remarkably revealing; but the moment one tries to understand how, say, one thing is seen as better (i.e. preferable, more desirable, more valuable) than another, problems emerge.

As a result, the great dilemma of Structuralism has been how to move on from understanding people's passive contemplation of the world (Geertz's "cerebral savage", 1973) to their active participation in it.

4.3

ON DESIGN

At no offence to Italo Calvino, it is at this point that we'd like to take some artistic liberties with the narrative of Mr. Palomar. We would like to propose a minor adaption: that while he stood on the sandy shores of his vacation beach gazing out at the ocean, his quest to perceive a single wave was complicated not just by the complexity of the water itself, but by hundreds of figures gliding across the horizon. Boats, with sails both grand and modest and bows both decorated and decorous, happened to set sail that day; all happening across Mr Palomar's field of view.

We previously analogised the notion of value as being the ocean that Mr. Palomar gazes upon. Now, we propose that design, in the most encompassing use of the word, sails on those very same waters. Admittedly, it does so in vast array of boats, each navigating the ocean in its own way. In the following sections we will position various design practices as respective responses to the articulations of value previously described. We will investigate the material origins and makeup of these 'boats' and assess their maritime capabilities. In doing so, we seek to understand how each of the narratives of value central to three specific design approaches informs the boundaries of our practice.

4.3.1. PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PRACTICE & VALUE-SENSITIVE DESIGN

The first fleet of boats for us to examine fly under the banners of Participatory Design and Value-Sensitive Design. As we will explore momentarily, these design practices reflect the sociological grand narrative, whereby values in

this sense are framed as conceptions of what is ultimately “good, proper or desirable” and relate not necessarily to the meaning of life, but what one could justifiably want from it.

Participatory Design (PD) finds its origins amongst the explicitly political climate of 1960s Scandinavia, and from these beginnings has been forged with a commitment to values. Suchman (in Schuler and Namioka, 1993) describes PD as a practice that makes explicit the critical, and inevitable, presence of values in the system development process. While the participation of end users throughout the design process has long been a fundamental tenet of PD, even as it became popular beyond the shores of Scandinavia, its reasoning not always clear (Bødker and Iversen, 2002). Many recognise participation as important because it empowers stakeholders and allows them to feel connected to the design process, however, Carroll and Rosson (2007) maintain the true reason participation is important is that it allows for a process of negotiating values – culminating in a “moral proposition” (pg. 243).

Values, in the context of Participatory Design, are often framed as “enduring beliefs that we hold concerning *desirable modes of conduct* or *end-state of existence* in different situations, societies and cultural contexts” (Iversen et al., 2012, 2012, pg. 89). In the Wisdom Well – a 12m² interactive floor that tracks movement in order to encourage kinaesthetic learning amongst children (see Gronbaek et al., 2007) – values are dialogically cultivated, developed, and grounded by designers throughout the design process.

Development of the Wisdom Well was underpinned by the notion of dialogue developed by Jones et al. (2007), whereby a person in dialogue may prefer a certain position but does not hold to it non-negotiably. The key role of the designer was to facilitate and orchestrate the dialogue in which values could emerge, develop, and be ground recursively throughout the entire participatory design process.

The ongoing engagement of stakeholders allowed for the emergent values to be further refined, re-conceptualised, and renegotiated as necessary

and appropriate. While many of Iversen et al. (2012) subsequent actions aligned with traditional participatory design practice (i.e., ongoing workshops and public prototyping engagements to co-design and co-develop the final product), a notable aspect of their reflections pertain to the realisation of values whereby the process of working with values is manifested in a physical form, like that of a final design prototype. They describe how artefacts like the mock-ups, prototypes, and supporting digital application instantiate open, democratic and inclusive education – the core values of all stakeholders.

Value-Sensitive Design, on the other hand, was developed as a response to the limitations of prior approaches¹ to integrate ethics and sociotechnical analyses with design. Value-Sensitive Design gives particular emphasis to conceptually, empirically, and technically investigating how human values are accounted for in the design of technology. Friedman et al. (2013b) refer to value as “what a person or group of people consider important in life” and specifically identify the 12 following human values as having ethical import: human welfare, ownership and property, privacy, freedom from bias, universal usability, trust, autonomy, informed consent, accountability, identity, calmness, environmental sustainability (Friedman et al., 2013b, pg. 57; Friedman and Kahn, 2007).

However, Value-Sensitive Design is not without critique. Le Dantec and Do (2009) take issue with the pre-defined list of values suggested by Value-Sensitive Design, arguing that this a priori formulation that runs the risk of ignoring any important values that might be elicited from a project via value mapping. Manders-Huits’ (2011) critique is more explicit, objecting to the definition of value offered in Value-Sensitive Design and arguing that framing value as “what a person or group of people considers important in life” risks conflating stakeholder preferences with moral values. She further states, “in view of a normative approach for ethics of technology, explicate the difference between descriptive and normative values, i.e., what stakeholders

1. The specific approaches reviewed by Friedman and Kahn (2007) were computer ethics, social informatics, computer-supported cooperative work, and participatory design.

factually consider important versus what they should regard as important” (Manders-Huits, 2011, pg. 282).

4.3.2. DESIGN INNOVATION AND THE ECONOMICS OF DESIGN

We now turn to the next fleet of boats, released onto the waters by shipbuilders subscribed to the economic grand narrative of value. Captaining the fleet are the works championed by John Heskett and Roberto Verganti, each of whom seeks to articulate design’s place in economics and business.

Heskett’s *Design and the Creation of Value* (2017) distils the abstract qualities of several economic theories and forges links with design’s purpose. While the book artfully examines design from the perspective of economics and vice versa, it’s Heskett’s discussion of design for value-adding and value creation that is of particular relevance to this critique. Heskett considers design’s significance in economic terms, asserting that while much of a designer’s job may be to “[add] value to products that already exist or to decisions that have already been taken by people elsewhere in the company,” this does not account for “the possibility of designers *creating value*, of being responsible for generating ideas for products and, indeed, of being an element in the strategic decision-making processes of firms.” (Heskett et al., 2017, pg. 157).

Heskett et al. (2017) go on to describe the four ways in which design (unlike other disciplines) can deliver value from the standpoint of customers, when successfully integrated into a company or economy’s strategic plan: (1) design is innately concerned with change, (2) design gives product concepts tangibility, (3) design concepts are important determinants of manufacturing feasibility and cost, and (4) the reality of a design as perceived by users at all levels determines market success (pg. 166). Heskett’s work positions design as a practice fundamentally concerned with adaptation, and by virtue of adaptation, able to enlarge the boundaries of possibility which may generate future economic value. Importantly, Heskett also recognises that the value intended by a designer is not always realised in the marketplace, as it is

ultimately the consumer who determines “the meaning and value of design in the marketplace” (Heskett et al., 2017, pg. 179).

Similarly, in Verganti’s inauguration of design-driven innovation, the concept of product meaning is defined by the values a product creates for a consumer (e.g., utilitarian, emotional, psychological, or socio-cultural values) (Verganti, 2009). This approach seeks to extend the boundaries of user-centred design to coalesce knowledge of user needs, technological development, and product language – ultimately devoting a designer’s attention to not just what form a product may take or how it might be used, but to why a consumer would use a product in the first place (Verganti and Öberg, 2013). Design driven-innovation proposes design as “a source of a stream of products that consumers find delightful, meaningful, and worthy of their loyalty” (Verganti, 2006, pg. 8) and focuses on leveraging the power of design to create products and services that are not only functionally excellent but also resonate with users on a profound, emotional level.

What is of interest here is the continued centring of the user and their subsequent desires. As was outlined previously, the promise of pleasure informs what economists call ‘value’ and per the economic articulation, value refers to how much a desired object or condition is evaluated to be worth in a process of exchange (that is, when the desired object or condition may be given up). Although Heskett and Verganti each independently criticises conventional economic theory for characterising value from the limited perspective of production and yield, centring a user at the locus of a product’s meaning still reifies abstract human values (in an attempt to grapple with them) as if they were material things that can be rationally evaluated by the user, or (more grievously) a designer.

This process of reification is exemplified nowhere better than in the products of consumer technology multi-national corporation Apple Inc., one of the most ‘powerful’ and ‘valuable’ companies in the world (Peters, 2020; Phillips, 2018). Apple’s success with products like the iPhone can be attributed not only to their technological innovations but also to their meticulous attention

to user preferences and desires. By designing sleek, intuitive interfaces and incorporating features that resonate with consumers' lifestyles and aspirations, Apple creates products that promise pleasure and the fulfillment of user desires. However, in an examination of "the Apple Way", Gaughwin (2023) argues that the promise of betterment is fraught, and merely "predicated on a reliance on the device to operate in everyday life" (pg. 62). This exemplifies how economic value is not only created but maintained through the continual reification of consumer desire.

4.3.3. SPECULATIVE DESIGN AND CRITICAL DESIGN PRACTICE

The final fleet of boats we turn our gaze towards is that of Speculative Design and Critical Design practice. Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby first described the approach in their Manifesto for Practice (Dunne and Raby, 2013). Speculative Design advocates for design to extend beyond common industrial and technological processes, where it frequently unquestionably reinforces the status quo. Instead, Dunne and Raby champion design as an opportunity to "challenge industrial agendas" (2021, pg. 58), and offer "a critique of the prevailing situation through designs that embody alternative social, cultural, technical or economic values" (2021, pg. 58). Importantly though, Speculative Design is framed as an exploration not of "how to make or assess objects, but rather in terms of what these objects *could* or *should* do" (Galloway and Caudwell, 2018).

For instance, Dunne, Raby and Anastassiades' *Designs For Fragile Personalities In Anxious Times, 2004/05* showcases products embodied with the understanding of consumer/user as a complex existential being – one who may possess irrational but real anxiety like the fear of alien abduction or nuclear annihilation (Dunne & Raby, and Anastassiades, 2004). In particular, their *Huggable Atomic Mushrooms* challenge industrial agendas by leveraging psychological realism and humanising nuclear energy through a soft, huggable mushroom-shaped object that emits warmth and comfort instead of fear and danger.

Similarly, Critical Design investigates the present social, cultural, and ethical implications of design objects and practice. Grounded in critical social theory, designers in this echelon of practice “scan the cultural horizon today, offering a critique of what already exists” (Malpass, 2013, pg. 341). In this way, critical designers achieve their diverse and often polemic critiques by extending (and to some extent exaggerating) the critical distance between the object and the user, availing themselves to striking comments on current socio-technical, economic, political, cultural, and psychological concerns (Malpass, 2013). Both Speculative and Critical design broaden the remit of design beyond mere usability or interaction concerns and instead encourage practitioners to collectively ask what it means to live in a designed world that truly reflects our values.

Yet, like the other design praxes outlined above, Speculative and Critical Design are not without opposition. Bardzell and Bardzell (2013) acknowledge the breath of what Speculative and Critical Design are trying to achieve and recognise that the core provocations of the practice are as philosophical as they are technological. Nonetheless, the authors are quick to highlight that despite their apparent potential, neither practice is often utilised in the everyday. And it is here that Speculative and Critical Design fall, in the same tradition of a linguistic narrative of value, on their own swords.

Where Structuralist approaches are critiqued for discovering the hidden patterns and meanings of novels and poems, yet simultaneously being unable to discern whether or not said novel or poem is any good, Speculative and Critical Design is similarly positioned to offer rich contemplations of what designed objects *could* or *should* do, without being able to translate those understandings into real world articulations of value. Like linguistic structuralism, these designs excel at mapping meaning but fall short of expressive relative value or desire. While there is much benefit in the intellectual, philosophical, and designerly endeavours of Speculative and Critical Design, we are yet to bridge the gap between meaning and desire (in this instance, perhaps as a limited understanding of the latter).

4.4

CONCLUSION

By drawing attention to the complex fabric of sociological, economic and linguistic representations of value, we sought to shed light on how the strengths and limitations of each articulation may inform common design praxes. The sociological representation of value elucidated the cultural nuances shaping notions of ‘good’ and ‘desirable’. Kluckhohn’s struggles with the incomparability and incommensurability of value ought to serve as a warning to design practitioners engaging with sociological value(/s) who may conflate descriptive value for normative value. The economic articulation framed value as a delicate equilibrium between pleasure maximization and effort minimisation. Yet, this approach fails to adequately manage reified abstractions of value or explicate why and how individuals determine which objects afford them more pleasure than others – something of particular interest to designers who centre the user in processes of product meaning. Finally, the linguistic notion of value highlighted the intricate connection between meaning and difference but fails to assist Speculative and Critical Designers in extending their rich contemplations into the domain of the mundane.

Ultimately, we argue that critically understanding the depth, complexity, and nuance around how we understand, articulate, and describe value, and how this plays out implicitly in our design practices, is core to moving the discipline forward. We must examine which narratives (inherited or synthesised) of value are central to our differing modes of practice to better comprehend the boundaries of our work. Designers, like Mr. Palomar, ought to commit themselves to deeply comprehending and harnessing the ever-shifting currents of value.

INTERLUDE III: (STILL) ON VALUE

Reader, I know what you're thinking. We're still on value?

Yep, we sure are. We're not quite ready to leave it behind. Believe me, I tried. But this stretch of the thesis still has something to say and more questions to ask as we continue orienting our understanding of value.

If the last chapter explored how value is positioned in relation to design practice, this next one asks how value is articulated in literature on non-profits.

In everyday language, value circulates as if it were common sense. We talk about *adding value*, *measuring value*, *doing things of value* as if value were fixed, objective, available for accounting. But this research is interested in what slips beneath those certainties. What are we really invoking when we reach for that word? What ideals are we upholding, what exclusions are we condoning, and what alternatives are we neglecting when we speak so easily of value?

This research doesn't try to pin value down to a single definition. That would be too easy and too misleading. Instead, it treats value as a signal of what is considered worthwhile, and consequently, what is not. In this research, value is understood both as an aspirational ideal and a measure of worth: a twofold role that shapes not only what is pursued, but how that pursuit is legitimised.

Study 2: What Do We Mean When We Talk About Value? begins here. It examines which notions of value are popular in the context of non-profit organisation literature. This is not an exercise in definitional clarity, but

a deliberate effort to map the contours of a concept that underwrites so much of the language we use when imagining better worlds or legitimising the world we reinforce today. By identifying perceptions and frames of value, this study offers a lexicon not to constrain, but to enable more critical conversations about what we aim for, and how we know if we've arrived.

This inquiry is foundational. Before turning to how design might contribute to the pursuit of value, we ought to ask a more fundamental question: what the hell is value, anyway?

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT VALUE?

UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS AND FRAMES OF VALUE IN THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR

Natalia Gulbransen-Diaz, Dr. Erez Nusem

ABSTRACT

How and why we value things directly informs our behaviour towards them. Despite being an essential aspect of any organisation, the concept of value remains poorly defined in the non-profit context. This research utilises a systematic literature review and content analysis of value-oriented literature on non-profits to investigate how the term 'value' is used in popular discourse. Our research identifies 32 distinct perceptions of value, along with four approaches to framing value. We elucidate the four most common perceptions of value (social, financial, economic, and public), and illustrate the relationships between the different perceptions of value. In doing so, we delineate between concepts of value internal to a non-profit organisation and value external to it, and create a distinction between frames of proposed and practiced value. Overall, this research demystifies the notion of value within non-profit organisations and expands to the conceptual repertoire of practitioners and researchers alike.

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5.1

INTRODUCTION

“Can you tell me, Socrates, can virtue be taught?” (Plato. et al., 1949). Despite its brevity, Plato’s *Meno* sees Socrates challenge and then confound his new student through a rigorous cross-examination of virtue. Subverting Meno’s original question, Socrates ripostes a more essentialist query – “what is virtue?”. He argues that “without knowing the nature of an object, one cannot judge its qualities” (Plato. et al., 1949, 71b). This dictum serves as the foundation of this paper as we, in the same vein, seek to untangle the perplexities of value in non-profit literature.

The theoretically and contextually diverse use of the term value has obfuscated, rather than illuminated, its meaning. In the end, these diverse, widespread and alternate usages each infer their own respective definitions with varying degrees of overlap, ultimately leaving us bereft of a basic conceptual account. For non-profit organisations who seek to create value, the ambiguity of value’s nature and qualities mean may be ill-positioned to effectively generate or leverage its potential. While it may be easy for an organisation to make assumptions around value (what kind they create, how they convey it, etc.), if the term is not appropriately clarified or part of formal conversation it becomes challenging to transform the idea of value into something relevant, comprehensible, and tangibly accessible for their stakeholders.

The concept of ‘value’ has been recognised as an essential component of business (Bowman and Ambrosini, 2000), and as paramount to sustaining a competitive advantage. In common parlance, the idea of value connotes worth – usually thought of in relation to production or financial terms. Classical economists (e.g., Marx, Smith) established theories of value contingent upon conceived economic value and said value’s relation to society. Neoclassical economists (e.g., Walras, Pareto, etc.) eschewed this approach and instead articulate value as a subjective relationship between individuals and their

preferences. Anderson and Narus (1998) described value within the business market as “the worth in monetary terms of the technical, economic, service, and social benefits a customer company receives in exchange for the price it pays for a market offering” (pg. 6). Incidentally, Gale et al. (1994) describes value from a customer perspective, stating that customer value is market perceived quality adjusted for the relative price of a product. Proposing an explanation of value beyond the neoclassical tradition, and instead firmly situating itself within a subjective and social space, Throsby (2000) articulates cultural value as “a multidimensional representation of [an object’s] cultural worth assessed in quantitative and/or qualitative terms against a variety of attributes such as its aesthetic quality, spiritual meaning, social function, symbolic significance, historical importance, uniqueness, and so on” (pg. 8).

Our research is predicated upon the notion that while value is essential to organisations, it is poorly defined, communicated and understood – particularly in non-profit organisations who straddle both production and socially oriented agendas. As such, our research seeks to investigate how the term value is articulated in literature on non-profits. Specifically, we are interested in how different definitions of value relate to non-profit organisation praxis. While this work does not attempt to synthesise a singular or authoritative definition of the term value, it does suggest that a more detailed understanding will be beneficial to non-profit management.

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we explain the methodology utilised to collect references to value present in popular literature on non-profits. This is followed by a findings section, which outlines the 32 distinct perceptions of value identified before turning to outline four approaches to framing value. A discussion of the value landscape is offered, with particular attention given to how perceptions of value are situated relative to non-profit organisations. The notion of proposed and practiced frames of value are similarly offered, with extrapolations relating these concepts to the agendas of various non-profit organisations. We conclude with future considerations and the limitations of the paper.

5.2

METHODS

A systematic literature review and content analysis were employed to investigate use of the term value in current literature on non-profits. The systematic literature review was employed to obtain scholarly publications for analysis. Tranfield et al. (2003) delineate systematic reviews as replicable, scientific and transparent processes that exercise an exhaustive search of literature. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, systematic reviews minimise bias by providing an audit trail of the reviewer’s decisions, procedures, and conclusions. A content analysis of the collected literature was utilised to offer new insight into the dialogical employment of the term value from replicable and valid inferences (Krippendorff, 1984). This is a known method of analysing documents (Cole, 1988) and its conventional aim – described by (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008) as a means to “attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon” (pg. 108) – aligns with our aspirations to systematically and objectively explore conceptualisations of value in current literary discourse.

5.2.1. SAMPLING

This research is based on secondary data sourced from Scopus, a database applied by various researchers conducting their own respective systematic reviews of non-profit organisations (Buonomo et al., 2020; Igalla et al., 2019; Maier et al., 2016). Publication data (Author[s], document title, source title, year, publication type, etc.) is also available for download from Scopus, allowing for more efficient querying of data samples. Finally, Scopus integrates a Field-Weighted Citation Index (FWCI), a distinguishing variable in our search (detailed further below).

Following the selection of a database, a series of pilot tests were used to optimise and define key search terms. This is, according to Tranfield et al. (2003), an important aspect of the review process. Ultimately, two

search terms were used and the first term defined was “value”. To account for the expansive stylisations of the second term (“non-profit”), the search included all variations found in the literature known to the authors. These terms have been applied in earlier systematic literature reviews carried out by Maier et al. (2016) and Laurett and Ferreira (2018). For our purpose, principal articulations of value are translatable across respective not-for-profit, non-profit and non-governmental studies.

The two terms were subject to a semantic association. While there is no ubiquitous definition of semantic association, Sheth et al. (2005) reason that the relationship between two words, direct or indirect, is meaningful. Furthering this, the proximity assumption posits that semantically associated terms will co-occur near each other (Jabeen et al., 2020). To target a sentence-level semantic relationship, the proximity value of 15 was applied.

The search was first carried out without any limitations on 18/10/20 and yielded 5,697 results. While preliminary explorations indicate that there is no published review addressing this research topic, the breadth of data had to be streamlined for synthesis. Consequently, an inclusion criteria (Table 5.1) for studies was implemented to ensure impactful results could be analysed by the authors in a timely manner.

Table 5.1: Boolean search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria for articles in Scopus

#	Terms	Directory	Inclusion Criteria
1	value	Scopus	Published between 01/01/2015 and 18/10/2020 Top 20% FWCI that year Article Book chapter Conference paper Editorial Review
2	nonprofit OR “non profit” OR non-profit OR npo OR ngo OR non-government* OR “non governmental” OR nongovernmental OR not-for-profit OR “not for profit”		

Inclusion criteria were determined by the time of publication (2015–2020) and the Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) of each paper. The five-year

constraint was implemented to ensure topical definitions of value were identified, as the authors were predominantly interested in topical definitions of value. The Field-Weighted Citation Impact refers to the “ratio of the total citations received by the denominator’s output, and the total citations that would be expected based on the average of the subject field” (Colledge, 2012, pg. 75). This metric accounts for disparities in research behaviour across disciplines and is particularly useful when identifying the most impactful papers across a multi-disciplinary sample. This study explores the top 20% FWCI papers of each year respectively, on the basis that the most impactful papers will reflect a discourse of value that is both prominent and exchangeable across the total sample.

Following the inclusion process, articles were subject to a subsequent screening whereby records inadvertently captured were manually excluded. Exclusions include:

1. Papers that did not clearly denote the non-profit perspective. Some of the collected papers were centred on a hybrid organisation, corporate social responsibility, social enterprise or the public sector rather than the non-profit sector specifically (n = 119).
2. Similarly, papers which presented a mixed perspective (e.g., amalgamating findings for both a for-profit and non-profit organisation without delineation) were removed (n = 35). This is due to the significant challenge of clearly distinguishing, and therefore attributing, the perception of value in these papers to the non-profit context, consequently negating the intentions of this investigation.
3. Papers that referred to the statistical rather than theoretical connotations of value (e.g., ‘P Value = ’) (n = 22).
4. Papers that did not fulfil the search criteria in the body of the article were also removed. Many papers (n = 113) were inadvertently captured by references to the “non-profit /near value” relationship in

their bibliography (in the title of referenced works) rather than their own main body of text.

5. Papers without full-text availability ($n = 2$) or were not in English ($n = 1$) were also removed.

Overall, 291 articles were excluded during this screening process. Ninety-three full text articles were assessed in an eligibility review, with additional exclusions for those that did not refer to an adequately descriptive or informative notions of value (i.e., simply stating “this value is good”). Furthermore, given that this paper does not aim to report on the various methods of generating value, nor do we believe the search terms were optimised to report on this meaningfully, papers on this topic ($n = 45$) were also excluded. Finally, we distinguish between notions of personal value (value in relation to a person in a way that other valuable things do not) and impersonal value (value which can be understood without reference to anything else directly) and focus our attentions on the latter. As a result, papers exploring tenets of personal value ($n = 5$) were removed.

References communicating how value is perceived were extracted from the remaining 43 records. All references are available in the Appendix A. The total selection and exclusion process is presented in Figure 5.1.

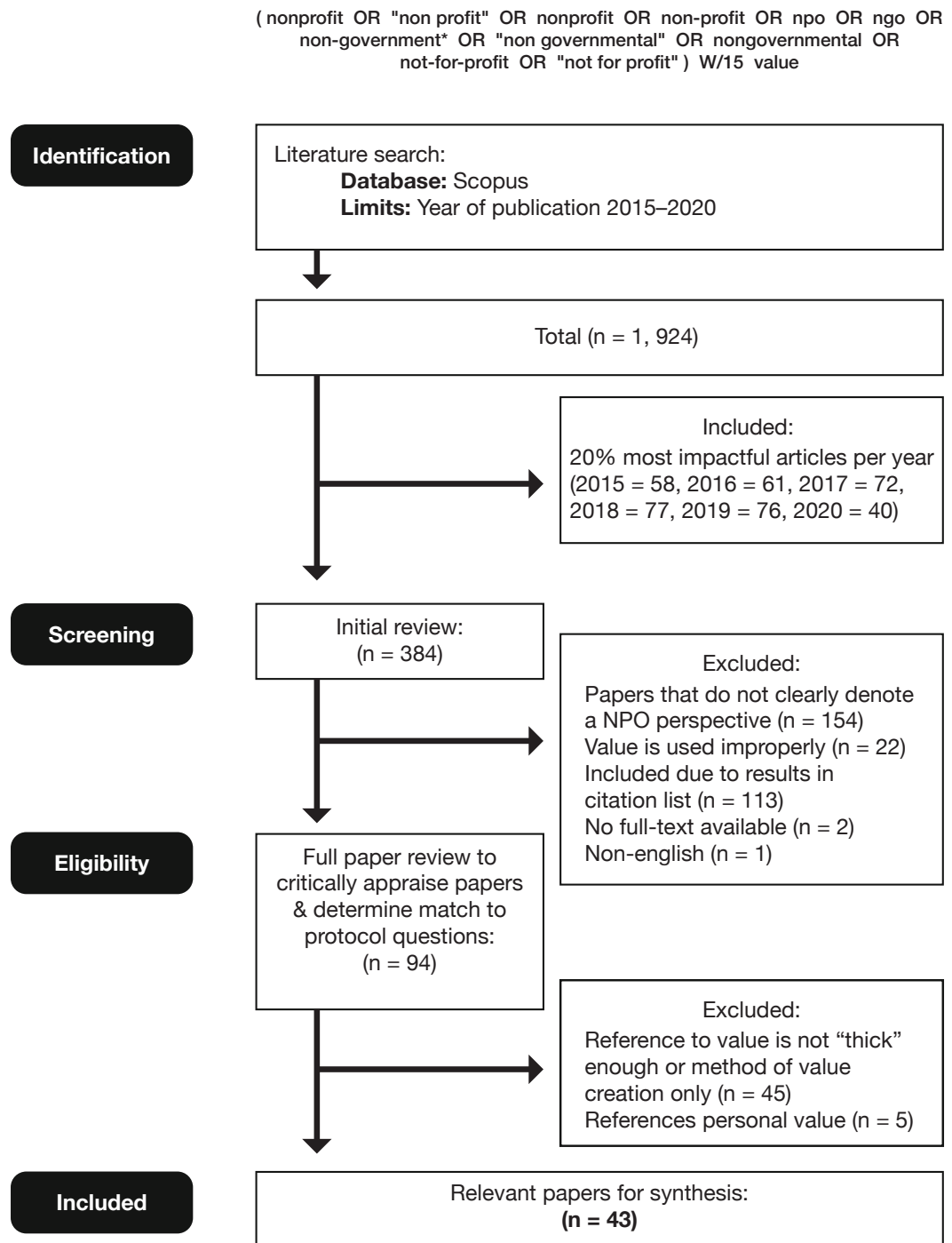


Figure 5.1: Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram

5.2.2. ANALYSIS

Textual references to value in non-profit literature are amenable to deconstruction, and their conceptual facets are thus investigated (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Resultantly, each publication was read, and text pertaining to value was openly coded in NVivo 12. Preliminary scoping identified two

core uses of the term value, the first pertaining to various ways in which value is *perceived* in non-profit discourse, the second evidencing various approaches employed to *frame* said perceptions of value in an organisation. Textual references were separated accordingly, and the process of analysing perceptions of value and frames of value is detailed below.

All potential perceptions of value were collected, and respective definitions were synthesised. When discussing perceptions of value, we argue that most mentions of value convey more than just the minimum informative content (Williams, 1985). A study assessing climate change may offer *scientific* value (for society), a book may possess *personal* value (for me), and photographs from childhood may hold *sentimental* value (for many people). Each of these ‘thicknesses’ (scientific, personal, sentimental) assigns the notion of value into a category and implies some (albeit not always very detailed) additional information about that value. Each sufficiently ‘thick’ textual reference to value assigns itself, through its additional descriptive or informative content, to a perception of value that is distinct from others.

Definitions of these distinct perceptions aim to subsume the central principles of each textual reference and offer a synthesised understanding of core insights free of organisational or disciplinary bias. Following the definitions, perceptions of value were separated into four tiers based on prevalence. Despite the sample already vying for topical articulations of value with the use of FWCI criterion, this additional step organised the perceptions of value from most to least common. Conceptual relationships between perceptions of value in each tier were explored and subsequently mapped, illustrating the overall landscape of value discourse in the literature on non-profits.

Remaining textual references alluding to frames of value were similarly collected and organised. Frames of value refer to approaches used to suppose, organise or project a perception of value within an organisation. In comparison to the ways in which value is perceived, these textual references explore the more generative, ‘doing’ facet of value. Frames of value were coded, with additional supplemental details of their attributes, stakeholders,

and outcomes being noted when possible. Each frame of value was clarified, and synthesised understandings of each frame is outlined in the results. Frames of value were delineated according to conceptual similarities, and two broader dimensions – frames of portrayed or practiced value –were established.

5.3

RESULTS

This research identified two key areas of interest. Firstly, distinct perceptions of value were identified and defined, providing insight into the central drivers of various non-profit organisations and the phenomena a non-profit organisation strives to generate. Secondly, four approaches to framing value were identified, each demonstrating how those drivers are actualised.

5.3.1. PERCEPTIONS OF VALUE

The 32 perceptions of value apparent in the sample (Table 5.2) are categorised by prevalence, across four tiers. The first tier contained four perceptions of value present across a mean of 11.75 papers. The second tier contained three perceptions of value across a mean three papers, while the third tier contained five perceptions of value across a mean of two articles. The fourth tier contained 21 perceptions of value, expressed across a single paper each. The most prominent perceptions of value identified (Tier I) include social value, financial value, economic value, and public value.

Table 5.2: Perceptions of value according to prevalence

Tier #	Mean number of articles referenced	Perceptions of value
I	11.75	Social, financial, economic, public
II	3	Stakeholder, shared, environmental
III	2	Property, political, cultural, associational, artistic
IV	1	Absolute, aesthetic, blended, consumer, customer, ecological, educational, exchange, expressive, habitual, instrumental, interaction, joint, organisational, relational, scientific, strategic, synergistic, trade, transferred, wilderness

Hereafter, we refine our focus to Tier I perceptions of value. These conceptualisations take precedence over the other perceptions of value as they are firstly, noticeably more prominent in the literature (present in 11.75 papers opposed to 3), and secondly, frequently incorporate the more specific facets of Tier II – IV perceptions of value. This is evident in the definitions offered in Table 5.3. Perceptions of social and economic value (Tier I) are directly referenced in the definition of shared value (Tier II). Similarly, stakeholder value, which relates optimising return for all investors, stems from the resource management and monetary worth aspects of economic value and financial value (Tier I).

Table 5.3: Defining Tier I and Tier II perceptions of value

	Value (# of mentions/# of articles)	Definitions
Tier I	<i>Social value (48/24)</i>	Serving to better the lives of individuals, and in turn, transform society as a whole.
	<i>Financial value (17/9)</i>	The monetary worth of an action, commitment, collaboration, process or artefact.
	<i>Economic value (11/9)</i>	Value derived from the market, and direct and indirect processes of exchange.
	<i>Public value (11/7)</i>	Benefitting and/or improving the rights and capacities of individuals as citizens, and communities or societies as a whole.
Tier II	<i>Stakeholder value (3/3)</i>	Materials, both financial and human resource-oriented, that promote optimal return for all parties invested.
	<i>Shared value (5/3)</i>	Conceptualised by Porter and Kramer (2011) as the creation of economic value in a way that also creates value for society.
	<i>Perceived value (10/3)</i>	The believed importance or worth of an action, document, or process. Can be proven or remain unquestioned.
	<i>Moral value (3/3)</i>	Balancing the protections of the self and others.
	<i>Environmental value (4/3)</i>	Supporting the long-term health and wellbeing of the natural world.

To understand how the concept of value is situated in non-profit discourse, we first examine the most prevalent perceptions of value in the literature. Here, we outline the aspects of social, financial, economic and public value and comment on the differences between the major themes belonging in the respective aspects. The sampled references for each of the Tier I definitions can be found in the Appendix A (Table A.1, A.2, A.3 & A.4).

Social Value

The sampled literature (Appendix A: Table A.1) articulates three distinct facets of social value: (1) the beneficiary, (2) the processes facilitating social value and (3) the focus and/or outcome.

The beneficiary of social value reflects a separation of individuals and society. While some authors focus purely on value to individuals, such as Lee and Nowell (2015) who describes social value as benefitting the lives of

“disadvantaged people” (pg. 881), others conflate the needs of individuals to those of society and define the needs of society according to the direct needs of individuals. Evidencing this, Abella et al. (2017) refer to the lives of “individuals or society as a whole” (pg. 49), while Akingbola and van den Berg (2019) assert that non-profit organisations are a “conduit to making a difference in society” (pg. 50).

Highlighting *processes that facilitate social value*, Mitchell and Schmitz (2019) identify “programs and interventions designed by public service organisations” (pg. 19) as vehicles to better society. Similarly, Abella et al. (2017) give credit to the combination of resources, inputs, processes, or policies that better society. Lurtz and Kreutzer (2017) present more specific methods of social value creation, outlining “collective-focused aspirations such as wealth giving or sharing, or community development” (pg. 96) to promote social value.

Finally, Alford et al. (2017), Banks et al. (2015), Lee and Nowell (2015), and Mitchell and Schmitz (2019) all generalise the *outcome of social value*, arguing it is the “achievement of social purposes” (pg. 598), “social justice and transformation” (pg. 706), making a difference or serving the needs of future generations. While these explanations are broad, Lurtz and Kreutzer (2017) offer a much more specific explanation, suggesting that the outcome of social value is focused on improving “fundamental societal or environmental problems such as poverty, hunger, health, unemployment, education or human rights” (pg. 96).

Amassing these articulations, social value can be understood as something – for example programs or processes – that serves to better the lives of individuals, and in turn, transform society as a whole. Per the sampled literature, social value is supported by two internal drivers: internal accounting and organisational capacity. Hall et al. (2015) note that the “robustness of internal accounting and reporting processes” (pg. 917) are essential to social value, as these are the systems that capture and make social value visible. Moldavanova and Goerdel (2018) also highlight how important it is for non-profit organisations to identify and meet the needs

of their stakeholders, who, through investment, ensure the overall viability of the initiative. Another means of enabling social value is attributed to a non-profit's access to data and information. Citing the work of Abella et al. (2017) and Ubaldi (2013) comment on how integral open government data is to understanding different perspectives of social value.

Financial Value

Papers referenced (Appendix A: Table A.2) present financial value as a metric and enabler relating to the monetary worth of an action, commitment, collaboration, process or artefact. Metrically, financial value is explored as “value for money” (pg. 707) by Banks et al. (2015). To O’Dwyer and Boomsma (2015) financial value equates a qualitatively-oriented outcome (e.g., improved social justice or social transformation) with a quantitative metric. Similarly, Manzi and Morrison (2018) discuss how “the social value of this activity.. could be translated into financial value” (pg. 1936) while Herzog et al. (2020) state that philanthropy in Vietnam must be of “significant monetary value” (pg. 17). However, the implication of this metric-oriented behaviour is cautioned. Banks et al. (2015) argue that the efficacy of non-governmental organisations is being called into doubt, due to the development sector’s “narrow focus on short-term results and value for money” (pg. 712), while O’Dwyer and Boomsma (2015) suggest that the backdrop of decreasing funding increases the potential for a benefactor to significantly influence an NGOs’ agenda.

Financial value is also referenced as an enabler for both organisations and individuals. Kuratko et al. (2017) draw on the example of the Girls Scouts of America, a non-profit organisation offering leadership development to young girls. The sale of their eponymous cookies introduces financial value that supports their offering of developmental programs that create social value. Importantly though, in this scenario financial value operates within the conditions of the economic climate, which can influence public donations to the non-profit sector (Lee and Nowell, 2015).

Economic Value

Economic value relates to value derived from the market, and direct and indirect processes of exchange. This proposed definition stems from the singular, explicit definition of economic value, in addition to five implied mentions (Appendix A: Table A.3). Abella et al. (2017) suggest economic value is processual, and purports it is generated by “taking a resource or set of inputs, providing additional inputs or processes that increase the value of those inputs, and thereby generating a product or service that has greater market value at the next level of the value chain” (pg. 49). Similar to their concerns with the metric applications of financial value, an implicit reference to economic value from Banks et al. (2015) warns that a recent emphasis on economic value has pushed non-profit organisations away from their “broader goals of empowerment for poor or marginalised groups” (pg. 710). Furthermore, prioritising a non-profit organisation’s processual capabilities of service delivery comes at the expense of their civil society functions.

Public Value

Public value is a multidimensional form of value benefitting and/or improving the rights and capacities of individuals as citizens, and communities or societies as a whole (Appendix A: Table A.4). While social value may account for transforming the social prospects of individuals, public value is firmly situated within the realm of the public sphere (Abella et al., 2017). This is highlighted in additional assertions that public value “focuses on community-oriented outcomes and broader benefits to society” (pg. 307) and is “consumed collectively and not as individual units” (pg. 3) (Lee and Nowell, 2015; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2019).

Bromley and Meyer (2017) are the only authors who reference singular, individual rights in their articulation of public value – which is “related less to discrete religious and political visions and more to an emerging, secular definition of the ‘public benefit,’ where individual rights and capacities... take centre stage” (pg. 954). However, even this discussion of ‘individual rights

and capacities' is framed through the perspective of the collective – as it refers to the rights of *all* citizens. Fundamentally, it is this emphasis on the public sphere, as well as collective rather than individual consumption, that demarcates public value from social value.

Lee and Nowell (2015) identify two internal influences that impact public value. The authors argue that non-profit organisations should streamline their internal processes specific to resource acquisition and organisational capacity, as these components have “downstream consequences for what a non-profit is able to accomplish in terms of outcomes and public value” (pg. 304). Externally, organisations are urged to engage with other actors who can “provide them with a licence (as well as resources) to operate on their public value proposition” (pg. 591) (Alford et al., 2017).

5.3.2. APPROACHES TO FRAMING VALUE

The sampled literature illustrated four variant approaches to framing value, including mission statements, value propositions, value orientations and organisational behaviours. Framing in the social sciences refers to “the process by which people develop a particular conceptualisation of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Each approach identified in this research demonstrates a way value may be supposed, organised and then projected throughout non-profit organisations. The details of each method, synthesised from the references (Appendix A: Table A.5, A.6, A.7 & A.8) and the authors' own understandings, are presented below.

Mission Statements

Mission statements (Appendix A: Table A.5) are presented as a means of making an organisation's values and enduring purpose transparent, which can, in turn, inspire formative relationships between an organisation and its employees or volunteers. Essentially, as presented by Macedo et al. (2016), mission statements act as a “route leading to the achievement of long-term strategic objectives” (pg. 1). Furthermore, they argue that mission

statements serve three functions: they give a sense of purpose and direction to a non-profit organisation, they legitimise the existence of the organisation, and they contextualise the development and implementation of a strategic plan. Beyond the organisation's values, mission statements also play an important role in motivating employee and volunteer participation. By signalling their commitment to a social cause, non-profit organisations are able to attract and motivate similarly vested employees or volunteers, or build social trust in the organisation's effectiveness (Akingbola and van den Berg, 2019; Macedo et al., 2016).

Value Propositions

Alford et al. (2017) acknowledge the similarities between value propositions (Appendix A: Table A.6) and mission statements – both methods act as strategic road maps – but delineates value propositions as “much more task specific and focused” (pg. 590). They explain that value propositions are rooted in the notion of the ‘business case’, whereby individuals must articulate the value of their proposal to senior managers and investors (Alford et al., 2017). Blocker and Barrios (2015) are proponents of the ‘holistic value proposition’, which account for a multitude of facets, such as the physical, relational, emotional and community needs to name a few.

Value Orientations

Value orientation, discussed by Akingbola and van den Berg (2019), refers to the central value (and implied values) that guide the organisation's vision and behaviours (Appendix A: Table A.7). The authors argue that a non-profit's mission and goals stem directly from the value orientation of the organisation's founders, which serves as a compass directing what is deemed worthy of resource investment.

Organisational Behaviour

Despite Bloodgood and Tremblay-Boire (2017) being the only authors in the sample to reference organisational behaviour (Appendix A: Table

A.8), their contributions highlight the important role values play in an organisation's overall conduct. According to the authors, "NGOs adopt behaviours conforming to the values of government funders" (Bloodgood and Tremblay-Boire, 2017, pg. 406), demonstrating their commitment to the cause and enhancing their legitimacy. Value, in this case, is framed and realised by the behaviours, activities and conduct acted out by the organisation.

5.4

DISCUSSION

In the hopes of avoiding any essentialist trappings, we recognise that a singular, unique answer to the question 'what is value' is unlikely if not impossible. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that there is usefulness in asking this question regardless, the least of which being our opportunity to identify and clarify overarching facets of value as a phenomenon. The question 'what is value?' directed us to explore different perceptions of value present in discourse and allowed us to identify four approaches used to frame value.

In the following sections, we turn from potential trappings and instead look to the two uses of the term value present in literature. Firstly, we outline how the divergent perceptions of value are more broadly situated in non-profit discourse and comment on their relationship to each other. We distinguish between categories of internal value and external value and outline efforts to bridge the divide. Secondly, we discuss the ideas of proposed frames of value and practiced frames of value and speculate on their co-dependency. Both explorations contribute to our understanding of, and available language for, the notion of value in the context of literature on non-profits and provide us with the necessary conceptual building blocks to further clarify, discuss and incorporate the potential of value.

5.4.1. ORIENTING VALUE AROUND THE ORGANISATION

Figure 5.2 showcases 32 perceptions of value and their explicit or conceptual relationship to each other. Similarities between perceptions of value are further illustrated with conceptual branches spanning across multiple tiers. Notably, when situating ourselves in the perspective of an organisation, these perceptions of value can be understood across internal and external dimensions.

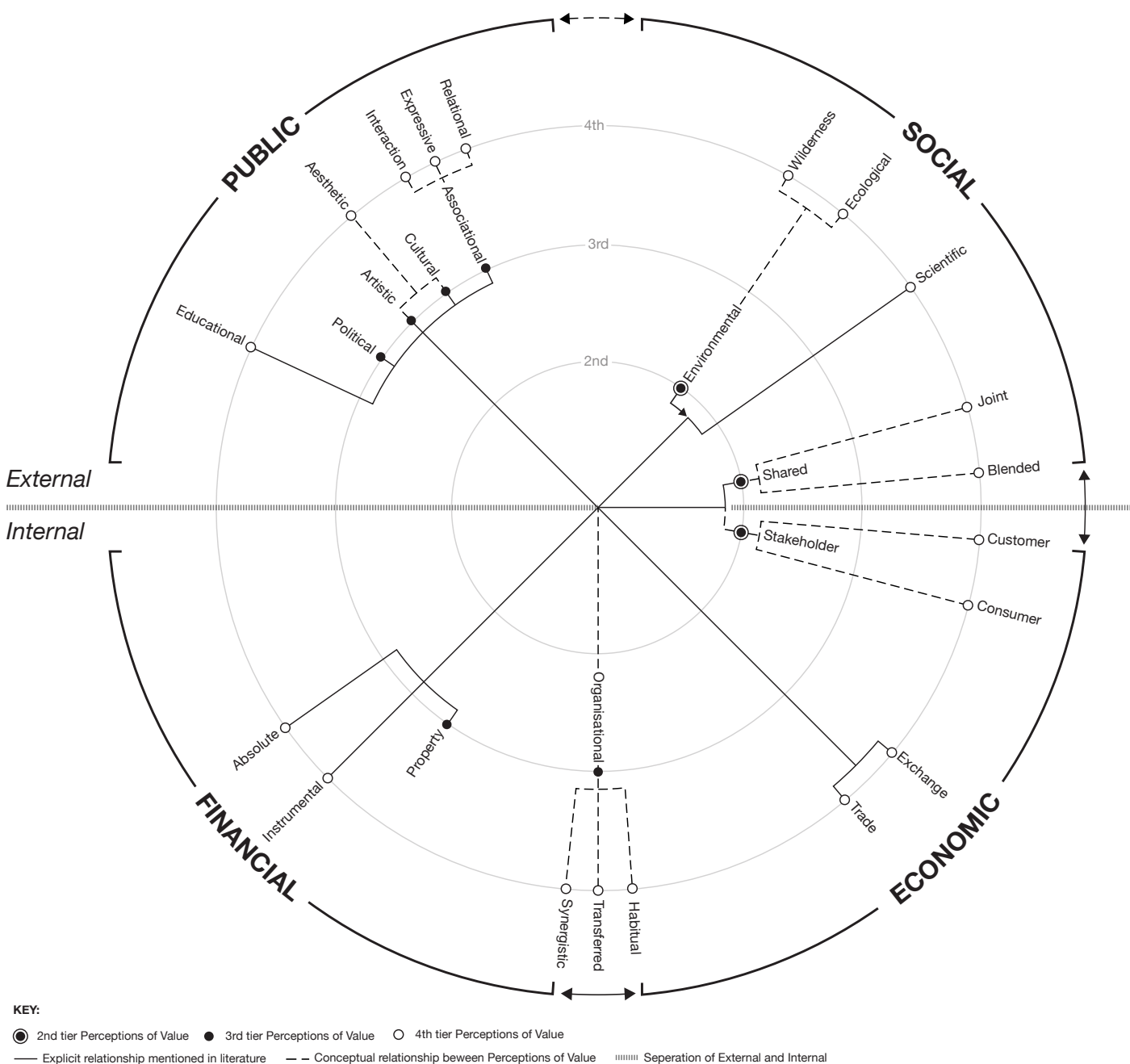


Figure 5.2: Mapping perceptions of value

These categories are not dissimilar to the economic concepts of externalities and internalities. As described by Reimer and Houmanfar (2017), the distinction between economic internalities and externalities rests in the separation of production or consumption: “externalities are additional outcomes of organizational production, which *organizations create* in addition to the intended product” [emphasis added] (pg. 7), while “internalities are additional outcomes of a product or service that an *individual consumes*” (pg. 7). Our proposed categories of internal and external value are less concerned with demarcating production or consumption and more closely aligned with who or what is impacted by processes of production and consumption. As such, external value refers to any additional effect or outcome produced by an organisation that impacts those outside the organisation. Internal value, on the other hand, relates to additional outcomes of a product or a service that the organisation themselves can consume or benefit from.

Perceptions of public and social value are situated beyond the realm of any individual organisation – a notion that aligns with the core belief that non-profit organisations provide services for their community and do not operate for the personal benefit, profit or gain of its organisational members. As outlined by Ben-Ner (1993), non-profit organisations are associations that “come into existence when for-profit firms and the government fail to meet the demands of certain groups in a particular market” (pg. 734). For example, American associations that qualify for a 501 (c) (3) tax exemption status are required to operate exclusively in one or more of the following functional purpose areas: education, religion, charity, science, literature, public safety, national or international amateur sports competitions, or prevention of cruelty to children and animals (Anheier, 2000). Any resultant efforts in these functional areas can be further viewed as an *external output* of a non-profit organisation, bettering the lives of individuals, and in turn, society (social value) or benefitting and/or improving the rights and capacities of citizens or societies as a whole (public value).

In this way, perceptions of public and social value differ from perceptions of economic and financial value. Rather than existing *outside* of the space

of the organisation, internal value is directly referential to organisational principles. We suggest that internal value can be viewed as a *resource* or *form of capital* that can be utilised by the organisation in pursuit of their external value endeavours. Importantly, we do not want to suggest that a perception of value internal to an organisation could not *also* contribute to the development of an external perception of value.

Taking the concept of property value as an example, this Tier III perception of value was referenced in the sampled literature through the lens of utility: “preserving open space... further increased the value of real estate and housing prices” (Koschmann, 2016, pg. 415) and Rosenbaum et al.’s (2015) argument that the property value of a hospital could be determined through the amount of revenue generated by patient care. However, the instrumental potential of property value – namely its ability to provide the means to a supplementary perception of value rather than its innate, material value – should not go unnoticed. Klinenberg (2018), in the tradition of Jacobs (1984), argues that ‘soft infrastructure’ encompasses the “the physical places and organisations that shape the way people interact” (pg. 5) and must be considered in our efforts address pressing societal challenges. When considering the example of a hospital, it is easy to recognise that the built environment’s (property) value extends beyond its tangible constraints to potentially influence concepts of social or public value, or provide human or scientific value as well.

Managing an organisation’s internal value to co-produce external value is not particularly novel in either the for-profit or non-profit context. The fields of management theory and organisation theory attest to this. In a for-profit context, the Corporate Social Responsibility model urges for-profit businesses to “achieve commercial success in ways that honour ethical values and respect people, communities, and the natural environment” (White, 2006, pg. 6), and the notion of the ‘Triple Bottom Line’ seeks to develop ““win-win-win’ strategies... to simultaneously benefit the company, its customers and the environment” (Elkington, 1994, pg. 90). In both examples, for-profit organisations are configured to manage their internal value (i.e., their economic and financial value) while also pursuing social or public value.

Yet, despite these business models, we return to the central problem: these approaches rarely clarify, let alone *explicitly* clarify, their understanding of either social or public value. This is particularly evident in the perception of public value, which demonstrated significant dissonance between our sampled references – centred solely on ideas of the public sphere – and the underlying concepts of Public Value Reporting. Beyond our sampled literature, Meynhardt and Bärö (2019) and Williams and Shearer (2011) present Public Value Reporting as a popular framework more considerate of an organisation’s management and financial and social contributions.

In addition to our groupings of internal and external value, we encourage a micro-investigation of the ‘chemistry’ of social, economic, financial, and public value, and how well aligned those perceptions are with actual practice. By ‘chemistry’, we follow in the tradition of Orsi (2015) and refer specifically to what informs the formation of a perception of value, and how the perception of value may differ from the value of its composite parts. Detangling these uncertain definitions may further clarify other peripheral inquiries, such as: who or what does a perception of value belong to or benefit? Have our understandings of these perceptions of value changed over time? Conversely, we also encourage a more macro exploration of this same topic with search extending beyond our limitations, as we acknowledge that our search – limited to the last five years and top 20% FCWI – does not encompass all material available.

5.4.2. VALUE AND THE IDEA OF ‘DOING’

Having situated our understanding of how value is negotiated across internal and external spheres, we move to a discussion of the ‘doing’ properties of these perceptions, and address how respective perceptions of value might be actioned. The four approaches to framing value – that is, the four ways that value is conceptualised, oriented, and actualised in a non-profit organisation – were further categorised based on core conceptual similarities. Mission statements and value propositions are identified as two frames of proposed

value, while value orientation and organisational behaviour are two frames of practiced value.

Frames of proposed value

Frames of proposed value refer to conceptualisations of value that inform the direction or clarify the *intent* of a non-profit organisation. They are presented, offered, or suggested and are uniquely future-oriented. As previously outlined, mission statements act as a “route leading to the achievement of long-term strategic objectives” (Macedo et al., 2016, pg. 1) and as a barometer for decision making (i.e., does this decision align with the organisation’s overall aspirations?). Value propositions, on the other hand, represent a promise of value to be communicated or delivered, and further accounts for how the organisation intends to create that value.

While both these techniques identify the ideal outcome of the organisation’s efforts or key activities that should be implemented to achieve that goal, they both fundamentally reflect and outline a potential outcome, that is perhaps to some, symbolic. By employing the term ‘symbolic’ to describe these frames of proposed value, we refer directly to the Baudrillardian explanation of symbolic value, whereby symbolic value is transformed by the socio-cultural context in which it exists (Baudrillard and Benedict, 2005). Juxtaposing notions of symbolic and exchange value, Miller (2008) writes, “Value is not something that the exchanged objects are reduced to, but something created by the act [of exchange] itself” (pg. 78). In the framing of proposed value, that “exchange” is yet to take place, and as such, the value remains aspirational.

Frames of practiced value

Frames of practiced value refers to the *actualisation* or realisation of proposed value. Frames of proposed value or perceptions of value are performed in present-time or were performed in the past. In social psychology, value orientation refers to a person’s preference about how to allocate resources between the self and others; it is sum of our priorities and preferences (Henderson and Thompson, 2003). These are, in practice, the set of

rules, values and beliefs by which an organisation or individual operates (Chandrakumara, 2011). Similarly, organisational behaviour reflects the generative ‘acting’ of these rules, values, and beliefs. Both approaches illustrate a moment of translation, whereby a proposed (or even unplanned) aspiration of value becomes tangible in the behaviours and efforts of the individual or organisation.

As such, these ideas of proposed and practiced value represent two sides of the same coin, and both categories of framing value are of equal importance. Should a non-profit organisation have intent (proposed value) but no method of actioning (practiced value) that intent, it is challenging to operationalise any real outcome. The same applies in reverse, in the sense that should a non-profit organisation have action (practiced value) but no clear intent (proposed value), their efforts may be too diverse or broadly organised to be productive or efficient. Coalescence of proposed and practiced value ensures that an organisation’s efforts are not only efficient, but genuinely effective.

Importantly though, we recognise that the search utilised for this research was not optimised for identifying any additional frames of value, nor did our search yield a particularly significant variation of approaches. In response to this limitation, we urge future research to explore these frames of value in more explicit detail, and specifically encourage an investigation of how and where they may be situated in a non-profit organisation. We posit the following provocations: are non-profit organisations explicitly or implicitly aware of their engagement with either proposed or practiced frames of value? How might an organisation’s understanding of or practice with framing value inform their strategic goals?

5.5

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, we all use value-dependent language. We all *value* things – specific outcomes, certain efforts, or collective behaviours – and in turn, feel and behave towards each of these things in a particular way. When organising businesses or associational activity, we might negotiate the economic value of certain actions or contemplate the social value of our efforts, each time implying something about the way we perceive that value and its meaning, or that value’s relation to either people or things. While many questions on the topic of value remain (what *exactly* do we mean by economic value? Who *really* possesses or benefits from social value?), this research contributes to our understanding of prominent ways in which value is perceived and framed in literature on non-profits.

The *Meno* concludes with Socrates abandoning the lesson in favour of another commitment, however, his parting statement emphasises how “we shall never know the certain truth until, before asking how virtue is given [by God, per Meno’s final suggestion], we enquire into the actual nature of virtue” (Plato. et al. (1949), 100c). With respect to the ‘actual nature’ of value, the 32 perceptions identified elucidate the conceptual repertoire of both practitioners and researchers alike. They equip organisations and stakeholders with the conceptual tools needed for a uniform and consistent discussion regarding organisational strategy, and offer an understanding of the landscape in which perceptions of value are situated in relation to each other and the non-profit organisation itself. The outline of both proposed and practiced frames of value provides insight into how these perceptions of value might tangibly manifest within an organisation and speculates on the necessary coalescence of proposed and practiced actions. Although further research is necessary in this space, these methods of framing begin to shift our understanding of value from a conceptual lens to that of an instrumental one, whereby we can explore *how* and *what* we might do with each of these popular perceptions. These

conceptual and instrumental explorations of value are essential to non-profit organisations, as they inform the very aims, goals and activities upon which an organisation structures itself.

PART II: ON DESIGN

**DESIGN X NON-PROFITS: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF DESIGN INTEGRATION
IN THE AUSTRALIAN NON-PROFIT SECTOR**

DESIGN WITH / AND / FOR AUSTRALIAN NPOS

INTERLUDE IV: ON DESIGN

Reader, we're halfway in, so don't give up on me now. It's time to get our hands dirty.

The last chapter looked at design from a distance – as a practice shaped by sociological, economic, and linguistic ideas about value. That work was necessary, as it allowed us to sit with the assumptions baked into the conceptual ground that design so often stands on without question. But now it's time to move in. This next chapter draws closer.

This marks the beginning of *Part II*, and a transition not just from theory to practice, but into the realities of non-profit organisations. These next chapters don't just examine what design can do in general, they ask what design might do *here* in the Australian non-profit sector.

As much as this research is an inquiry into value and design, it is also an exploration of the Australian non-profit context itself: how we as designers might work with it, where design might offer something useful, and where design might not belong at all. Importantly, the non-profit sector isn't just the backdrop to this thesis, it's been one of its most stable and grounding elements.

While value has been a preoccupation throughout, it has also been the least settled thread. Its meanings have shifted, expanded, and occasionally disappeared altogether. In moments of doubt – when I wasn't sure what value meant, or how to work with it – the non-profit sector itself has offered a steady foundation for the broader theoretical concerns of this research.

The next study begins this work by exploring how design might be integrated into the operational and strategic realities of Australian non-profit organisations. Drawing on survey responses from 140 NPOs, it examines

how these organisations conceive and pursue value – and speculates on how design might assist, extend, or even complicate that work. Together, these studies move the thesis from theoretical provocation to practical interrogation.

The chapter that follows turns the lens towards designers themselves – those navigating these organisations from the inside. It explores how they define their remit, negotiate constraints, and wrestle with what it means to practice design in systems not always built to hold it.

I'm still investigating value – but now, it's value in motion. Let's see where it takes us.

DESIGN X NPOS

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF DESIGN INTEGRATION IN THE AUSTRALIAN NON-PROFIT SECTOR

Natalia Gulbransen-Diaz, Dr. Leigh-Anne Hepburn

CHAPTER 6

ABSTRACT

Design has long demonstrated an interest in shaping society and the world for good. In Australia, there are 59,747 non-profit organisations that seek to do the same. Surprisingly, there is little research situated at the intersection of these fields. This research addresses this persistent gap by exploring the potential remit of design in non-profit organisations and provides insight into where and how design practices may be beneficial to non-profit partners. This paper first thematically analyses the responses of 140 Australian non-profit organisations as they reflect on their strategic position and core activities. Drawing on these insights, we outline five thematic notions of value as it pertains to non-profits, their stakeholders and beneficiaries. Finally, we contribute a preliminary map of the Australian non-profit value ecosystem and speculate on design's potential for integration.

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6.1

INTRODUCTION

Australia alone has registered 59,747¹ non-profit organisations (NPOs), that – despite reflecting divergent functions, utilising a variety of strategic initiatives and serving distinctive roles – profess to occupy the space between market and government (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, 2022). Variations notwithstanding, these organisations are unbound from the pursuit of profit or the favour of individuals, and act as service providers, innovators, guardians of values and advocates (Kramer, 1981).

Given designers’ longstanding desire to contribute positively to their community, society and the world, there are surprisingly few explorations of design integration in non-profit organisations. Despite a range of independent design and non-profit engagements – for the development of service (Lemons et al., 2024), Human-Computer Interaction interventions (Moulder et al., 2014) or some other ‘tangible’ output (such as a product, service, business model, etc.) – little focus has been given to the more general application of design in relation to a non-profit’s pursuit of value, which is understood here as their ‘intangible’ organisational aspirations.

It is worth noting that this scarcity of research exists in stark comparison to scholarship investigating the integration of design in for-profit organisations. Practices like Design Innovation (Straker et al., 2021) and Design Thinking (Liedtka et al., 2017) have been lauded generously for their capacity to create “offerings with more user value [which] in turn raises the economic and business value of the offerings” (Kumar, 2009, pg. 1) in a for-profit context. Recognising this imbalance and leveraging the notion of value as an entry point for design integration, this work positions itself as an exploration of the remit of design in non-profit organisations.

Specifically, we seek to investigate the following questions:

1. What notions of value are perceived and conceived by Australian non-profit organisations?
2. How might design be situated in and contribute to the Australian non-profit value ecosystem?

6.2

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

This paper is positioned at the intersection of design integration in business, design for social good, and an understanding of the relationship between design and value. Relevant research in these three fields is introduced below.

6.2.1. DESIGN FOR BUSINESS

Design practitioners and academics alike – namely Brown and Martin (2015), Verganti (2009), Alexander and Fry (2019) – assert that the iterative and cyclical nature of design can help businesses overcome conventional challenges facing innovation in order to develop or strengthen competitive edge. Initially evidenced by the market success of the Lombardy design discourse (e.g., Alessi, Flos and Artemde, Kartell, etc.) and demonstrated in the proliferation of design thinking by significant institutions (e.g., Stanford D-School, IDEO), design has become a means to guide strategy and balancing the interrelation of user needs, technical feasibility and business viability.

6.2.2. DESIGN FOR SOCIAL GOOD

Dilnot (1982) argued that all design engages in socially significant activity as it orders and forms the world around us. Over the past four decades, there has been a demonstrated increase in both design research and practice addressing social issues is seen (Ehn and Badham, 2002; Koskinen, 2016; Manzini and Coad, 2015; Tonkinwise, 2016). *Leap Dialogues* (Amatullo et al.,

2016) captured shared experiences of 80 designers who had established a small foothold for social innovation in organisations such as Nike, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the United States Federal government. Similarly, Liedtka et al. (2017) championed the use of design thinking in the social sector to catalyse change-oriented conversations and generate solutions to some of world’s most wicked problems, citing use-cases across health and human services, charitable organisations, community initiatives and government.

6.2.3. THE CONCEPT OF VALUE

Some may interpret the meaning of value in direct alignment to the monetary worth of an object – akin to price (e.g., the value of an an impressively made car). Others may define value in opposition to price, arguing the value of an object is its significance which cannot ever be reduced to a monetary value (e.g., the value of clean air). Miller (2008) resolves this differentiation by arguing that “what value does, is precisely to create a bridge between value as price and values as inalienable, because this bridge lies at the core of what could be called the everyday cosmologies by which people, and indeed companies and governments live” (pg. 1123). Recognising the concept of value as common to social endeavour, it offers a potentially useful lens through which to explore design’s potential remit in NPOs.

6.3

METHODS

6.3.1. NPO PARTICIPANTS

The study involved participants from Australian NPOs, randomly selected from the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Charity Register dataset and contacted via the publicly available address as listed on their webpages. The ACNC describes a not-for-profit as “...an organisation

that does not operate for the profit, personal gain or other benefit of particular people (for example, its members, the people who run the organisation, or their friends or relatives)” (*Charities Act*, pt II div 3, 2013).

The ACNC Charity Register is a regularly updated dataset managed by the Australian Government which identifies (as of the 1st of June 2023) 59,747 registered charities and displays the following information: organisation’s name, address, date of registration and establishment, charity size², number of responsible persons, state(s) and/or territory(ies) of operation, countries of operation, charity subtypes³ and charity beneficiaries⁴. A de-identified list of participating NPOs is available in Appendix B.

6.3.2. SURVEY DESIGN

A survey was designed for distribution, underpinned by three conceptual positions:

- At a micro-level, it sought to investigate the types of value a NPO can create, as well as ‘how’ and ‘why’ they create this value. Of particular interest was exploring whether the concept of value was explicitly discussed day-to-day or in strategic organisational planning. To achieve this aim, the survey adapted the Value Definition Tool (VDT) by Straker and Nussem (2019), a managerial activity that helps organisations synthesise their internal understanding of value and frame how value

2. *Charity sizes* are defined as Small (1): revenue less than \$250,000 AUD; Medium (2): revenue of \$250,000 to \$999,999 AUD; Large (3): revenue of \$1 million AUD or more.

3. *Charity subtypes* include: PBI (Public Benevolent Institution), HPC (Health Promotion Charity), Preventing or relieving suffering of animals, Advancing Culture, Advancing Education, Advancing Health, Promote or oppose a change to law government poll or prac[tice], Advancing natural environment, Promoting or protecting human rights, Purposes beneficial to the general public and other analogous, Promoting reconciliation mutual respect and tolerance, Advancing Religion, Advancing social or public welfare, Advancing security or safety of Australia or Australian public

4. *Charity beneficiaries* include: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, Adults, Aged Persons, Children, Communities Overseas, Early Childhood, Ethnic Groups, Families, Females, Financially Disadvantaged, Gay Lesbian Bisexual, General Community in Australia, Males, Migrants Refugees or Asylum Seekers, Other Beneficiaries, Other Charities, People at Risk of Homelessness, People with Chronic Illness, People with Disabilities, Pre/Post Release Offenders, Rural Regional Remote Communities, Unemployed Person, Veterans or their Families, Victims of Crime, Victims of Disasters, Youth

can be aligned with stakeholders. The tool extends Sinek's (2011) 'Golden Circle' concept to understand 'what' each NPO does, 'how' they do what they do, and 'why' they are motivated to pursue their goals.

- At a meso-level, the VDT prepared participants to reflect on the more abstract aspects of value, such as (1) the context in which conversations on value take place, and with whom? (2) If they believe the 'why' aspect of their organisation (i.e., why their organisation exists as discussed in relation to its goals) is reflected in the 'what' component of their organisation (i.e., what their organisation does as explained when discussing the value it provides)?
- Finally, at a macro-level, cumulative responses from the VDT and participants' reflections provided insight into the broader ecosystem of value articulation and operationalisation, as well as preliminary understandings of the transfer of value between non-profit organisations, stakeholders, and members of the public.

Figure 6.1 highlights the three conceptual positions at play in the VDT, with a copy of the survey materials included in the Appendix.

Value Definition Tool Organisation Name: _____

The Value Definition Tool can help an organisation understand its 'why'. This is accomplished through a set of guided questions which examine an organisation's 'what', 'how' and 'why', and then consider these elements in the reverse order. The same is done from a perspective external to the organisation. This can help highlight discrepancies between what the organisation does and what is expected of them.

Step 1: Fill out the LEFT-hand side from an INTERNAL perspective

1. What is the goal of your organisation?

2. How does your organisation achieve its goal(s)?

3. Why does your organisation perform its key activities?

4. Why does your organisation provide the value it provides?

5. How does your organisation provide this value?

6. What value does your organisation provide?

Step 2: Fill out the RIGHT-hand side from an EXTERNAL perspective External perspective: _____

7. What does this person/group think your organisation does?

8. How does this person/group think your organisation achieves its goal?

9. Why does this person/group think your organisation performs these activities?

10. Why does this person/group value the work of your organisation?

11. How does this person/group hear about the value of your organisation?

12. What can be done to reinforce this person's perception of your organisation's value?

Are there any notable differences between the responses you provided from the INTERNAL perspective (e.g. how your organisation perceives value to be created and delivered) opposed to the EXTERNAL perspective (e.g. how your stakeholders may perceive the value offered by your organisation)?
Why might that be the case?

Straker, Wrigley & Nussem (2020)

- - - - Questions reflecting the **micro**-conceptual position
- - - - Questions reflecting the **meso**-conceptual position
- - - - Questions reflecting the **macro**-conceptual position

Figure 6.1: A copy of the Value Definition Tool, adapted from Straker et al., 2021, illustrating the presence of different conceptual positions within the survey.

The survey link was emailed directly to NPO participants, with an introduction that shared the purpose of the research and data protection processes. The 140 respondents spent an average of 30 minutes completing the survey.

6.3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analysed in two parts. During the first phase, analysis concentrated on understanding how value was defined by Australian NPOs. Whilst the

adapted VDT was completed fully by participants, this study specifically focused on analysing the collated reflections on value only in order to understand the meso and macro conceptual positions. Data (responses to questions 2.5-2.7, 4.5-4.7, 6.1) were analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021), in order to identify common themes and patterns. After data familiarisation, one author engaged in a process of open coding, generating a range of first-cycle codes related to topics of value in non-profit organisations (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2012). Subsequent sub-themes and themes were generated in accordance with higher-level topics and broader groups, and the content of these coding levels was reviewed against the perspective of the second author through conversation. Together, both authors interrogated the final set of themes to discern connections across themes and develop an early understanding of their holistic contribution (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

The second phase of analysis sought to establish an initial mapping of the value ecosystem in the Australian non-profit sector. The authors considered where and how the uncovered notions of value were situated and identified three proverbial ‘spaces’ of value. Whilst participants were not asked to consider the potential role of design in their organisational activities⁵, the value ecosystem developed offers a tangible articulation of the ecosystem, and enables a unique opportunity to speculate on design’s broader potential remit within such an ecosystem.

5. We did not think it was reasonable to ask Australian non-profits to speculate (via survey) on their potential engagement with a field as unfamiliar and dynamic as design. Although design is sometimes engaged by Australian non-profits, it is often for communication, marketing, or branding purposes. Future work extending this project will engage a smaller sample of organisations more closely and will investigate a more direct relationship between design and NPOs.

6.4

FINDINGS

Findings provide insight into how the concept of value is perceived and conceived by Australian NPOs. In describing five notions of value, we outline how NPOs talk about, seek to generate, strategise for and evaluate the concept of value within their organisation, as well as describing the externalities that influence these conversations and activities. Secondly, the findings are used to propose an ecosystem that illustrates interactions between notions, NPOs, members of the public and stakeholders. In doing so, we seek to generate insights that speculate on design's remit in NPOs.

6.4.1. NOTIONS OF VALUE UNCOVERED

- **External drivers of change**

Like any organisation, NPOs are beholden to external drivers of change, each uniquely impacting an NPO's capacity to establish and fulfil its value. The accessibility and availability of relevant resourcing was identified as a significant driver of change, with one participant stating the greatest challenge for their organisation was “keeping true to our Values [while trying] to ‘fit’ the values into funded Govt programs where the objectives and outcomes are fixed” (P40). NPOs also explained how legislative requirements and their alignment (or not) with governments' priority areas informed an organisation's capacity to conduct their work. One participant celebrated the fact that they “now [have] the resources (although limited) to put sexual violence much more on the agenda of government, institutional and community responses” (P72), while another denounced the “the pathetic current government” (P105) for their lack of support or assistance in food or housing relief.

- **Confluence of proximity and knowledge**

The real or perceived distance between an individual's understanding of the organisation (motivations, value, services, benefits) and their

proximity to the organisation itself was highlighted by respondents. While some NPOs described having close relationships with local communities or benefiting from a high profile and positive reputation, others lamented the challenge of breaking through cultural awareness and establishing relevance. Some participants described this challenge as a product of a lack of national attention, whereby the “general population might not have a good understanding of the structural disadvantage surrounding most people who are in contact with the criminal justice system.” (P43). Others framed the challenge as one of personal interest, in which members of the public may only “want to be involved with us for their own personal reasons and their assistance is more of a benefit to them than to us” (P55). Conversely, organisations avowing a close-knit relationship with their community often discussed how their entire community was welcomed, and actively encouraged, to participate in the value articulation process alongside the NPO team themselves:

The [de-identified] holds a monthly meeting and these values are often discussed at this forum. For instance, recently it was reinforced at a meeting that everyone is most welcome to sit in the garden or wander through, to join in or not... The [de-identified] doesn't have a hierarchy, apart from the necessary roles undertaken by those who have the responsibility of running the [de-identified]. Everyone is able to contribute their ideas and work how and where they wish. (P25).

These organisations often cited storytelling as a key tool utilised to bridge the gap between themselves and their audience, discussing how extracting and distilling the stories of valuable projects was done “not only [to] the direct participants but also to those people (audiences) who engage in the additional aspects and layers of the stories [told](via text/video/digital/podcasts)” (P80). This alludes to how storytelling is used by NPOs to connect and engage with their audiences to develop

and reinforce positive relationships, giving more attention to their work, and enabling feedback loops.

- **Processes of value definition and articulation**

This notion refers to the procedures and practices utilised by NPOs to define and articulate the organisation's value, and illustrated how notions of value were managed. Important here is consideration of who gets to participate in processes of value definition and articulation. Participants commonly framed value articulation as something that fell within the remit of the leadership team or as something that was discussed by a select group of individuals who were closely associated with the organisation. Two participants explained “the primary group (the hierarchy) understands the why and the what because they are involved in the decisions” (P76), and “the CEO is pleasantly persistent in the reiteration of ‘why’ we are here” (P122). In this way, value was articulated at the top of the proverbial organisational pyramid, trickling down to those working on the public-facing frontline.

While organisational managers proved helpful in bridging gaps between those at the “top” and the “bottom” of the organisation, small NPOs with hierarchical structures that benefit from middle-management staff are rare. Whilst the concept of value was explored in the majority of NPOs, conversations relating to the explicit articulation and definition of value took place predominantly behind closed doors in board or strategy meetings. Interestingly, evidence demonstrated that definitions and articulations were occasionally developed with external advisors or alongside major stakeholders, with some participants stating that value became explicit when “problem solving and planning and designing activities with partners” (P128). This could be in response to the conversational nature of these interactions, or because stating the value of an endeavour is often a clear requirement of successful funding applications.

- **Strategic operationalisation of value**

The strategic operationalisation of value conveyed the more functional aspects of value at play within a non-profit organisation. Here attempts to assess the notion of value within NPO's were described, referring to the need to juggle the dynamic concreteness of value: e.g., for some value is captured in the number of mouths they can feed (P96), and for others it is reflected in notions of religious communion (P109). Moreover, NPOs acknowledged that the indicators they use to track value, through formal and informal feedback, proved to be an endeavour of varying success: "the number of visitors who come through our doors provides a compelling case for the value that the Society provides for the public" (P99), opposed to "we can only go on the behaviour of the clients... if they appear happy and excited to mount their horse or get into the carriage, then we know we are achieving our goals" (P18).

This theme also described the organisational function of value, whereby NPOs attest to their projects remaining aligned to a core goal, or simply presenting their offered services as a direct realisation of the organisation's value – "The [NPO] regularly orientates decision making to the 'why' of the mission statement. It is one of the best additions to the leadership's decision-making checklist that I think we have made" (P11).

Finally, it captured how value was perceived by those within the organisation, with NPO managers or associational leaders describing their work as the act of translating conceptual value into action, or exploring how core operations may be structured or redeveloped to improve their alignment with the NPO's core goal: "the discussions about value are conceptual and strategic in how we translate that into work on the ground" (P111).

- **Conveying the promise and practice of value**

Conveying the promise and practice of value describes how an NPO's proposed value is communicated by the organisation and perceived by

the public. It pertains to an NPO's capacity to manage the expectations of the public, "we don't want to over promise and under deliver" (P102), and effectively communicate the complete scope of their offerings. When reflecting on conversations of value in this sense, participants highlighted how value was communicated through both non-personal channels (e.g., newsletters, emails, social media posts) and the day-to-day conversations between NPO representatives and members of the public. Volunteers were often positioned as key deliverers of value, with NPOs making a clear effort to align volunteers with their core ethos.

6.4.2. TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE ECOSYSTEM IN AUSTRALIAN NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

Based on these findings, we propose a model comprising three spaces in which value is considered or mentioned by NPOs: (1) the organisational domain, (2) the public domain, and (3) a mediation domain. Figure 6.2 offers an initial consideration and mapping of these spaces, articulating a value ecosystem within the Australian non-profit sector. Each domain is described further below.

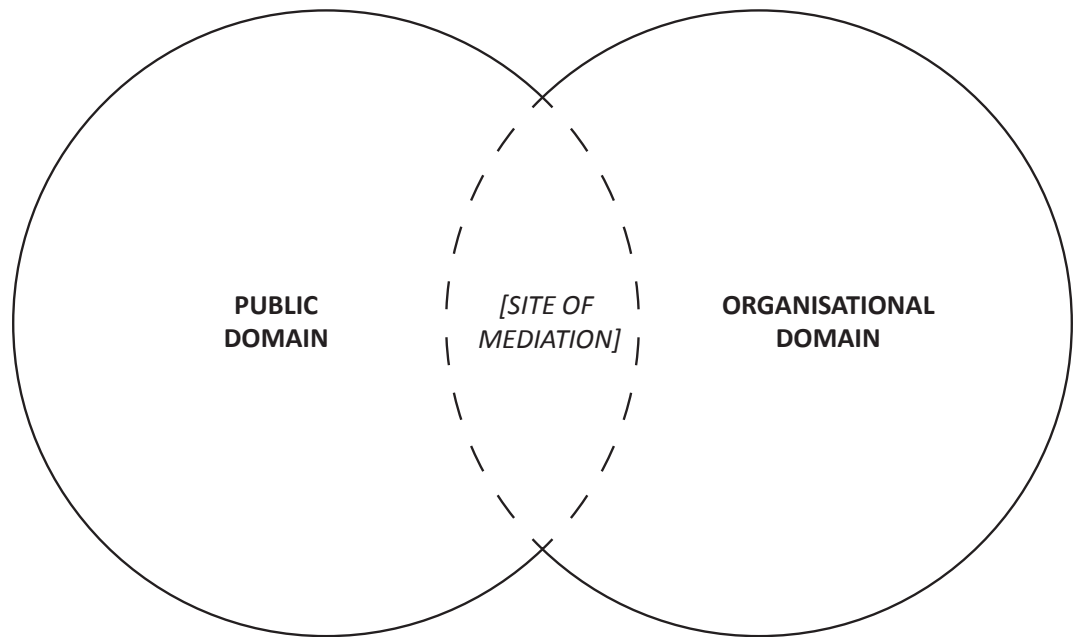


Figure 6.2: An initial consideration of the value ecosystem, illustrating three domains engaging value: (1) organisational domain, (2) public domain, and (3) mediation domain.

- **The organisational domain**

This domain reflected the perspective of the non-profit organisation and encompassed all activities that might be considered as business-like, i.e., strategic planning, event or activity organisation, the distribution of goods or services. Within this realm, value was discussed in strategic and pragmatic terms. For one NPO, value was positioned as the North Star of decision-making, whereby “each project, partner and decision is carefully considered to align with its values and in the futures in which it contributes to making” (P80). For others, value was perceived in the generative activities that take place within the organisation. That is, through the behaviours and practice of employees and volunteers – “We will also be working towards building a workforce of suitable and dedicated educators to ensure the viability of the centre and create an awareness ... of the importance of children accessing early childhood education prior to starting school” (P83).

- **The public domain**

The public domain represented the position of the public within the NPO ecosystem. At an individual level, this perspective was captured

in characterisation of a donor, a potential volunteer, beneficiary, or bystander. While this research did not seek to include the explicit, primary perspective of this audience, its existence was clearly understood by all NPOs by virtue of aiming to serve something other than themselves: “It is very obvious that there is need in the community” (P65). The notion of the ‘public’, that is, individuals who exist outside the NPO and who may – at some point, in some capacity – engage with the organisation, was explicit in almost every participant’s response. For example, “I think our audiences are very pleased we exist, no matter which bit of our work they encounter, because they are keenly aware that no one would do that work if we were not.” (P111).

- **The mediation domain**

In defining the organisational and public domains, a liminal space of mediation emerged. Here the value realised by a NPO was actualised, and made available to members of the public. Inhabiting this space, and bridging the gap between NPOs and the public, are communication channels, the services and activities offered, and conversations or interactions between NPO representatives and members of the public. One participant described how their organisation incorporated value into all internal and external aspects of their practice, stating the organisation’s core value was visible in “our advertising, mentioned at all events, and in day-to-day conversations... we are always looking for ways to expand awareness and incorporate it in media releases and correspondence” (P50). Another stated, “all our activities whether formal or informal, are guided by these values” (P52).

Notably, this domain of mediation also included interactions between NPOs and their more business-like stakeholders, with one participant describing conversations of value taking place with “other service organisations, our community, governments at all levels” (P102). The inclusion of government representatives, major donors, and other collaborators in the mediation space distinguishes collaborators working with a NPO from those inside the NPO. It also highlights that value

is often in movement, being transferred from one set of proverbial hands (the NPO) to another. Importantly, we describe the mediation domain as a space of both conceptual and tangible form-giving, whereby definitions and articulations of value formulated within a NPO are tested, iterated, and redeveloped outside its place of origin.

6.4.3. A PRELIMINARY MAPPING OF A VALUE ECOSYSTEM

The following section leverages our preliminary insights to speculate on design's remit in NPOs. Figure 6.3 offers a more detailed consideration of the emerging value ecosystem, illustrating the three domains in which value was referenced and the situated thematic findings. Our suppositions are delineated by the three domains previously identified (organisational, social, mediation) and we outline how design may be used in each.

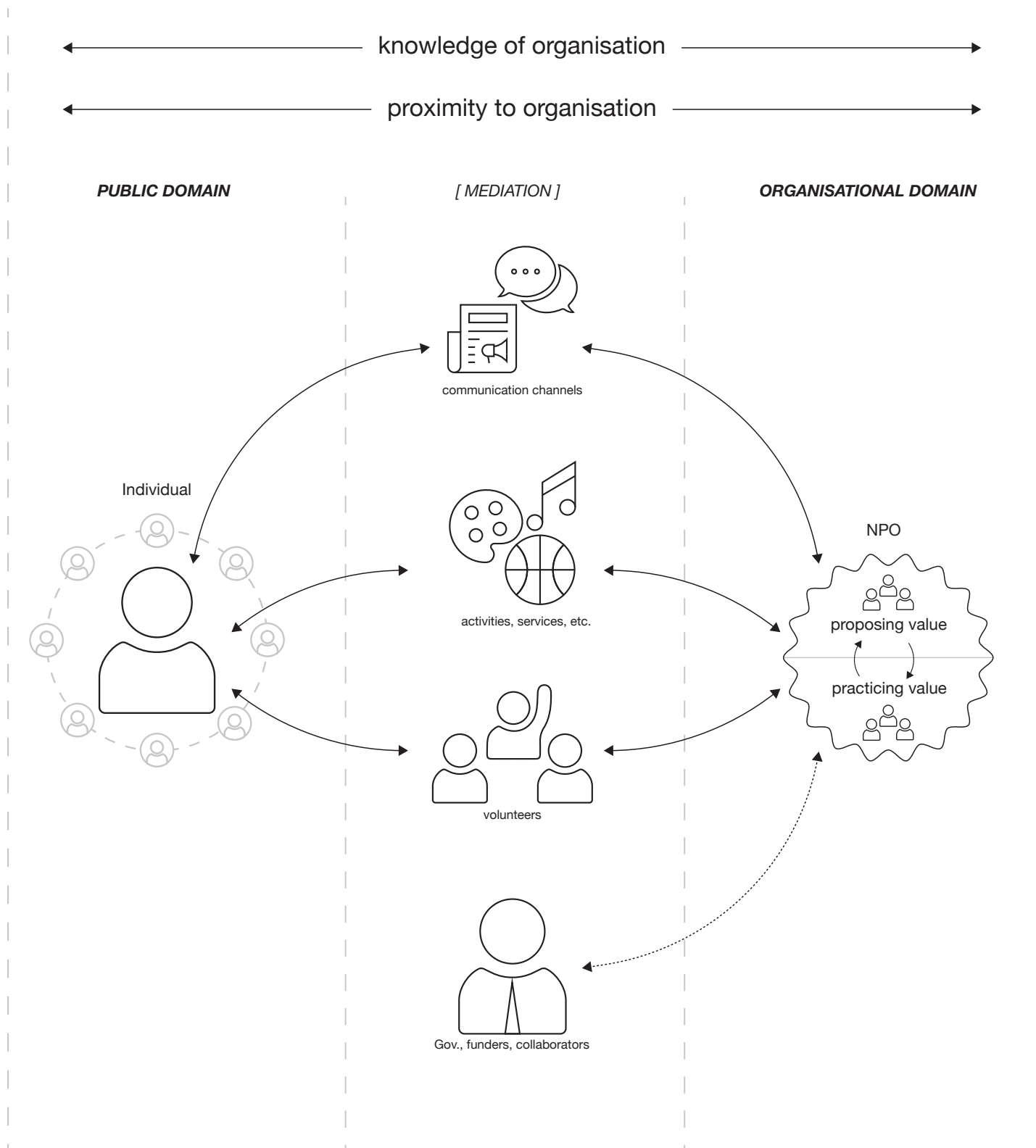


Figure 6.3: A preliminary mapping of a value ecosystem – denoting how value is (1) perceived (proposed and practiced) within a NPO’s organisational domain, (2) transferred to members of the public or major stakeholders via sites of mediation, and (3) conceived by NPOs in relation to an external individual (e.g., a donor, potential volunteer, beneficiary, member of the general public, etc.).

6.5

DISCUSSION

We begin the discussion with the reminder that while design has long professed social benefit and organisational advantage, to date few investigations have pertained to the broader role of design in non-profit organisations. Design has been integrated into NPOs in the past (Amatullo et al., 2021; Benston and Balka, 1993; McPhail et al., 1998; Pilemalm, 2002), however studies reflect isolated engagements explored for the benefit of other research foci (e.g., extending participatory design or contributing to technology theory more broadly).

6.5.1. DESIGN IN THE ORGANISATIONAL DOMAIN

A designer working with, alongside, or within a NPO with the intention of clarifying value or shaping organisational strategy would be firmly situated within the organisational domain. This mandates an understanding of four essential factors. Firstly, designers must consider the expanse of the organisational domain itself (e.g., how large is the organisation, what kind of structures exist within/support the organisation, what geographic profile does the organisation inhabit?). This understanding also requires consideration of external drivers of change which may dictate the scope of the current or future engagements. Thirdly, designers should be equipped with an understanding of the internal processes that define and articulate value, and, finally, how value is strategically operationalised by the NPO. Reading this, many would think immediately of Strategic Design, Systems Design, Design-Led Innovation and Organisational Design – disciplines of design primarily concerned with integrating information, artefacts and interactions conceived by an actor(s) to achieve a set of specific outcomes.

In each of these design practices, the remit of design is to interpret dynamic and ongoing situations, where problems are “open and ill-defined, tasks are unclear, processes experimental and where knowledge is something that

emerges step by step, by continuous interactions” (Zurlo in Meroni, 2008). In this capacity, the role of design is to assist the organisation in defining and articulating its value. In more traditional managerial practice this may be done through the development of a value proposition, organisational mission, or non-profit business model, which are common methods utilised in the previously outlined design praxes. While design praxes have a brief but successful legacy of benefitting organisations through these methods, we’d also like to champion the use of more speculative design practices such as Design Futuring. Xia and Fu (2023) divide future-oriented design into two types, (1) the pursuit of the confirmation of the realisability, and, (2) the exploration of the possibility. These foresight techniques and Futuring methods offer NPOs an opportunity to explore potential futures and how value may play out within those futures.

6.5.2. DESIGN FROM THE ORGANISATIONAL DOMAIN TO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

It is naïve to suggest that a designer’s potential remit be restricted to the organisational domain. Design practice encompasses considerations for an end-user, and design practice for the public domain follows accordingly. Importantly, we firmly situate this perspective in the notion of design for the public domain, rather than in the public domain. This is because our argument for the remit of design originates in the organisational domain and extends outwards to the public domain. The breadth of this design practice distinguishes it from the remit of design in the organisational domain (detailed previously) and requires attention to distinct contextual factors.

A designer already integrated in a NPO, or one working alongside a NPO, will likely be focused on conveying the promise and practice of value. As this theme occupies the space of the public domain, it also demands attention to associated contextual and environmental factors. This reflects elements of Buchanan’s (2001) *Four Orders of Design*. In this role, a designer would be fundamentally concerned with interactions between the NPO and the public, akin to our “[focus] on how human beings relate to other human beings

through the mediating influence of... experiences or activities or services” (Buchanan, 2001, pg. 11). Co-Design and Participatory Design practice come to mind as design approaches celebrated for their capacity to engage and empower participants. It is also integral for designers to understand how much distance (conceptual, cognitive, geographical) exists between the NPO and its audience as this will directly inform the development of NPO-audience interactions. Likewise, it speaks to the a potential wealth of opportunities for design to explore, identify and strengthen relationships between NPOs and the communities they serve.

6.5.3. DESIGNING SITES OF MEDIATION

Presupposed on our mapping of the mediation domain, as well as the confluence of knowledge and proximity, we suggest that design activity in this domain should be framed in response to more conventionally finite problems (Rittel and Webber, 1973). While it is readily acknowledged that correlation does not equate to causation, our preliminary mapping suggests a relationship between the number of tangible outputs a NPO generates and the public’s awareness and understanding of the organisation. Looking again at Buchanan’s (2001) *Four Orders of Design* we see opportunities for utilising the principles of first to third order design. For example, an NPO (P97) that primarily engages with members of the community through a small museum has a limited scope of impact defined by it’s geographic location in a regional community. Engaging with graphic designers or communication designers, or any designer “primarily concerned with visual symbols, the communication of information in words and images” (Buchanan, 2001, pg. 11) might allow NPOs to generate more engaging materials to strengthen existing community relationships or engage with previously untapped digital audiences.

P50, an entirely volunteer run organisation advancing the natural environment in a remote region of Australia could seek the assistance of industrial or interaction designers to develop new products, information guides, or offerings to strengthen their contributions to their community. Given that the second order is primarily concerned with tangible, physical

artefacts and other such *things* and third order design is centred on *action* (that is, designing experiences), a small NPO with limited resources (and thus, limited scope) may benefit from expertise in developing *things* and *actions* that realise their pre-defined value (Buchanan, 2001). In the case of P50, this may manifest in local planting guides that can be distributed physically and digitally or the development of citizen science animal tracking applications to support animal conservation.

While the potential types of design applicable in this domain are far more extensive than the others, it is important to note that designs must respond to well-defined problems to be fully effective. Anything inhabiting the mediation domain serves as a bridge between the organisation and the general public. This mediation is akin to a conversation between two parties (the public domain and organisational domain respectively), and the content of the mediation domain would be the words spoken between the two – the words which convey and communicate meaning but are independently interpreted by each party. While the words being communicated (i.e., the *things* and *actions* being designed) serve as a vehicle for conveying deeper meaning, it would be beneficial to think before we speak. Put plainly, it is important for the deeper meaning being communicated by the leading party, and subsequently interpreted by the responding party, to be formulated in advance. In this sense, the remit of designers in the mediation domain is to understand and develop effective vehicles (*things* or *actions*) that transfer value from the NPO to the public. While these vehicles ought to inherently reflect and reinforce the value they are transferring, explicitly defining, and articulating this value falls outside this domain.

6.6

CONCLUSION

This research offers a preliminary analysis of the potential remit of design within non-profit organisations to support their pursuit of value. Offering a mapping of the organisational, public and mediation domains that comprise the value ecosystem and the corollary thematic findings, we contribute valuable insights into how design might be integrated in Australian NPOs to support their pursuit of value. We readily acknowledge the limited scale of data collection and actively encourage further exploration in this space. Ultimately, we understand value to be a unique bridge between disciplines, practices, and sectors, and we view the integration of design in non-profit organisations as an opportunity to cultivate meaningful, measurable and socially resonant change.

INTERLUDE V: (STILL) ON DESIGN

Reader, we're not out of the woods yet.

The last chapter speculated on what design might make possible within the value ecosystems of Australian non-profit organisations. It stayed open – charting where design might enter, contribute, or reshape the work of social good. But design doesn't enter these spaces smoothly, it is shaped by the contexts it moves through. What interests me here is not just *what* design claims to do, but *how* it actually unfolds within the real, sometimes resistant, world of non-profit organisations.

This next chapter follows that reality more closely. *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs* examines how design takes shape within organisational life. It is, in many ways, the *pièce de résistance* of this thesis – the most grounded and applied chapter, and the one closest to practice. It is dense. It is detailed. But within that density lies rich, lived accounts of what it means to practice design inside the complex, shifting terrain of the non-profit sector. This is the central concern of the research: not just theorising design's potential but understanding how it is actually practiced – even if only through a series of short-term, discrete design engagements.

Here, the focus narrows. I move from systems and structures to people and practice.

Design is still the object of inquiry. But now I'm asking: what does it feel like to practice design in these conditions? What strategies do designers use to stay aligned with their goals, or to negotiate the systems around them?

This is still a research project invested in understanding design's potential. But it is also a study of its limits and what it takes to keep going anyway.

This is the last green page for a while, but don't worry – I'm not going anywhere.

DESIGN WITH / AND / FOR AUSTRALIAN NPOS

Natalia Gulbransen-Diaz, Dr. Clare Cooper, Dr. Leigh-Anne Hepburn

CHAPTER 7

ABSTRACT

This study explores how design practice contributes to value creation within Australian non-profit organisations (NPOs). It examines three design engagements with NPOs, specifically drawing on reflections from emergent designers and supported by interviews with professional designers. It introduces a spatial-relational model (a double helix) to re-interpret the relationship between designers and NPOs, to understand how design is enacted, integrated, and experienced in socially-oriented contexts. The analysis reveals that design outcomes are deeply shaped by organisational conditions, role clarity, relational labour, and mutual understanding, and highlights design's capacity to produce meaningful artefacts, support organisational strategy, and cultivate collaborative relationships. Importantly, the study identifies five pathways through which design enhances the everyday: generating symbols and systems, enabling knowledge, imagining alternative futures, fostering strong relationships, and facilitating value definition. This work contributes to growing scholarship on design for social impact and foregrounds the importance of supporting organisations already doing the work of social change.

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7.1

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Design Council (), a not-for-profit industry body established to advance a design-led future for Australia, regularly recount the following proclamations: “design is a process that leads to business growth and national prosperity”, “businesses that use design gain competitive advantage” and “we want to ensure design capability can be leveraged to amplify the number of Australian businesses leading by design to drive National Prosperity” (Australian Design Council, n.d.). Just over five years ago, McKinsey & Company shared a series of (what they describe as) exemplary design products and services, all of which are “constant reminders of the way strong design can be at the heart of both disruptive and sustained commercial success in physical, service, and digital settings” (Sheppard et al., 2018, pg. 3). Nearly 10 years before *that*, the UK Design Council wrote “design can directly and significantly improve sales, profits, turnover and growth. Using and valuing design brings bottom line benefits, and those who understand and act on this insight have a competitive edge over the rest” (2007, pg. 4). From these quotes alone, it seems clear that, at least in design communities, design is *a big deal*. The competitive advantage design can offer to businesses is *a big deal*. The impact of design on economies is *a big deal*.

When we turn away from business, we still hear declarations heralding design as having “all the potentialities to play a major role in triggering and supporting social change” (Manzini and Coad, 2015, pg. 55). We read about design having “an essential social responsibility because design is at the core of the world’s largest challenges... and solutions” (Berman, 2008, pg. 1). Designers report on seeing a “broad interest [amongst design practitioners] in mission-driven work and applying design methods and mindsets at a strategic and systems level of intervention” (Amatullo et al., 2021, pg. 13). Even here, the potential impact of design on society seems to be *a big deal*. Perhaps it is precisely because of this cacophony of praise that it is so baffling to the authors

that we hear so few references to the non-profit sector. One might think that if design is so effective in business, and so impactful to society, that there would be a strong presence of design amongst associations or organisations that also strive to better society. Existing between market and government, non-profit organisations serve communities by acting as service providers, innovators, guardians of values and advocates (Kramer, 1981). We would therefore think these organisations a perfect site for socially oriented design activity. However, we have found little exploration of design with/and/for Australian NPOs.

Briefly, we want to comment explicitly on the inclusion of two slashes (‘/’) in the last phrase and the title of this paper. Specifically in the phrase “design with/and/for Australian NPOs” the slash is employed as a shorter substitute of the ‘inclusive or’ (also known as an inclusive disjunction), a logical semantic that is true when either one or both of its parts are true. This is an essential reflection of the exploratory nature of this research, which gives equal import to each of the potential combinations of the phrase. Put simply, we are just as interested in understanding notions of design *and* Australian NPOs as we are in exploring perceptions of design *for* Australian NPOs. Likewise, as eager as we are to understand design *for* Australian NPOs, we are equally intent on investigating design *with* Australian NPOs. At this current time, we do not believe it possible (nor practical) to delineate between each of these permutations given the scarcity of literature examining *any* relationship between design and Australia NPOs. As such, we instead choose to closely examine three cases studies of design with Australian NPOs.

This research explores the practice-based experiences of designers engaging with NPOs for value creation. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

1. What value can design create in an Australian non-profit organisation?
2. How might modes of practice and contexts of application inform the experiences of designers engaging with Australian non-profit organisations?

Reflective diary entries, essays, and interviews provide insight into the experiences of five emergent designers involved in these brief, 12-week design engagements. Supplementary insights from interviews with expert designers working with Australian NPOs were also collected. The contribution of the work is two-fold. First, we present a spatial analysis of design engagements with Australian NPOs – that is, the spaces which enable, contain, and bring to life design activity in partnership with Australian NPOs. Second, we offer design-specific understanding of these learnings and provide insight into design’s role in generating value in Australian NPOs.

7.2

CONTEXTUALISING THIS RESEARCH

This research is situated at the intersection of three core perspectives: site, practice, and function (Figure 7.1).

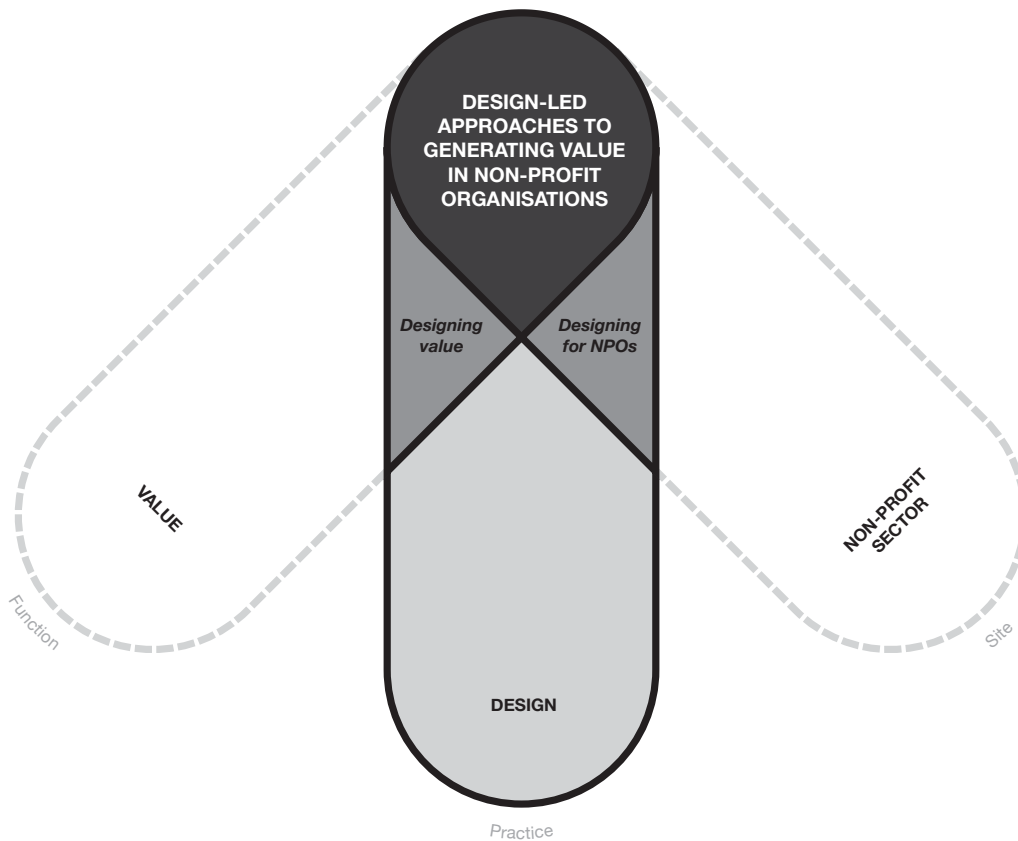


Figure 7.1: Intersections of site, practice and function in this work

The research is defined by its site – all the design engagements explored reflect on design work completed with, and, or for, Australian NPOs. A brief historical account of the Australian non-profit sector provides insight into the social, economic, cultural, and governmental factors that have shaped this sector, and subsequently, the NPOs described in this research. From a functional perspective, the primary data collection comes from design students embedded in or working closely with local NPOs as a part of their tertiary education. As such, practice-based pedagogy is outlined to offer insight into the key tenets of design education and to establish the boundaries of how design was practiced. Finally, a description of value and its relationship with design is provided. Although rarely explicit, the notion of value (whether it be of human, cultural, social, or personal origin) motivates decisions, guides action and serves as a basis for assessment for both designers and clients (Le Dantec and Do, 2009). Exploring the notion of value as an output enables us to examine what is produced alongside the process of production.

7.2.1. THE AUSTRALIAN NON-PROFIT SECTOR

Australian non-profit (alternatively denoted as not-for-profit) organisations play a significant role in a range of sectors: human services, education, health, religion and faith, sports, the environment, arts, to name a few). 73.6% of some 60,000 organisations are small, unincorporated organisations, who, despite an annual revenue under \$500,000, play an important role in the life of civil societies in Australia (McGregor-Lowndes, 2014). NPOs within Australia are defined as organisations that provide services to the community. They do not operate to make a profit, and any profit generated must go back into the services the organisation provides (and not to any shareholders or members) (Australian Taxation Office, n.d.). Lyons (1993) provides an apt description of NPOs, an account which stands nearly three decades on:

Non-profit organisations are the organisational manifestation of commitments by various groups of people to provide a service, to facilitate an activity or to advance a cause. They differ from government organisations because the effort that sustains them is voluntary and does not have the authority of government; they differ from for-profit organisations in that obtaining a personal profit from funds invested in the organisation was not their founders' nor their current participants' intention. (pg. 301)

The 1990s neoliberal economic turn in the Australian Government marked a concerted effort to bring NPOs under the control of State and Commonwealth government policy (Butcher and Dalton, 2014). Competition policy made funding increasingly constrained – doled out only for specific contracted services – and constructed citizens as consumers who “should exercise their free choice in accessing goods and services according to their capacity to pay; the providers of such goods and services would continue to provide them as long as the demand remained strong enough and the quality of their services remained sufficiently attractive” (Onyx et al., 2016, pg. 173). This neoliberal turn, and resulting policies and values, has culminated in a push for NPOs

to become businesses, or at the very least, operate in accordance with the principles of the market.

The rise of social enterprises – organisations leveraging micro business models to create and sustain social rather than private value through continuous innovation, adaptation, learning – brilliantly showcases one of the fundamental problems of this neoliberal turn: the inherent conflict of interest between profit generation and social good (Butcher and Dalton, 2014; Menasce and Dalsace, 2011). Although many NPOs would readily acknowledge the importance of financial viability, operational decision-makers may find meeting social needs and financial needs noncommensurate. Green (2009) argues that these noncommensurate objectives result in dire consequences for human resource management of a NPO and the NPO more broadly. Onyx et al. (2016) also argue that “as economic goals and the achievement of profit become paramount, and as an organisation adopts the language of business, then those intangible goals of social cohesion, trust and social justice, become ever more invisible” (pg. 182).

7.2.2. EDUCATING EMERGING DESIGNERS

Given the central role of emergent (student) designers in this research, this section details literature on design education. Broadly, it provides context for understanding how designers are trained to think, act, and reflect, and lays the groundwork for the specific pedagogical model adopted in this study.

Teaching design to students via the design studio format has been a common approach over the last hundred years (Cuff, 1992; Dutton, 1987; Schön, 1988). The pedagogical pith of the design studio format is the ‘crit’ – the “central means of conveying design knowledge” (Reimer and Douglas, 2003, pg. 194). Students participating in design studio classes will often gather in a central area and present their work to their instructor and cohort, allowing their progress to be evaluated both summatively and formatively (Cennamo et al., 2011). During this feedback session, instructors are well-positioned to impart design knowledge (Adams et al., 2016), model their own design

thinking and actions (Budge, 2016), and offer a framework on which students can cultivate their own professional relationships (Percy, 2004). Despite criticisms suggesting the ‘crit’ as a means of enculturation (Belluigi, 2016) or creating climates of fear, anxiety or defensiveness (Scagnetti, 2017), many design educators see (and are likely to continue seeing) the ‘crit’ as a core pedagogical component of studio-based learning that cannot be abandoned (Dannels, 2005; Souleles, 2013).

In addition to the ‘crit’, the practice-led focus of a design studio is recognised as an effective framework for developing Schön’s notion of ‘tacit knowledge’ within students. Schön’s theories on the nature of professional knowing and professional education stem from an attack on what he viewed as a tendency to apply ‘technical rationality’ – purported to make problem-solving rigorous through the application of scientific theory and technique – to disciplines engaging with the complexities of real-world problems and real-world practice (Schön, 1983). Schön convincingly argues that professional disciplines characterised by “uncertainty, complexity, instability, uniqueness and value conflicts” (1983, pg. 14) (such as architecture, and more pertinent to this work, design) require a kind of ‘artistry’ or ‘tacit knowing’ achieved over a period of time spent doing good practice. He further describes this ‘tacit knowing’ as a capacity for “intuitive and spontaneous performance” (Schön, 1983, pg. 21) in response to design problems – a form of knowing that exists not just “in the head” (Schön, 1983, pg. 22), but is built into the knowing manipulation of the tools of practice.

7.2.3. THE CONCEPT OF VALUE AND DESIGN

Already the concept of value has been referred to numerous times in this chapter. Explicitly, it has been framed as an output and product worth investigation – something that has generated more benefit than sacrifice (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996), produced hedonic appreciation (Holbrook et al., 1994), or monetary gain (Grönroos, 2011). Implicitly, it has referenced to frame design as ‘*a big deal*’ – something important, meaningful or

even “good”¹ to the reader (Zimmerman et al., 2015). It has long been recognised in literature that value is an elusive concept, one that suffers from ‘fuzzy definitional problems’ (Ballantyne et al., 2011; Carù and Cova, 2003). Attempts to understand the concept’s role, remit or influence on design practice is not exempt from the consequences of these definitional complications.

Writing on the topic of value Milton Rokeach states, “the value concept has been employed in two distinctively different ways in human discourse. We will often say that a person ‘has a value’ but also that an object ‘has value” (1973, pg. 4). He goes on to suggest that personal values are of particular importance to social analysis and activity, an opinion seemingly shared by a slew of design academics. In their introduction to *Handbook of Ethics, Values, and Technological Design: Sources, Theory, Values and Application Domains* Van den Hoven, Vermaas, and Van de Poel (2015) describe the traditional perspective on design and values. They write:

The design of new products, public utilities, and the built environment is traditionally seen as a process in which the moral values of users and society hardly play a role. The traditional view is that design is a technical and value-neutral task of developing artifacts that meet functional requirements formulated by clients and users. These clients and users may have their own moral and societal agendas, yet for engineers, these are just externalities to the design process. (pg. 1)

Throughout the remainder of the handbook, they make available research in ethics of technology and design to outline a more constructive perspective on developing technology in accordance with moral and social values. Importantly though, these sociological interpretations of value are often centred on the individual (whomever puts the proverbial ‘person’ in ‘personal values’) and are less cognisant of Rokeach’s second proposition: the objects and artefacts that have their own form of value.

1. Whatever that might mean.

The value of objects and artefacts is commonly evaluated in terms of producer value or economic value (Heskett et al., 2017). The tenets of producer value are reflective of the sustainable competitive advantage ideology, the current theory underpinning several business management approaches. It argues that to sustain a competitive situation, a business must leverage their intangible (read: knowledge) resources to (i) deliver value to the customer or user, (ii) prevent other businesses from appropriating these methods, and (iii) ensure appropriate means of maintaining, or increasing, their share of the value created (Heskett et al., 2017). In a similar vein, economic value is characterised by a resource management perspective and is founded on the relationship between the availability of an object and its desirability. However, it has also long been recognised that not all objects or values can be subject to an economic value mechanism (such as a price evaluation) because of incommensurability, and other objects or values cannot be measured in economic terms at all.

These complexities inherent to value are central to any design engagement in a non-profit context, where the value being worked with, generated, supported, or offered often escapes the traditional evaluation mechanisms relied upon in for-profit settings. This research acknowledges these ambiguities and, rather than trying to resolve them, explores how value is interpreted and made meaningful in or through design practice.

7.3

METHOD

In our desire to better understand the practice-based experiences of designers engaging with NPOs for value creation, the authors recognised the requisite need for design activity with NPOs to take place. That is to say, in order for us to investigate design's impact within Australian NPOs, we first needed designers to *do some design with/and/for some NPOs*.

This study collected data from two groups of designers, delineated by their levels of expertise. The first group, referred to as the *emerging designers*, consists of five third (final) year Bachelor of Design Computing students from the University of Sydney. In order to participate in the research, students had to be over the age of 18 years old, be enrolled in the relevant Independent Study Unit engaging with NPO partners, and be proficient in English to articulate their reflections on design practice and value. Students were asked to complete weekly reflective diary entries (for 12 weeks) and submit a reflective essay at the students at the end of their design engagement. These reflections were collated and analysed as a data set. Interviews with each student were also conducted after the course was completed to better understand the context of the emergent designers' experience.

The second group, labelled as *expert designers*, consisted of six design practitioners recruited using convenience sampling from a range of design firms across two major Australian cities, Sydney, and Melbourne. Participants had to be over the age of 18 years old, have current or recent (within five years) experience working in, with or for an Australian NPO, and proficient in English to articulate their reflections on design practice and value. The purpose of these interviews was threefold: (1) to provide insight into longer-term design engagements with Australian NPOs, (2) support a comparative understanding of more evolved design practice, and (3) capture a broader range of common design methods or approaches used in an industry context.

Prior to any data collection, all participants were required to read a privacy declaration and give informed consent (HREC2021/787). The following sections present: (i) an explanation of the design pedagogy shaping the Independent Study Unit undertaken by the emergent designers, (ii) a description of the three cases of design with/and/for an Australian NPO, (iii) details of data collection methods employed, and (iv) an overview of the data analysis approach.

7.3.1. LEARNING THROUGH AND WITH DESIGN PRACTICE: DESIGNING THE INDEPENDENT STUDY UNIT

This section outlines the pedagogical and practical foundations of the Independent Study Unit undertaken by the emergent designers. We describe how the unit was structured to support practice-based learning and reflection, and detail how and why each partner NPO was selected.

How the class was structured and why

The Independent Study Unit was intentionally structured to support emergent designers as they engaged with real-world non-profit clients through autonomous, practice-based design work. Drawing on studio-based pedagogy, the unit emphasised independent inquiry, situated reflection, and the capacity to navigate uncertainty within live design contexts. While it fulfilled standard curriculum requirements for advanced undergraduate study, the structure of the class was deliberately shaped to act as both a pedagogical scaffold and a research setting.

Independent Study Units “provide an opportunity to high achieving students to develop an interest in a specific Design Computing topic; to develop skills in independent study; and to develop advanced report writing skills” (Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning, 2024). To participate in this subject, students must have already completed 48 credit points of study (i.e. equivalent to two years of full-time study) and have a WAM (Weighted Average Mark) of at least 70. The elective is undertaken with an agreement between the student and a supervisor on an agreed topic. The learning outcomes of the unit, as detailed in the Student Handbook, are included in Table 7.1 below – and can (for clarity) be summarised into three design dimensions: Design Engagement, Design Management and Design Application

Table 7.1: Learning outcomes described in Student Handbook

#	Details of Learning Outcome	Design Dimension
L01	Demonstrate expertise in producing a solution to a real-world problem by employing design methods, creative thinking, and producing prototypes	Design Engagement
L02	Apply design innovation strategies and concepts to a real-world project and communicate it successfully via written and oral presentations	
L03	Manage the project independently, to develop strong project management skills and operate within a schedule to produce deliverables	Design Management
L04	Think critically about design processes, reflect upon personal performance, and improve your own processes	
L05	Apply ideation and design methods for developing solutions that synthesise insights from a need finding process, then prototype designs that address problems through innovative ideas	Design Application
L06	Identify design opportunities to develop innovative, realistic and original ideas	

Six students enrolled in the 13-week unit and met weekly for a three hour group supervisory with the lead author across the semester. The supervisory meeting was structured akin to a design studio (albeit a less formal one) and actively encouraged student pairs to gather at the central long table and take a turn sharing their progress with their instructor and cohort. Students were strongly encouraged to share low-fidelity work (i.e., drafts, sketches, preliminary ideas) to accommodate spontaneous feedback, current obstacles or challenges they were facing and their key priorities for the following week. Although these design crits were primarily led by the sole supervisor – sharing feedback and asking additional questions – other students in the cohort were encouraged to participate. This not only allowed students to practice in the role of the ‘professional designer’ (a position usually reserved for the instructor only) but fostered a culture of community and support amongst the students who, although working with different NPO clients, were united by their broader experiences working with real-world clients.

During the meetings, the supervisor made it clear that their supervisory role was more akin to that of a coach or mentor, rather than a pedagogical marshal. That is to say, they made it clear that the students had complete autonomy to

engage their own design processes as they saw fit. The supervisor was there to assist them in their decision-making, offer additional perspective, and refine their selected approaches or skill sets.

To structure student progress, the unit utilised two ‘phases’ of design activity to enforce timekeeping benchmarks. The first phase was framed as a ‘Discovery Phase’, with suggested activities including (but not limited to): secondary research (e.g., literature review), primary research (e.g., user interviews), an outline of user needs, an outline of market landscape (e.g., existing precedent analysis), synthesis of findings and early ideation. The second phase of design activity was labelled the ‘Design Phase’ and encouraged students to share their concept selection and evaluation, engage in concept consultation or testing, engage in low-fidelity development and testing, refinement, mid-fidelity development and testing and a final synthesis of findings. The proposed milestones, summarised in Figure 7.2, outline key activities across the unit and were also provided to students at the beginning of the semester to guide their progress.

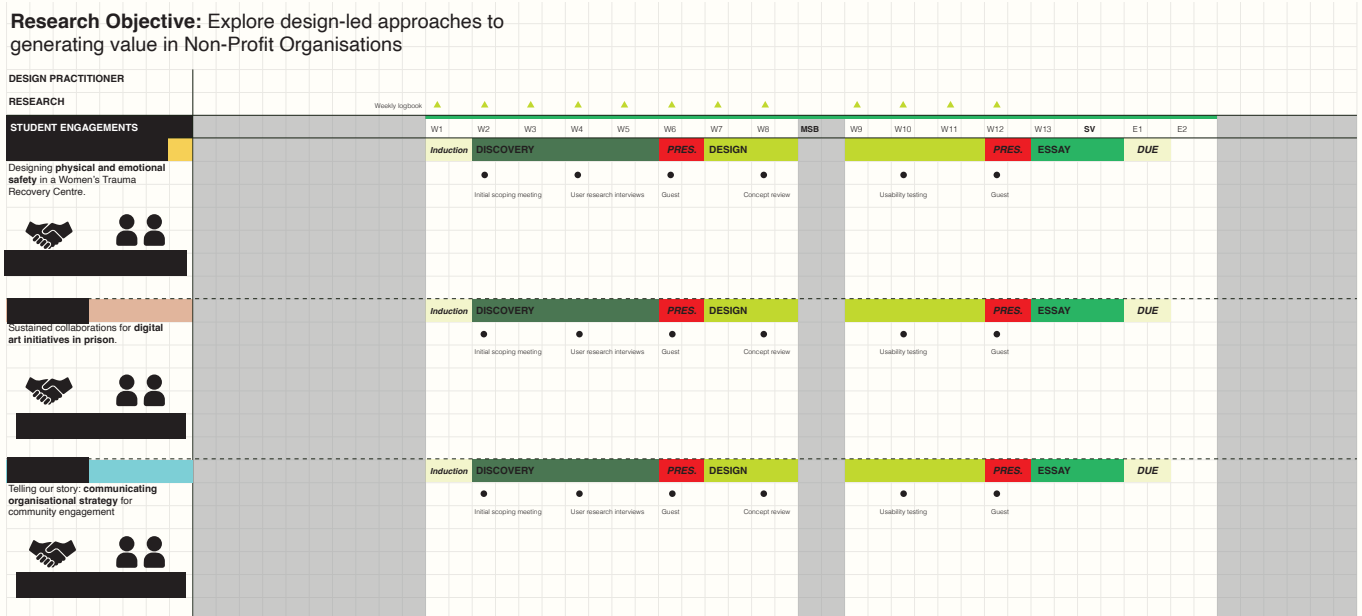


Figure 7.2: Suggested project outline for students

These loose guidelines for design activity were informed by Nussem et al. (2017) Non-profit Design Ladder, which suggests that foundational activities

like a discovery phase – which showcases a designer’s understanding of the NPOs stakeholders, internal and external environment, and user insights – assist in demonstrating the value of design as a practice and establishes a “foundation for future innovation” (pg. 69). To sensitise students to the concept of value without prescribing specific methods or outcomes, a Week 1 lecture (available in Appendix C) was delivered on the notion of value in design. The lecture introduced multiple theoretical perspectives and frameworks for understanding or engaging with value in design and ultimately prompted students to attend to value as a situated, relational, and likely contested feature of their engagements. This lecture aimed to foster attentiveness rather than direct methodology, allowing reflections on value to emerge organically through each project.

With this pedagogical foundation in place, attention now turns to how non-profit partners were selected and matched with students to support both engagement and alignment across the study.

How the NPOs were selected

The process of selecting non-profit organisations (NPOs) for this study was shaped by both pedagogical and methodological aims. From the outset, the goal was to foster engagements that were not only feasible within the timeframe of the Independent Study Unit but also meaningful to the participating students. To this end, the authors were intentional in partnering emergent designers with NPOs with which they had an affinity for the cause. As such, when students expressed an interest for taking the Independent Study Unit and sought departmental permission, they were asked to outline their relevant skillsets, describe the skills they wished to showcase or develop further within the unit, and voluntary causes they were passionate about. This was motivated by the assumption that a personal investment in the cause would help engage the emergent designers more effectively and respectfully than working on a brief they felt personally distant from.

With this understanding, the authors then utilised their professional networks to identify local NPOs that had (1) some form of existing relationship with the academic department offering the unit, and (2) an interest in working with the emergent designers. A preliminary meeting between the unit supervisor and a leadership representative from the NPOs outlined the scope of the engagement, an opportunity to collaboratively develop the specific design brief for the emergent designers and the proposed level of participation and organisational access needed for project success. It also gave the supervisor an opportunity to better understand the level of design literacy each NPO possessed. Five NPOs were contacted, and three agreed to participate.²

7.3.2. THREE CASES OF DESIGN WITH/AND/FOR A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

Participating organisations include a women’s health NPO with one past engagement in co-design seeking a digital design solution, a community justice NPO with little design literacy seeking strategic design assistance, and a creative community organisation with extensive design literacy seeking aid with strategic communications and community engagement. A more detailed description of the participating NPOs, their design literacy, specific design briefs, design disciplines and resulting design artefacts are described in more detail below.

Case #1: Designing physical and emotional safety for victim-survivors

NPO #1 is a non-government and not-for-profit organisation that provides accessible medical, allied, and complementary healthcare services, along with a range of programs, group activities, and educational initiatives aimed at enhancing women’s health. The organisation envisions a world where women and girls are treated with respect, live safely and healthily, and can participate fully and equally in all aspects of life. Actively committed to advancing the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of women and girls, the organisation

2. One NPO contacted was unavailable for the entire duration of the academic semester, while the other NPO expressed a desire to work with postgraduate students instead of undergraduates.

also advocates for systemic improvements in both community settings and the broader health sector.

This NPO had previously engaged a public health researcher to co-design a report that would guide the strategic expansion of the NPOs physical sites and service offerings. The report outlined key priorities with respect to interventions, practitioners and physical features, as well as core principles for the site's operations. Key priorities were discussed with the Executive Director of the NPO, and it was agreed that the emergent designers would be best positioned to contribute design ideas for digital or technological solutions that could support the physical and emotional support of victim-survivors engaging with the NPO. Despite their prior experiences with co-design and design workshop facilitation, the Executive Director admitted they had little expertise in the realm of digital or interactive product design processes.

The two participating emergent designers in this engagement identify as female and were eager to contribute to a women's health and safety initiative. Having explored digital technologies to support women's safety previously, they were passionate about applying their skills for the benefit of a local organisation. The emergent designers were tasked with designing a digital offering that supports the physical and emotional safety for victim-survivors. The engagement proceeded smoothly, with clear communication, aligned expectations, and a sense of mutual respect. The designers were able to progress through each phase of the project without major disruption, resulting in a well-received set of design outcomes.

Case #2: Sustained collaborations for digital art initiatives in prison

NPO #2 aims to improve the social and mental health of prisoners and involuntary patients by providing prisoner, mental health and court support. In addition to its work in defending human rights, the organisation advocates for the marginalised and excluded and believes that a positive change in Australia's criminal justice and mental health systems requires these voices to be respected and embraced as part of the solution.

Although this NPO regularly engaged with undergraduate students as volunteers, their experiences were primarily with students from a legal, arts or social sciences background, and they had very little experience with notions of design and the design process. The partnership was facilitated by a supporting academic staff member who had extensive experience as a design researcher, practitioner and educator across the fields of design, psychology, and criminal justice. However, miscommunications, misunderstandings and misalignments in expectations between the unit supervisor and NPO CEO within the first month led to a breakdown in the engagement, and the emergent designers were pivoted to working on an altered design brief with the supporting academic and their connections to a State Government Community Justice initiative instead of the initial NPO. As such, the emergent designers shifted their initial focus from exploring the use of digital arts initiatives for prisoners to understanding the types of organisational collaborations that might be needed to sustain this engagement for the long-term.

The two emergent designers working within this engagement sought to develop either a product, strategy, or even both, for their NPO partner. Capitalising on previous learnings, the students expressed a desire to engage with design beyond a singular discrete product and hoped to find an opportunity for future innovation. Although they had no prior experience working in the space of community justice, they voiced a passion for community care and justice more broadly.

Case #3: Communicating organisational strategy for community engagement

NPO #3 is focused on fostering community wellbeing by linking individuals and groups with spaces, initiatives, and opportunities that encourage creative living. Operating as an independent charity, the organisation is committed to broadening the role of the creative industries in engaging with diverse communities to drive meaningful social transformation. Its efforts are directed towards empowering emerging communities to cultivate stronger connections, improved health outcomes, and long-term sustainability.

The primary contact for this engagement was an organisational representative of many hats: CEO, founder and managing director of the NPO. With a background in creative arts and regular engagement with a range of creative disciplines (including a variety of design practices), this NPO had the highest perceived level of design literacy. With this came a receptiveness and trust in the design process and insights offered, as well as a willingness to participate in design activities. This open-door approach enabled the emergent designers to leverage highly participatory design methods in their practice, developing a rich and intimate understanding of the organisation's internal and external environments, stakeholders and audience.

The two emergent designers were keen, creative individuals and extremely enthusiastic to support a local community-based creative organisation. Having completed prior units in Co-Design and Participatory Design approaches and Design Innovation, the emergent designers saw this as a unique opportunity to refine their design-led community engagement skills. They responded to the following design challenge established by their NPO partner, which said “being a creative powerhouse isn't smooth sailing. With such a vast program of activities and offerings, telling the story of the NPO is immensely challenging. Ensuring this story is genuinely articulated and communicated to their community? Even more challenging.” With this in mind, the emergent designers were tasked with designing a novel way of communicating the organisational strategy of the NPO for sustained community engagement.

Similar to engagement #1, this design–NPO engagement was notably positive, marked by strong alignment, high design literacy, and active participation from the NPO. This enabled the emergent designers to apply participatory methods with confidence, resulting in a well-scoped response to a real communication challenge grounded in community needs.

7.3.3. DATA COLLECTION

This study was primarily concerned with collecting designer's reflections on their practice-based experiences engaging with Australian NPOs. Reflections

were captured through various means: the emergent designers shared weekly reflective diary entries, reflective essays, and participated in interviews, while the expert designers participated in interviews only. To balance the shorter research engagement with the expert designers, expert design participants were encouraged to bring relevant artefacts (e.g., notebooks, drafts, works in progress) to prompt their memories.

- **Reflective Diary Entries** were completed weekly by the emergent designers – an initiative informed by Tann and Griffiths (1992) tripart approach of acting and observing, systematically analysing, and planning. These reflective diary entries sought to capture any impromptu considerations the emergent designers may have had regarding the application of their design methodology, while also detailing deeper understandings of the same topic that may be challenged, reformulated, or retheorised over the research engagement. The entries consisted of three parts: (1) textual vignettes, (2) responses to predetermined questions, and (3) mind maps. Below, Figure 7.3 presents a blank version of the weekly reflection template, while Figure 7.4 illustrates a completed example drawn from the emergent designer data.

The textual vignettes were crafted per Ely et al. (2003), whereby vignettes are treated as “composites that encapsulate what the researcher finds through the fieldwork” (pg. 70). Reflecting on their own use of vignettes in research, Spalding and Phillips (2007) describe them as “provid[ing] a mediated account of the ‘truth’... they reveal the writer, researcher, and interpreter behind the writing and emphasize the fact that in putting together the account, selection and interpretation have taken place and particular values have been brought to bear” (pg. 961).

Each week emergent designers were asked to respond to the same two questions, “What value did your work generate for the NPO this week, and how did it do so?” and “What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?” These

predetermined questions encouraged the emergent designers to reflect on their practice and impact, and how that might be perceived by their NPO partners.

The final component of the reflective diary entries asked the emergent designers to produce mind or concept maps. This enabled them to illustrate conceptual, thematic, or actual relationships within the project that might be difficult to describe textually. Although the distinction between the two approaches is outlined by Wheeldon and Ahlberg (2012), the decision to utilise a mind map or a concept map was a decision left to the discretion of the designer. Both forms of mapping illustrate how the emergent designers understand, interpret and visualise the relationships between various concepts, actors and ideas relevant to their practice (Kommers and Lanzing, 1997).

- **Reflective Essays** were employed to understand the first-person perspective of the emergent designers engaging with NPOs. Smith (1999, pg. 360) argues that writing reflexively promotes “an internal dialogue for analysing and understanding important issues in the research project”. This exercise in reflection and reflexive writing encouraged the emergent designers to move beyond isolated events and establish linkages across theory, research and their practice. Following their final presentations with their NPO partners, students had three weeks to complete a 2,000-word reflective essay. While the format of the reflective essay was open and flexible, students were encouraged to draw on their weekly reflections, design process and real-world experiences (i.e. engagement with your NPO partner) to describe (1) what value design can create in a non-profit organisation, and (2) how design might contribute to a non-profit organisation’s pursuit of value. Although three weeks is a relatively short time, within the 13-week semester context we felt it appropriately balanced the need for specific and concentrated reflection with time dedicated exclusively to their NPO engagement.

- **Semi-structured interviews** were utilised to systematically gather information regarding designers' experiences engaging with NPOs (Wilson, 2013). An adjustable interview protocol (Galletta and Cross, 2013; Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Wilson, 2013) consisting of open-ended and more theoretically driven questions was implemented, with follow-up questions posed as needed. Interviews with both emergent and expert designers grounded the conversation in one or two design recent design projects the participant had experience with, and explored: (1) how their design practice created value for the NPO (i.e. identifying skills, activities or behaviours that were most impactful, and describing design artefacts related to key moments of the engagement), and (2) how the designer believed their design practice was perceived by the NPO (i.e. articulating the value the designer thinks their work was perceived to have created for the NPO over the course of their engagement, and reflecting on specific moments in which they think the value of their work was particularly evident).

TEXTUAL VIGNETTES	
PRACTITIONER TO ORGANISATION	ORGANISATION TO PRACTITIONER
What value did your work generate for the NPO this week, and how did it do so?	What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?

CONCEPT MAPPING

Figure 7.3: Blank Weekly Reflective Diary Template

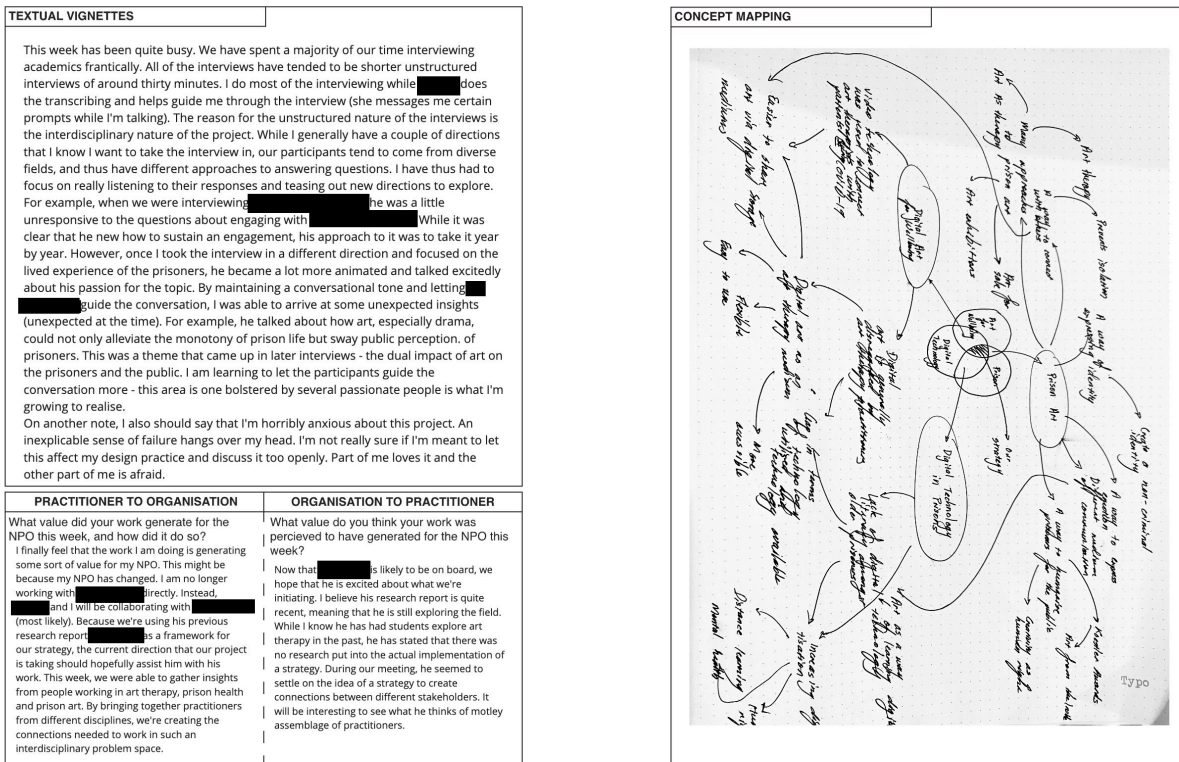


Figure 7.4: Completed Weekly Reflective Diary Example

A selection of original artefacts and materials produced are available in Appendix C.2. This includes samples of weekly reflections (including textual vignettes, mind-maps, and reflective questions) and reflective essays completed by the emergent designers. In addition, the interview protocol and excerpts from interviews with both the emergent and expert designers are provided to further evidence the themes and interpretations developed across this chapter. These artefacts provide a tangible view of how design work was recorded, made sense of, and communicated throughout the process.

7.3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim using a professional transcription service, and, alongside the reflective diary entries and essays, thematically analysed within NVivo. Thematic analysis is a frequently employed qualitative research method for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pg. 79). Although the

approach is viewed as increasingly flexible, it is this very fluidity that enables thematic analysis to both “reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pg. 81). Within this study, the analysis method was leveraged to articulate a concise understanding of both emergent and established designer practitioner’s experiences working with and/or for Australian NPOs.

Data was first analysed by one author per a descriptive coding strategy informed by Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton’s (2013) three orders of coding and Corbin and Strauss’ (2015) notions of axial coding. Passages of data were summarised in basic topics using short phrases, written as close to verbatim as possible to maintain the authentic voice of the participants. This first round resulted in 144 initial descriptive codes, which were then reviewed and consolidated into 98 final codes. The second round of coding sought to create second-order groups underpinned by their theoretical connotations and established 15 sub-themes. During the final data analysis workshop between authors, it became clear that the seven themes generated from the research were lacking in a final theoretical grounding. What we mean to say is that although the themes clearly articulated specific aspects of design practitioner experiences, there were clear delineations in how and where these themes were located (in the context of a design engagement). Resultantly, three fourth-order dimensions were outlined, encompassing a selection of the seven themes respectively (Figure 7.5).

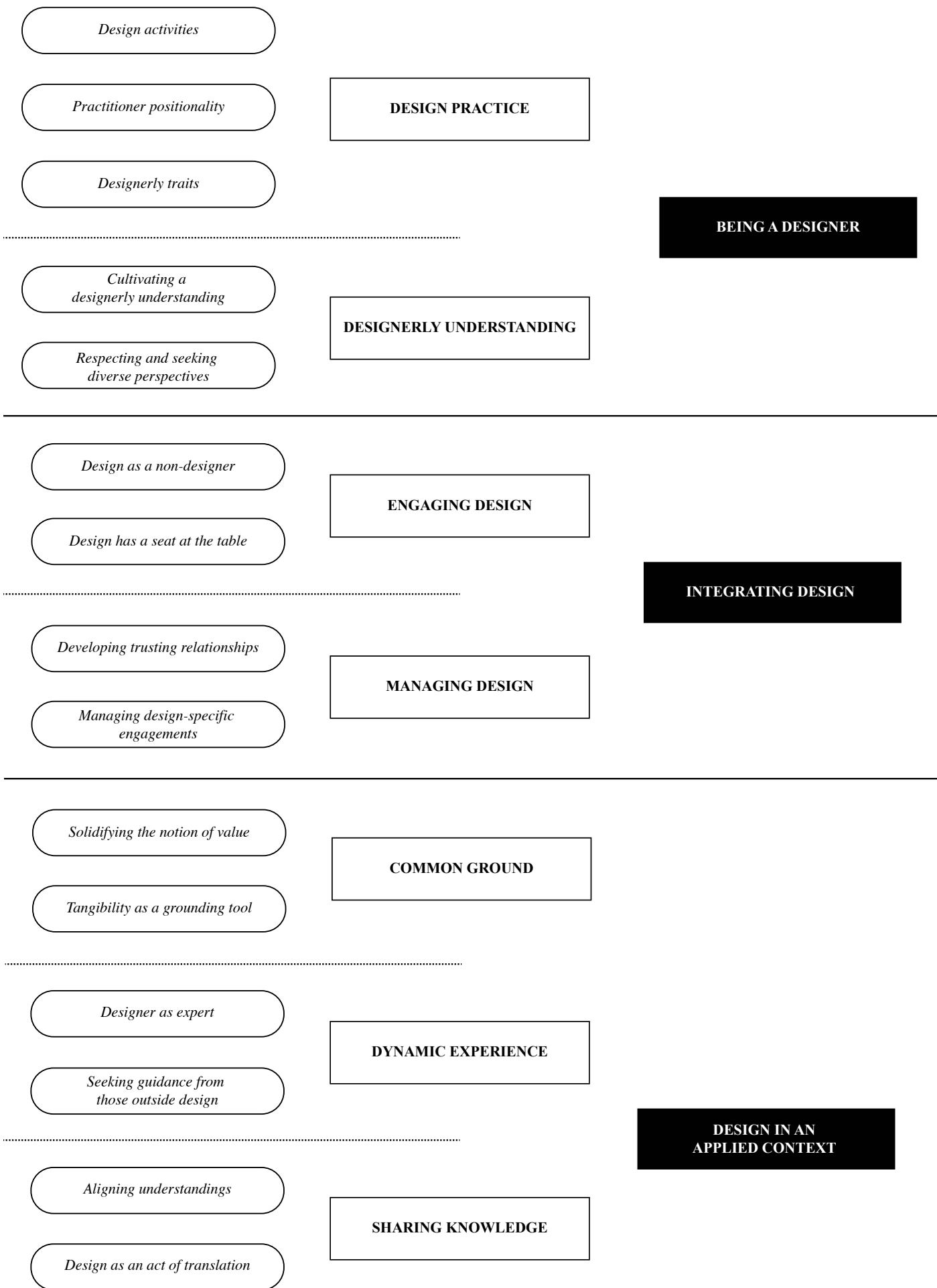


Figure 7.5: Overview of Thematic Structure (without codes)

7.4

RESULTS

The three overarching dimensions generated by this work describe experiences of: (1) being a designer, describing *design practice* and *designerly understandings*; (2) design integration, outlining the conditions required to *manage design* and *engage design* in Australian NPOs; and (3) common ground, depicting experiences of design in an applied context, that is, experiences of *sharing knowledge*, recognising *dynamic expertise*, and establishing *common ground*. Each is detailed further below.³

7.4.1. BEING A DESIGNER

Within our context (which we frame as the social practice of engaging design) the physical space of a design engagement pertains to (1) the practice of design, and (2) the development of designerly understandings. These themes (illustrated in Figure 7.6) equally reveal the generative, producing, and/or creative elements of design, as well as the mindsets and mentalities that support, encourage and cultivate those elements. Put simply, the physical space of a design engagement looks to the aspects of *making* essential to design: touching on *what* is done and *how* it is done.

3. Quotes from Expert Designers are referenced as 'ExD #'. Quotes from Emergent Designers are referenced as 'EmD #'.

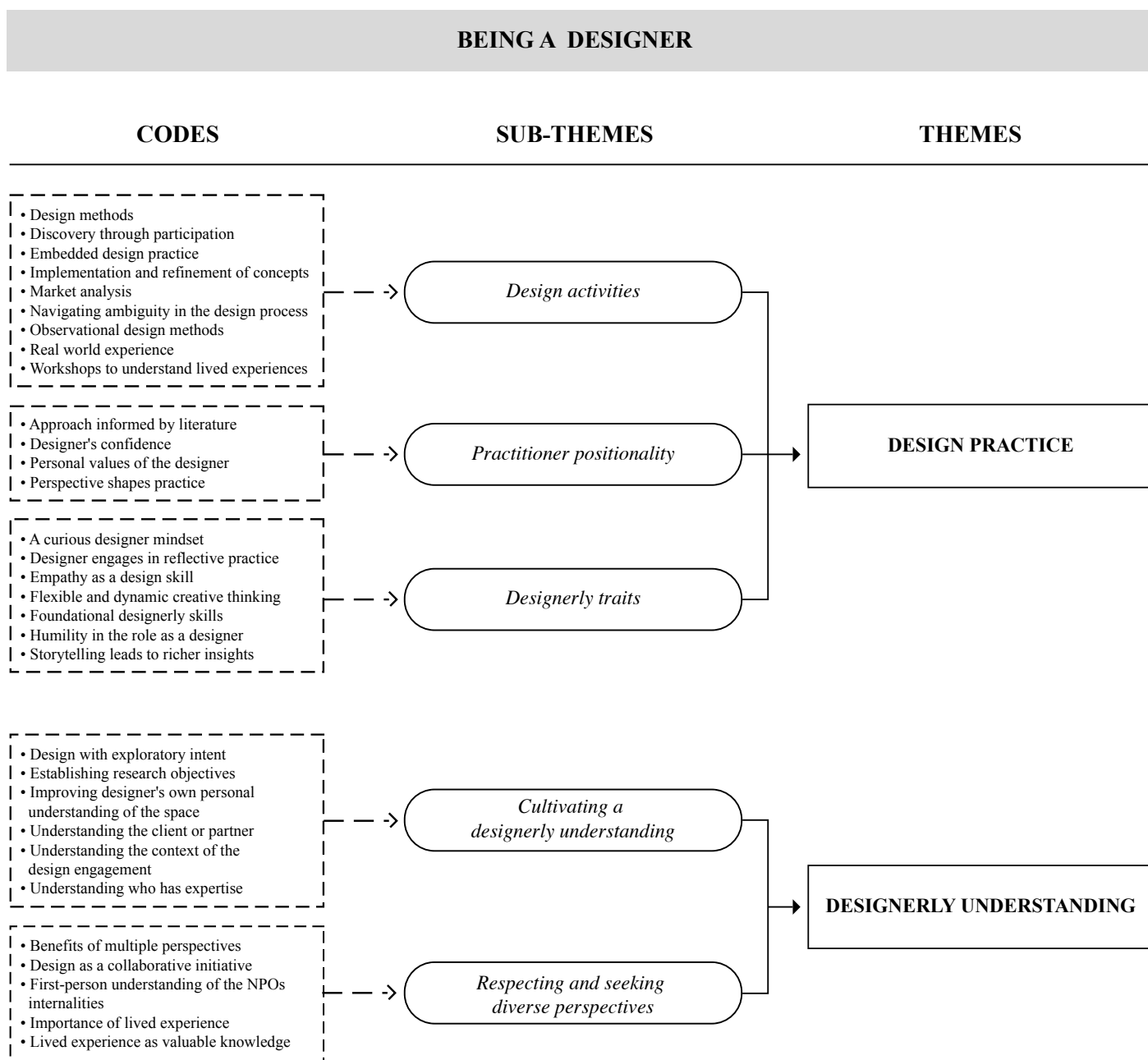


Figure 7.6: Thematic Structure of Being a Designer

Design Practice

As might be expected when reflecting on experiences of generating value for NPOs, many of the design participants focused on their own design *practice*. Writing on the nature of design practice, Dorst (2009, pg. 159) explains that “experienced designers will acquire attitudes, interests and possibly original principles that will start to govern their work.” The “high-level design abilities and specialist knowledge” (ibid.) cultivated is developed not just within a

singular, specific design project, but across projects, contexts and time. The notion of design practice in this study encompasses (i) core design activities, (ii) practitioner positionality and (iii) designerly traits.

Although the *design activities* mentioned by participants were diverse (each leveraging methods, approaches and activities they determined to be suitable to the context of their respective engagements), almost all described methods that allowed them to get some form of first-hand knowledge of their partner NPO, or the partner NPOs beneficiaries: “integrat[ing] practice with knowledge, encouraging the researcher to engage with participants to both understand and enact change” (EmD 5). Participants framed their design activities as being focused on navigating the ambiguity of a complex problem space. One of the expert design participants brought this to life nicely, saying that in their practice they “[needed] to lean in and understand the complexity... the idea of facing complexity is so scary [for clients]” (ExD 4) while also balancing their resources. This suggests that although complexity is exciting for designers, it is important for designers to have a firm understanding of when their investigations are needed.

Moving beyond reflections of tangible design activities, both emergent and expert designers demonstrated an awareness of their *practitioner position*. They understood that practice is influenced by the experiences, biases, knowledges and understandings of the design practitioner. Speaking carefully, an expert designer discussed how their positionality shapes their practice:

As people and as creatives, as our own people with our own experiences in life, we want to kind of make sure that we’re creating value and the right end-product, and we need to be in the right mind frame to be able to translate all of the knowledge and the learnings and the research into something that’s really evidence-based and also tangible from a design perspective. (ExD 1)

Interestingly, when emergent designers felt they did not have an appropriately developed ‘well of experience’ to draw on, they would seek “pre-existing

frameworks or set ways of doing things to help us... stay directed on our goal and stay focused on what we want to achieve” (EmD 3) or “[rely] on academic literature to support my design choices” (EmD 5). Showcasing an instance of seeking support from existing frameworks, EmD 3 and 4 and ExD 1 (who completed a design engagement in a similar context as EmD 3 and 4) utilised trauma-informed frameworks to honour the additional level of sensitivity within their engagement. The expert designer outlined how they “wanted to be really honouring actual tangible frameworks out there that support the people who are going through [trauma]” while they collected insights (“extracted information”) (ExD 1).

Finally, participants outlined aspects of their practice that could not be attributed to mere design activities or their positionality. These aspects, hereafter described as *designerly traits*, related to the mindsets, attributes, qualities and characters present. Practicing design with a curious mindset (“constantly seeking feedback, seeking information and seeking insights” (EmD 2)) and considering empathy as a design skill were common examples of traits which many of the participants considered significant to their engagement, either because they directly informed their positionality and activities, or because they were essential to maintaining a healthy and inclusive environment for their design practice to occur. Participants also stressed the importance of reflection and humility, traits which encourage designers to regularly “talk about the sort of things we can do in our practice to strengthen [it]” (ExD 4), cautioning against what some participants recognised as the “designerly attitude of wanting to come up with solutions to fix a problem” (ExD 2).

Designerly Understanding

Although not as necessarily *material* as design practice, we argue that understandings developed through, from, because of, or even satellite to design often become a material for design itself. Designerly understandings – lenses through which we create, recognise, assume, and believe in our explanations for the workings of the world – when found sufficient, cease our

directives for questions and allow next actions to become possible (Vygotsky, 2012). Our portrayal of designerly understanding refers to ways in which (i) a designerly understanding is cultivated, and (ii) designers respect and seek diverse perspectives.

We don't think it would be irresponsible to suggest that many design engagements begin with, or contain early on, concentrated activities of exploration or discovery. According to our participants, these preliminary explorations – framed as both informal or unguided explorations and formal research objectives – provide the opportunity for design practitioners to “immerse ourselves in that industry and deep dive to accelerate our knowledge because we want to provide impactful solutions” (ExD 1) or “[understand] context [by] putting ourselves within the organisation, understand[ing] their community and understand[ing] their audience.” (EmD 4). Nested within these explorations, participants focused on identifying key actors within each project and understanding their expertise and experience, developing feedback channels within their client's or partner's organisation and establishing a boundary around the context of the engagement. When brought together, these insights allowed design practitioners to weave a metaphorical tapestry of their respective engagements – bringing to life the scope of their engagement and potential impact, the tools available to the design team, significant project mechanisms or influences, and understanding of relevant actors (and their needs, expertise, experience and intentions).

If we continue to think of the design practitioners as weavers crafting tapestries out of design engagements, it is also important to acknowledge the critical reflections raised by the practitioners. That is, participants showed an active awareness that these crafted tapestries were entirely of their own making. To combat bias and tackle rose-tinted glasses, many participants foregrounded the importance of collaboration, first-hand experience within the design team, and lived experience outside of the design team. These perspectives were highly respected by participants and actively sought out to ensure that the woven tapestries were as authentically representative of the organisation and situation as possible. One expert designer suggested “design

shouldn't just be that single person; it should definitely be a team effort and bring people together" (ExD 6). When engaging with individuals who shared lived experience relevant to the design engagement, another expert designer shared "we want [the individual's] opinion, we want to really understand the stories. We want to get to know them on a personal level and really support them as well." (ExD 1)

7.4.2. INTEGRATING DESIGN

This dimension pertains to the *knowledge of, for and about design* in a collaborative engagement. Producing a space for a design engagement means assembling countless conditions, requirements, environments, resources and knowledges into a whole, the totality of 'reality' *inside of which* a design engagement can occur. We specifically examine the enablers of (1) engaging design and (2) managing design highlighted by participants (Figure 7.7).

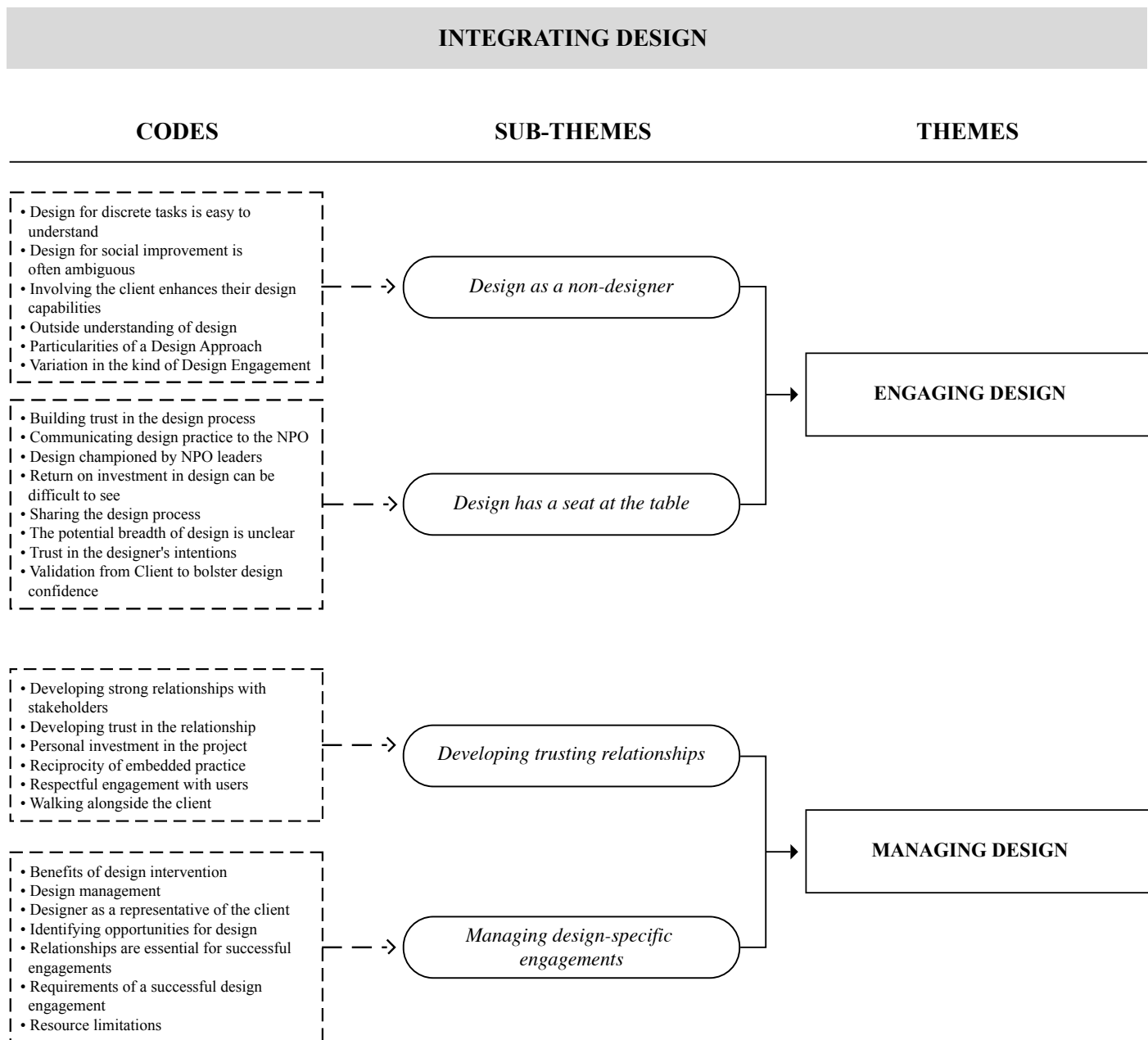


Figure 7.7: Thematic Structure of Integrating Design

Engaging Design

The design engagements explored in this research have all been fundamentally relational. The case studies and supplementary interviews collected reflect design engagements in which design practitioners have worked with NPOs to support the NPOs strategic initiatives. And while there has been much evidence of design’s success in driving innovation or developing a competitive edge (Brown and Martin, 2015), less attention has been given to investigating the conditions, requirements, understandings, knowledges, attitudes or

resources needed to establish or maintain a design engagement in the first place. These conditions, requirements, understandings, knowledges, attitudes and resources are fundamental to integrating design in any relationship, which is predicated on two core components: (i) a non-designer's understanding of design, and (ii) ensuring that design has a seat at the (proverbial) table.

The landscape of design has seen many great shifts, transitions and evolutions over the last century (Furniss, 2020; Rodgers and Bremner, 2017; Sanders and Stappers, 2008). Although these changes may be difficult to keep up with from within the discipline, the challenge of *understanding design* becomes infinitely more difficult when explored *from the perspective of a non-designer*. Participants appeared to almost be hyperaware of this, and reflected often on how their efforts and activities were being perceived and conceived by their non-design partners. One emergent designer worked closely with an NPO with a moderate level of design literacy, and as a result, became very focused on “making sure we deliver to their expectations” (EmD 2). Another emergent designer – this time working with a highly design literate NPO – outlined how their partners were “very interested and very in tune with what design can do, and what the process might offer” (EmD 4). Participants often mentioned that clients or partners might struggle with the variations in design practices (i.e. distinguishing between interaction, product or user experience designers) or with the less tangible offerings designers might generate. Participants highlighted how discrete design tasks were more accessible to non-designers, and often provided the design team with an opportunity to include the client in the process and pull back the curtain of practice (ExD 4).

Once an understanding of design has been developed in (often non-design literate) NPOs, attention ought to be given to ensuring that design has a seat at the table from the beginning. Participants stressed the difference between working with people who understand design and those who trust, share, believe in and/or champion design. Volunteering at a small NPO with no prior design knowledge, an expert designer shared how “design has definitely been viewed more in its traditional sense as opposed to its potential for innovation in our not-for-profit.” (ExD 5) Another expert designer argued the difficulty of

cultivating ‘buy-in’ for design was because design engagements often started with a difficult conversation, one where the designer had to fundamentally shift the linear industrial mindset of many organisational leaders and tell them “Their approach is no longer appropriate for solving the sorts of problems we’re trying to address” (ExD 4). These are difficult conversations that are ameliorated through open communication and transparency of the design process – “it’s about bringing them on this journey with us” (ExD 1) – and cultivating trust and confidence in both design and the design practitioner – “[they] know that I know what I’m talking about as a designer and I think [they] had confidence in what I could do as well.” (EmD 4)

Managing Design

Now that we have explored the conditions, requirements, understandings, knowledges, attitudes and resources needed to enable a design engagement, we may turn our attention to the mechanisms, environments and influences required to *manage* a design engagement. Writing in the *Handbook of Design Management*, Farr (2011) describes design management as:

The function of defining a design problem, finding the most suitable designer, and making it possible for him to solve it on time and within a budget. This is a consciously managed exercise which can apply to all the areas where designers work. (pg. 73)

The following reflections are most certainly *not* a comprehensive list of consciously managed exercises, and instead are centred on two themes which contribute to well-managed design. The first theme, (i) trusting relationships, illustrates how trust and trusting relationships within design engagements assists in defining design problems, finding the appropriate designer and allowing the chosen designer to do their design work on time and within budget. The second theme, (ii) managing design specific engagements, explores activities, conditions and mechanisms which further allow a chosen designer to do their design work on time and within budget.

Participants spoke regularly and confidently about the role of strong and trusting relationships in design engagements, with one stating, “the difference between a good Service Designer and a great Service Designer is the ability to build and manage relationships and stakeholders” (ExD 4). This participant further explained that it is a strong relationship between a designer and their partner organisation that creates long-term, sustainable change; without the relationship, no matter how good a designer’s craft may be, they won’t even get a foot in the door (ExD 4). Reflecting on developing these key relationships, an emergent designer highlighted the importance of “showing up. This just showed that we were putting in the effort for the project” (EmD 2). Another emergent designer shared that as their NPO partner “became more engaged with the design process, they were able to provide us more value through connecting us with external stakeholders to conduct user testing, which strengthened our design” (EmD 1). In this way, the personal investment or visible dedication of the designer was reciprocated by their NPO partners who became more amenable to providing access and resources to the design team.

In addition to strong relationships, participants drew attention to formal and casual activities that supported design management. These were perhaps best brought to life by the two expert designers that shared their struggles managing design within their respective NPOs. They argued that one of the most important moments in a design engagement was whether or not the opportunity for design integration arose. One expert designer attributed their hardship integrating design into the organisational model on the fact that, “[the organisation is] based on volunteers who, some are very engaged, some are slightly less engaged. . . design has the potential to do more but because of that funding limitation you can’t get [the expertise required]” (ExD 5). As no opportunities for design were articulated, it became difficult for designer to concretely articulate the benefits of design. An emergent designer attributed many of the problems in their engagements to complications with their client, “from a single meeting with one NPO to to the final confusion

with the second organisation, our engagements... were complicated by communication issues” (EmD 5).

7.4.3. THE APPLIED CONTEXT OF DESIGN

Finally, we turn our attention to the third dimension, where our attention focused on how embodied symbols of value are moved, conveyed or transported in design engagements. By this we mean we became more interested in (1) the role of common ground in enabling the transfer of symbolisms, (2) the way dynamic expertise directed attention towards and away from certain symbols, and finally (3) how knowledge of and about these symbols was shared amongst practitioners and NPOs. Figure 7.8 provides an overview of the thematic structure of this domain.

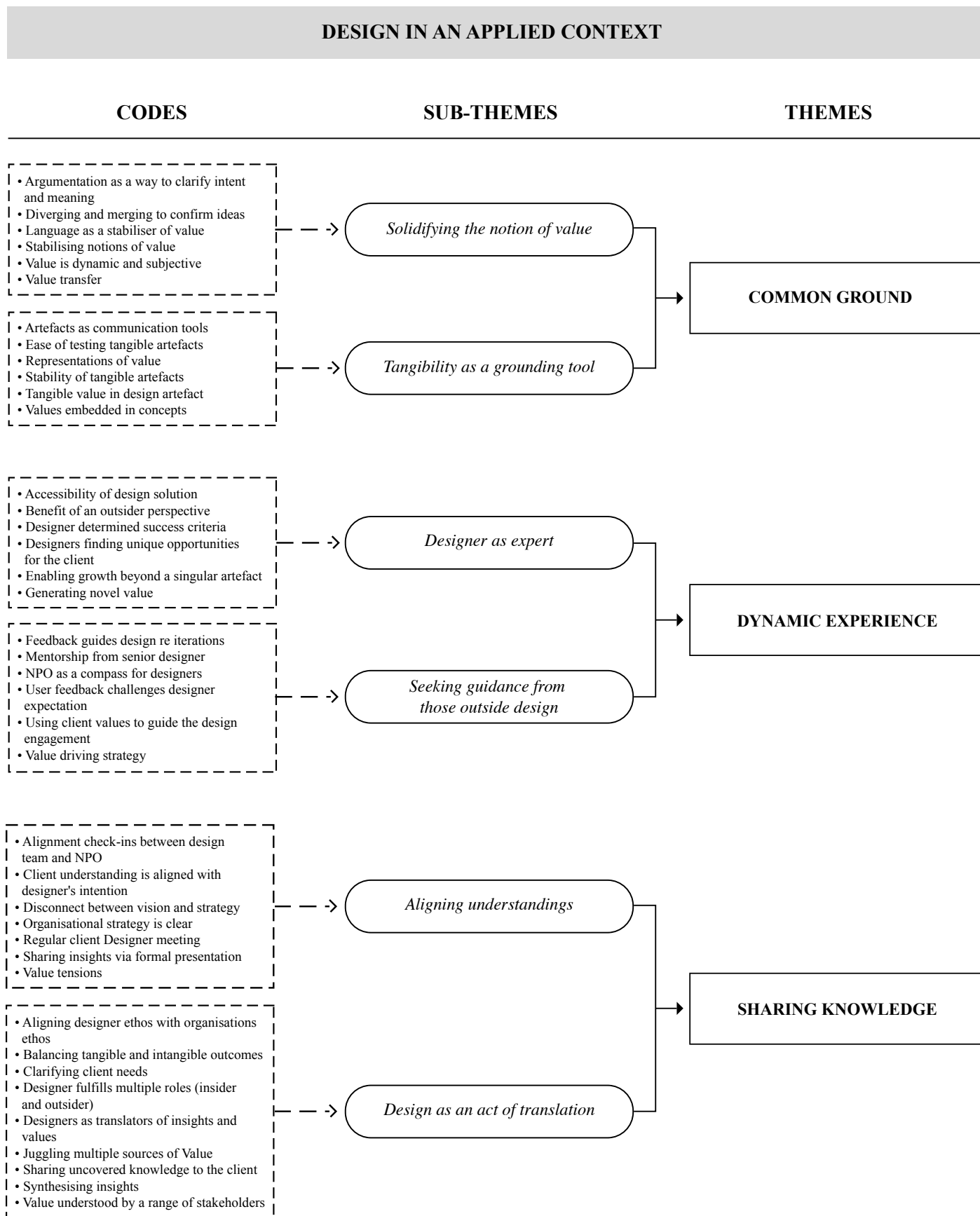


Figure 7.8: Thematic Structure of the Applied Context of Design

Common Ground

Engaging with NPOs often means engaging with complex and multi-faceted societal problems. These complex problems in turn, often call for multidisciplinary teams and multi-stakeholder approaches (Beers et al., 2006). However, members of these teams (designer practitioners or otherwise) are influenced by their own perspectives and positionalities, and more so, their own interpretations of the world. Despite the resulting interpretive differences and misunderstandings are often framed as barriers to a collaboration or engagement's success (Bechky, 2003), other design research has suggested that the reverse may be true, that "miscommunications are a key ingredient of creativity and serendipitous exploitation of different meanings can engender new innovative solutions" (Hall and Torrisi, 2013, pg. 582). Participants of this research highlighted these tensions by debating how design may (i) solidify notions of value and (ii) utilise tangibility as a grounding tool.

Critical to all the design engagements explored was the notion of value. Many participants highlighted how dynamic and subjective both the idea of value is itself, as well as how dynamic and subjective ideas *about* a specific value or values may be. Referencing the notion of inclusion, and central principle of their organisation's mission, an expert designer described "a constant debate because there are so many nuances to inclusion, it's also really hard to measure" (ExD 3). In an effort to combat these debates and to provide some clarity and stability, this expert designer's organisation established an agreement on the definition of inclusive design – "we use the Inclusive Design Research Centre in Ontario's definition, which design that considers the full spectrum of human diversity, and that's with respect to age, ability, gender, race, or any other type of human difference" (ExD 3). This showcases the role of language as a stabiliser of value. To frame this per the reflection of an emergent designer, individual words don't just hold meaning, they "hold concepts" (EmD 4). This also led to an interesting discussion around the role of arguments in a design team – whereby it was only in moments of disagreement, moments in which two designers held two distinct perspectives on the path forward, they became forced to further articulate, justify and evidence their

reasoning in order to find a resolution (EmD 3 and 4). This conscious back and forth of ideas was also mentioned by another pair of emergent designers, who said they “consulted each other, and crosschecked everything with each other throughout the whole project” (EmD 1) to legitimise and give confidence to their approach.

A notable compliment to the role of language as a stabiliser was a discussion around design artefacts as stabilisers of value. This stemmed from design practitioners reflecting on how design artefacts (such as prototypes, service maps, brand documents, etc.) supported their communication of design visions, processes, and intentions. Emergent designers shared how “it was very difficult to talk about what value we were creating in the initial stages just because there weren’t any tangible products or offerings we could point to” (EmD 2). This was a stark comparison to the mid and end points of their design engagements, whereby “showing those actual [physical] artefacts linked everything together in [the client’s] head... it made it easier for her to see the solution or what we were doing and where we were going with the design process” (EmD 2). Even when design projects are engaged in exploring ambiguity or the unknown, an expert designer commented on how simple slide decks shared in alignment meetings with their clients helped to support communication: “We got a really strong foundation, while it’s not tangible and while we are asking for some trust with the client, I think we’re painting a vibrant and vivid enough picture for them to understand what that might look like... we obviously pair that with some visuals so we’re all on the same page [in an alignment meeting] and then we download [the client’s commentary] with [our] team” (ExD 1).

Dynamic Expertise

Design expertise is presented by Cross (2018) as “the result of a dedicated application to a chosen field” (pg. 428); it is something more than mere experience or the possession of a specific talent, it is a product of grit, practice, and reflections (Ericsson et al., 1993). In their reflections on their NPO engagements, it became clear that participants negotiated the notion of

expertise in their work. They understood that certain activities, knowledge or potentials were in their domain, and thus a matter of design expertise, while other activities, knowledge or potentials were firmly outside of their domain, and thus, the expertise of another individual. A participant's awareness and understanding of (i) the designer as an expert, is compared with their comments on (ii) seeking guidance from those outside design.

Reflecting on areas of expertise firmly *within* a designer's remit, participants commented on an understanding of accessibility, generating novel growth, and finding unique opportunities to strengthen product, digital, and service offerings of their NPO partners. Speaking on these topics, an expert designer framed these design activities as "good design, but also just good risk mitigation" (ExD 5). Another expert designer, speaking confidently about their practice, said "we've seen a lot of apps or websites that have served the purpose of being a page that provides information, but when you're talking about usability and experience navigating through them and actually finding the right information that a person would need, then they're all not really there yet" (ExD 3). This commentary on usability and experience foregrounded skills in design that separate it from other domains and highlight its competitive potential. Evidencing this further, another expert designer spoke to the capacity of design to change an organisation's ethos, suggesting that the most interesting part of NPO projects was not just the initial brief, but an exploration of how "we empower these experiences, and how do we shift the organisation to look at what they're doing through the lens of experience rather than through the lens of the things that we do for them? ...We very intentionally design for both the project outcome and the experience of the people in it. So we kind of have a meta level. We always have an engagement strategy as part of our project, which is a deliverable project that comes out of that first piece" (ExD 5).

This design confidence and expertise was juxtaposed by a constant awareness and drive to seek guidance and feedback from outside the design team, with feedback and commentary from key stakeholders presented as a central pillar of design developments. One emergent designer described how they

“tested our low fidelity and mid fidelity prototypes with service workers as well as our stakeholders and based on their feedback. We continually iterated our prototype and strengthened it so it would be targeting our users” (EmD 2). Another emergent designer outlined, “although we had several opportunities for potential solutions, we were able to narrow down the most useful, desirable, and feasible outcomes based on specific client feedback on what would generate the most value” (EmD 3). Participants recognised the value of others’ expertise not just in the testing or evaluation of certain prototypes or design concepts, but also with the very definition of value within the engagement. Reflecting on their engagement with a community arts organisation, one emergent designer said “at the start, we were like, ‘oh, value, who is [NPO]? What does [value] mean to them? . . . but maybe we should have understood how they defined success. . . because I think we were focusing more on the values than the value that we were generating.” (EmD 1). Although the learning was retrospective, it is notable that the emergent designer became aware of how insight from the NPO could have better directed their practice. The same emergent designer finished their reflection by stating, “once the value is established and what they want to achieve and what is important to them [is established], then that could lead to success for the company. . . I think it’s a matter of what *they* want to do with it.” (EmD 1, emphasis added).

Sharing Knowledge

The idea of sharing knowledge in the lived space of a design engagement relates to the specific ideas, concepts, practices, and potentials shared between design practitioners and the NPOs they are working alongside. While it may be easy and relevant to think of this process as a dialogue or process of exchange, it is worth noting that the following section biases itself to only one party within the conversation – designers – and the particular knowledge offered by their practice. Manzini (2009) describes design knowledge as a collection of various cognitive artefacts, such as “*visions* to stimulate and steer strategic discussion; *proposals* to integrate into the development of specific projects;

tools to help understand the state of things and implement design ideas; along with reflections on the sense of what we are doing or could do” (pg. 5). These artefacts and more were discussed by participants in this research, with the theme of sharing knowledge reflecting on (1) aligning client and designer understandings, as well as conversations pertaining to the idea of (2) design as an act of translation.

Although not frequently discussed on their own, the significance of alignment meetings between designers and their NPO partners was heavily implied. These conversations, hosted with the intention of confirming or sharing an understanding of the design engagement at that time, gave all parties the opportunity to ensure they are on the same page. Having established a common ground (described previously), they could now have conversations in said grounds. “The point of the discovery presentation, is to just let [them] know what have discovered so far, get validation, also ask from [them] any sort of opportunities that we could use or things that they were already doing that we could also map into our current opportunities” (EmD 4). More than this, these meetings seemingly allowed both design practitioners and NPO members to articulate their respective strategies. Often, design practitioners commented on the clarity of these strategies, stating “because [the NPO] is very, very small, it’s hard for that mission to get diluted or lost” (ExD 6) and “we find that at the not-for-profit end... you’ve got that alignment on purpose and that’s usually clear” (ExD 4). Mentions of these meetings were particularly interesting when they described potential design solutions – what designers may describe as possible futures that have been imagined but not yet realised. Formal presentations, and the associated documentation, realise these possibilities enough for them to be discussed, critiqued and approved:

We have a bit of a conversation. In this particular one we had their marketing manager in the room. We had their head of practice and development as well as their CEO, as well as me and [additional designer] from our side. And yeah, it was more of just a conversation, but where we go through a presentation and it’s a pretty detailed and comprehensive document. It’s probably like

80 pages or so. We align on the way we see the brand and use, I guess, statements of verbal alignment for confirmation (ExD 1).

Another interesting aspect of sharing knowledge within a design engagement relates to the ways in which designers, and design practice more broadly, act as translators. The notion of translation in design relates to design's inventive capacity, that is, its capacity to *give shape* (Zingale, 2016). Writing on this topic, Zingale (2016) elucidates “design’s translation activity does not aim to be understood ‘in another language,’ but to turn into a new expression, after various steps of visual or sensible invention, what originally lacked a form or a fixed textual structure” (pg. 1069). This interpretation was similarly reflected by an emergent designer who spoke about “being able to translate the insights that we’ve got from the research to produce a solution” (EmD 4). When this idea of translation was explored further, participants reflected on the unique position afforded to them by design practice, in which they attempt to get as close to an organisation as possible through participatory or embedded design approaches, while also balancing their position as an outsider. Often, practitioners will shape their practice according to the ethos of the NPO in order to build trust and support the engagement, but in doing so, they enable themselves to translate their insights and findings back to the NPO in a ‘language’ that makes sense to the NPO (EmD 3 and 4). Another critical perspective shared related to designer’s capacity to “zoom in and zoom out” when looking at problems and knowing when to balance tangible and intangible results (ExD 5). They furthered, in “the nonprofit space, a lot of the problems or challenges that we’re looking at, they’re really systemic, and so there’s no one solution that can fix everything. Every solution has its ongoing impact consequences. . . some people are able to zoom in and other people just look outwards, but being able to flip between the two, it helps that dialogue” (ExD 5).

7.5

DISCUSSION

This chapter returns to the central questions of the study to interpret the findings through a conceptual and spatial lens. It proceeds in two parts. First, we propose a new understanding of designer–NPO relationships by applying Lefebvre’s spatial triad, offering a relational and dynamic reading of how design engagements are produced and sustained. This includes the introduction of a “double helix” model that visualises the entangled, co-productive nature of these relationships across perceived, conceived, and lived dimensions. Second, we reflect on how differing contextual conditions shaped the nature and outcome of three design engagements. Drawing on the Lefebvrian framework, we identify points of strength and tension within each engagement and consider the implications of these variations for the value design can create with/and/for Australian NPOs.

7.5.1. A NEW INTERPRETATION OF DESIGN–NPO RELATIONSHIPS

In this section, we revisit the findings through a Lefebvrian lens to reveal how designer–NPO relationships are enacted and experienced. Drawing on both theoretical and empirical material, we offer a new perspective on the design–NPO relationship as an ongoing, co-productive entanglement. To that end, we introduce a new visual metaphor: the double helix of design–NPO engagements.

A Double Helix of Design–NPO Engagements

The figure below (Figure 7.9) presents the Designer–NPO relationship as a double helix: two intertwined strands representing the trajectories of the designer (green) and the NPO (grey), held together by shared practices, materials, knowledges, and meanings. The shared elements, represented as the bonds connecting the two spirals, are dynamic sites of negotiation and

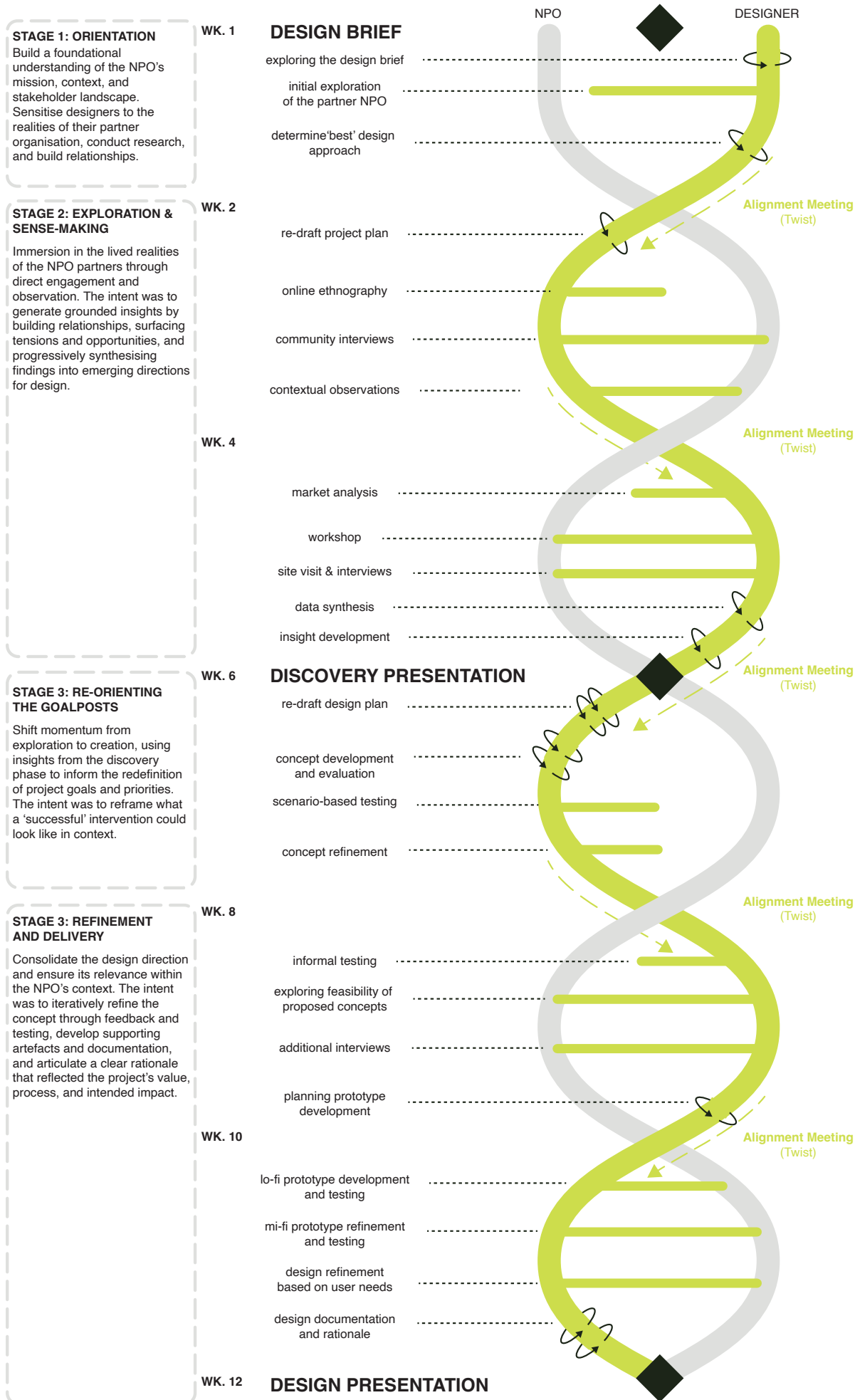


Figure 7.9: A Double Helix of Design–NPO Engagements

exchange. It is within these bonds that the relationship is maintained, and where value is most visibly and viscerally attended.

This diagram offers a conceptual reframing of the Design–NPO relationship, drawing attention to the relational infrastructure required to sustain meaningful design engagements in non-profit organisational contexts. The double helix metaphor illustrates how design and organisational trajectories remain distinct yet interdependent – held together by emergent bonds forged through collaboration and communication. These bonds do not always pre-exist the engagement, nor are they guaranteed; they are generated, reinforced, multiplied, and strengthened through the ongoing work of aligning intentions, navigating ambiguity, and building shared understandings.

Figure 7.9 is centred on the designer’s experience (reflecting the available data) and foregrounds what it means to ‘be a designer’ inside an NPO partnership. The green strand represents this designer’s trajectory, and the green bonds illustrate moments where knowledge is exchanged, design tools or strategies are implemented, and new meaning is discovered or co-constructed. These include both tangible artefacts (e.g., workshops, prototypes, presentations) and symbolic gestures (e.g., gaining trust, sharing language, or resolving conflict).

Since we did not collect post-engagement data from the participating NPOs, we recognise the absence of the grey strand and its bonds as a limitation. Nevertheless, we contend that many of the findings outlined earlier in this chapter – such as the role of design literacy, organisational readiness, or the need for sustained scaffolding – suggest how this second trajectory might be inferred. The grey strand would reflect the organisational conditions for *integrating design*: an NPO’s internal capacity to absorb new ways of working, and the socio-cultural frameworks that shape their interpretation of the engagement. Grey bonds might include shared meaning, alignment of goals, or moments of perspective shift – outcomes which are partially visible in designer reflections.

Within this helix, alignment meetings – and particularly the discovery presentation and design presentation – functioned as critical turning points. These were not just project milestones, but moments where the understandings and activities of the designer were explicitly brought together with the understandings and activities of the NPO. It was in these meetings that mutual understanding was tested, re-confirmed, or made meaningful. They provided opportunities for the two strands of the helix to momentarily synchronise and negotiate the way forward based on what had been learnt and what could now be collectively imagined.

To better understand the dynamics that constitute these bonds – how they are formed, how they hold, and what they produce – we turn to the work of Henri Lefebvre. His theory of spatial production offers a powerful lens for interpreting the Design–NPO relationship not just as a process of delivery, but as a space of co-production, structured through physical action, conceptual framing, and lived meaning. In the following section, we adapt Lefebvre’s spatial triad to unpack how design engagements are generated, held, and experienced across these dimensions.

Understanding Lefebvrian Spatial Analysis

One of Lefebvre’s most central arguments is that “[social] space is a [social] product” (1991, pg. 28). As a French Marxist philosopher, Lefebvre follows in the tradition of Hegel and the English economists (Adam Smith, David Ricardo), to focus less on the result of production and more so on the productive activity itself. This orientation towards production as a social and situated process aligns with the focus of this work. In placing emphasis on the conditions and dynamics that enable or constrain design work, Lefebvre’s theory helps foreground the complex and co-constructed nature of value generation within Australian NPO settings.

We believe this to be relevant to our exploration of practice-based design experiences with Australian NPOs in two ways. First, Lefebvre’s emphasis on social production and relations provides an opportune lens for examining

spaces created in collaborative, interdisciplinary engagements (such as those at the heart of this study), as well as the design processes co-creating value in said engagements. Second, we argue that Lefebvre's intention to understand (and then dismantle) the inner workings of a dominant capitalist society may, in turn, offer a unique lens through which we can explore the non-economic, value-oriented experiences of designers championing organisational missions that extend beyond a financial bottom line.

To apply this framework in the context of design practice, we adapt Lefebvre's 'spatial triad' to examine how design engagements are produced, structured, and experienced. Per Lefebvre (1991; Schmid, 2022), the production of space can be understood as the totality of three dialectically linked production processes:

1. **The Perceived/Physical Space** (*espace perçu*), in which material generates a spatial practice, and accordingly, the perceivable aspect of space.
2. **The Conceived/Mental Space** (*espace conçu*), in which knowledge production creates a representation of space, and accordingly, a conceived space.
3. **The Represented/Lived Space** (*espace vécu*), in which meaning production, via its ties to representation, produces an experienced or lived space.

It is worth noting that Lefebvre is 'somewhat' vague with his definitions of these three formants (i.e. spatial components or structuring dimensions). Schmid (2022, pg. 267) highlights that the terminology of Lefebvre's dialectical triad (i.e. 'social/lived space', 'material/perceived space', 'representational/conceived space') "[fell] from the sky". Schmid explains:

Lefebvre does not introduce [these terms] and he does not deduce them from other concepts in *The Production of Spaces*. Nor does he offer any assistance to the reader that would allow for a reconstruction of their theoretical starting point... he does not

even try to give a clear definition of these terms: instead, he feels his way in, sounds them out, tests their possible applications, in order to reformulate them again in the course of his reflections. (ibid.)

Yet, it is this very ambiguity that allows us to engage, interpret, apply, assemble, redevelop, and reconstruct a parallel of his triad, reflecting and reordering the practice-based experiences of the designers within our study.

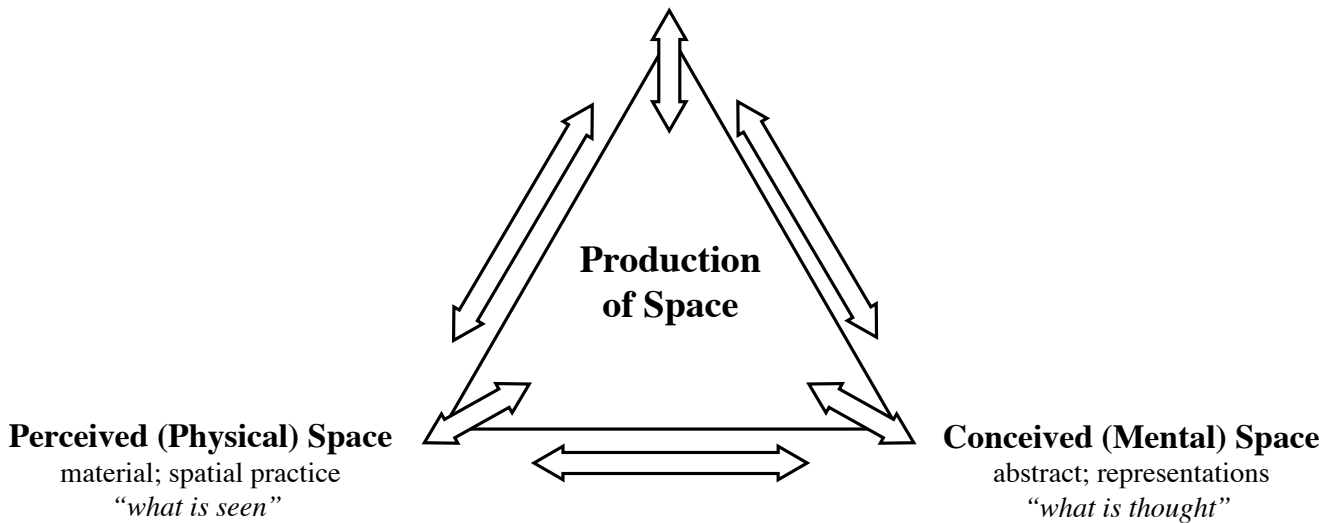
In adapting this triad, we aim not to mimic Lefebvre's categories, but to use them to frame the relationship that design produces with and within NPOs. In our reworking, Lefebvre's physical space is directed towards the material and procedural dimensions of design: the activities and outputs that define what a designer does. The mental space aligns with the conditions that make design integration possible: the conceptual scaffolding, organisational know-how, and mutual understanding required for collaboration. The lived space, finally, is applied to the symbolic, relational, and experiential aspects of the engagement: the meanings produced as designers and NPOs work together in context.

Lefebvre's insistence on simultaneity offers significant insight into the relational aspects of his three formants. In Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, simultaneity is not a secondary attribute but a foundational condition that acknowledges the continuous interplay between the perceived, conceived, and lived space. Rather than unfolding independently or in a linear sequence, these spatial formants co-exist and co-produce each other, forming what Schmid (2022) terms a 'relational definition' of space.

This perspective is crucial for our study, which understands design not as a sequence of tasks, but as a relational activity shaped by multiple, overlapping dimensions of practice. To support this spatial reading, Figure 7.10 illustrates our 'production of design engagements', a parallel of Lefebvre's dialectical triad for the production of space.

PRODUCTION OF SPACE

Lived (Social) Space
embodied experience
“what is felt”

**PRODUCTION OF DESIGN ENGAGEMENT**

Lived (Social) Space
embodied interaction and experience
“what occurs between actors”

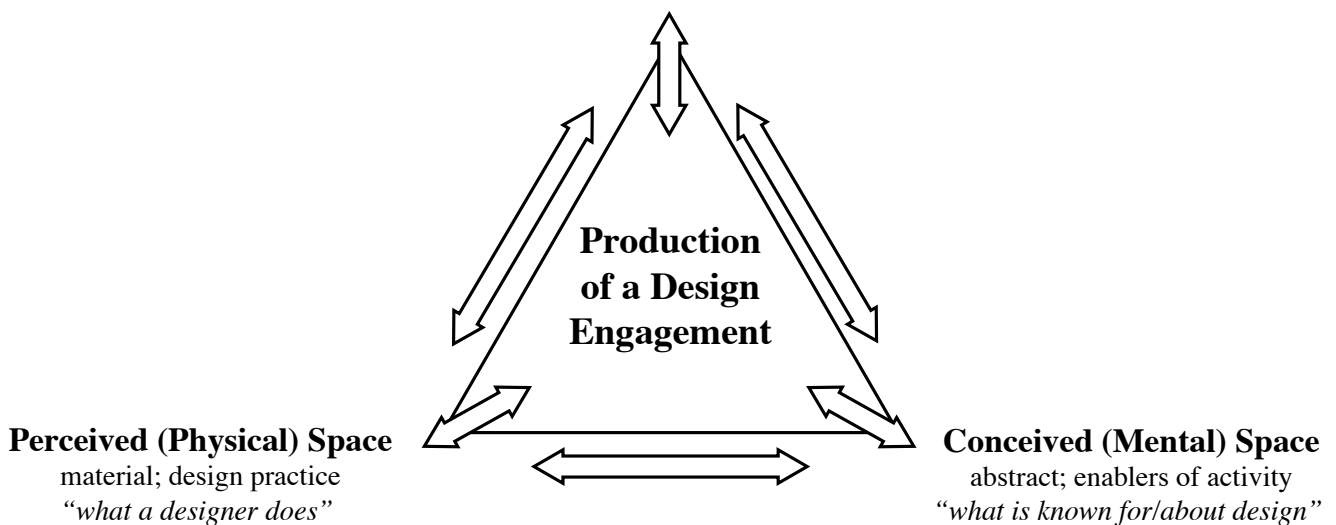


Figure 7.10: The Production of Design Engagements, developed as a parallel of Lefebvre’s Dialectical Triad

We elaborate each of the three formants below, drawing on Lefebvre’s original framing while tailoring each to the context of design engagement.

1. **The Perceived/Physical Space of a Design Engagement**, in which material generates a spatial practice (of design), and accordingly, the perceivable aspect of a design engagement space. Lefebvre (1991)

describes this as the space where actions inscribe themselves in the form of tangible outputs and spatial routines (Schmid, 2022). The physical space of a design engagement, in this sense, is the embodied, visible, and repeatable set of designerly actions through which design engagements are enacted.

2. **The Conceived/Mental Space of a Design Engagement** describes how knowledge (of and about design) creates a representation of design and enables a conceived space of design engagement. It encompasses the knowledge systems and conceptual frameworks that shape how design is understood and enacted and includes shared vocabularies, organisational logics, and the strategic integration of design within the broader aims of the NPO. In the same way that representing space means “assembling countless scattered details and their relationship to one another into a whole, the totality of a ‘reality’” (Schmid, 2022, pg. 277), conceiving a space for a design engagement means assembling countless conditions, requirements, environments, resources and knowledges into a whole, the totality of ‘reality’ *inside of which* a design engagement can occur.
3. **The Representation/Lived Space of a Design Engagement** refers to the symbolic and experiential dimension of a design engagement: the meanings, relationships, and value that emerges through collaboration. Lefebvre (1991) describes this space as “alive”: rich with “images”, emotions and “symbols” (pg. 42). In this study, we attend to how these meanings are negotiated and transported between designers and NPOs, shaping not just the outcomes of design, but how those outcomes are experienced and understood.

Lessons from three cases of design engagement

In the following section, we return to our Lefebvrian spatial analysis to examine how three distinct cases of design engagement unfolded when emergent designers worked with Australian NPOs. These cases are visualised

as three unique double helix models (Figure 7.11), each illustrating the specific activities and relational structures that shaped the production of the engagement. By mapping the project trajectories along two interwoven strands – designer and NPO – these diagrams provide a comparative view of how design becomes entangled in a non-profit’s organisational conduct.

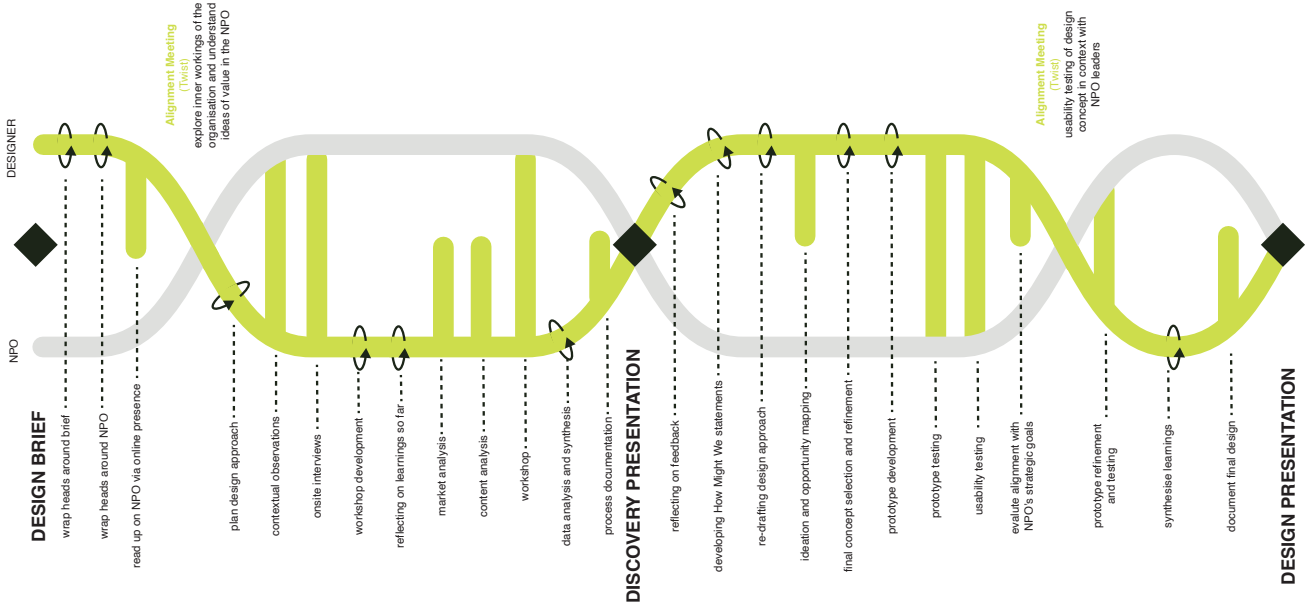
Much of our analytic attention remains focused on the lived space of a design engagement: the dimension least explored in design literature and most contingent on the dynamics of relationship-building, trust, and shared understanding. While previous sections highlighted insights into the perceived (what is done) and conceived (what is known or imagined) spaces of a design engagement, these three visualisations extend our focus towards how design actively participates in, and shapes, the Design–NPO relationship.

Although many of the obstacles encountered in these engagements were triggered by factors beyond the designers’ control, it is still important to acknowledge the role that design played – at times compounding these challenges, or failing to mitigate them. We do not raise these examples to assign blame (as a reminder, these were third-year undergraduate students, not professional consultants), but to temper inflated expectations around the promise of design, and to highlight the contextual conditions necessary for it to thrive. The intention here is not to diminish the potential of design, but to recognise its limits.

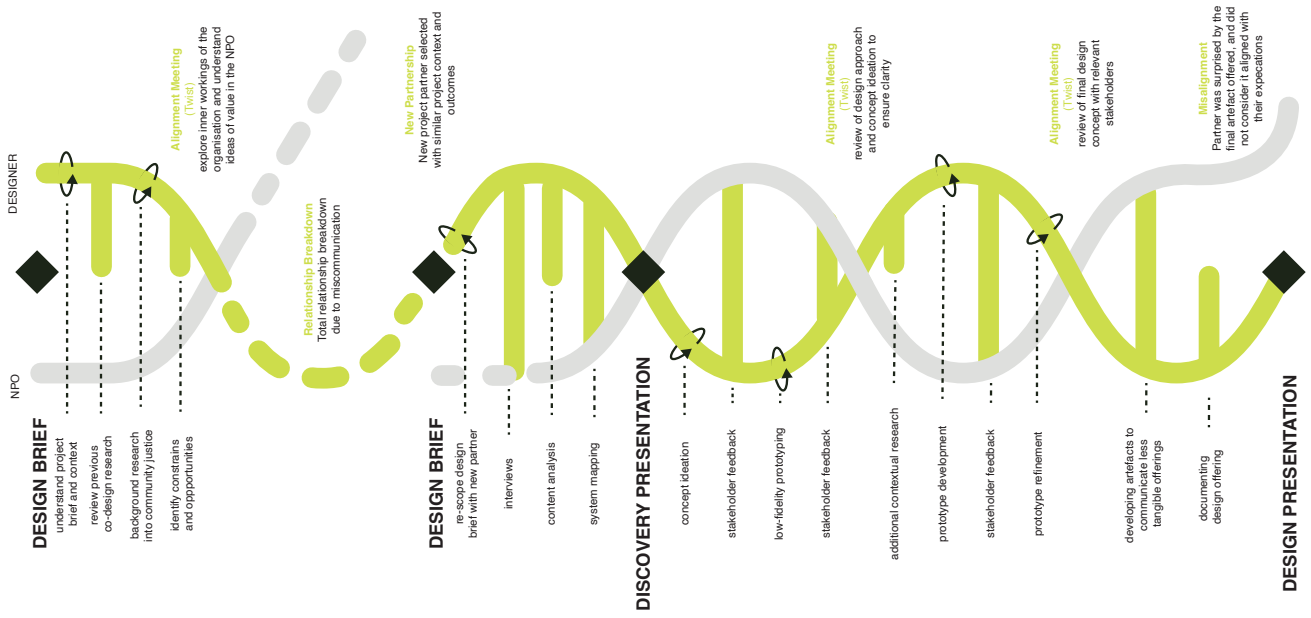
The following four observations (framed as ‘notes on...’) synthesise key differentiators across the three engagements. They outline how variations in designerly intent, labour, organisational readiness, and role clarity influences the conduct, trajectory, and outcomes of each Design–NPO relationship.

- *A note on designerly intent:* Robust mental spaces (understandings or prior experiences with engaging or managing design) enable design, but do not guarantee satisfying outcomes. In Case #2, a breakdown in the initial NPO relationship led to a rushed reframing of the design brief with a new partner. Despite shared expertise, common ground was never re-established. The designers worked towards one outcome, while

Case #3: Communicating organisational strategy for community engagement



Case #2: Sustained collaborations for digital art initiatives in prison



Case #1: Designing physical and emotional safety for victim-survivors.

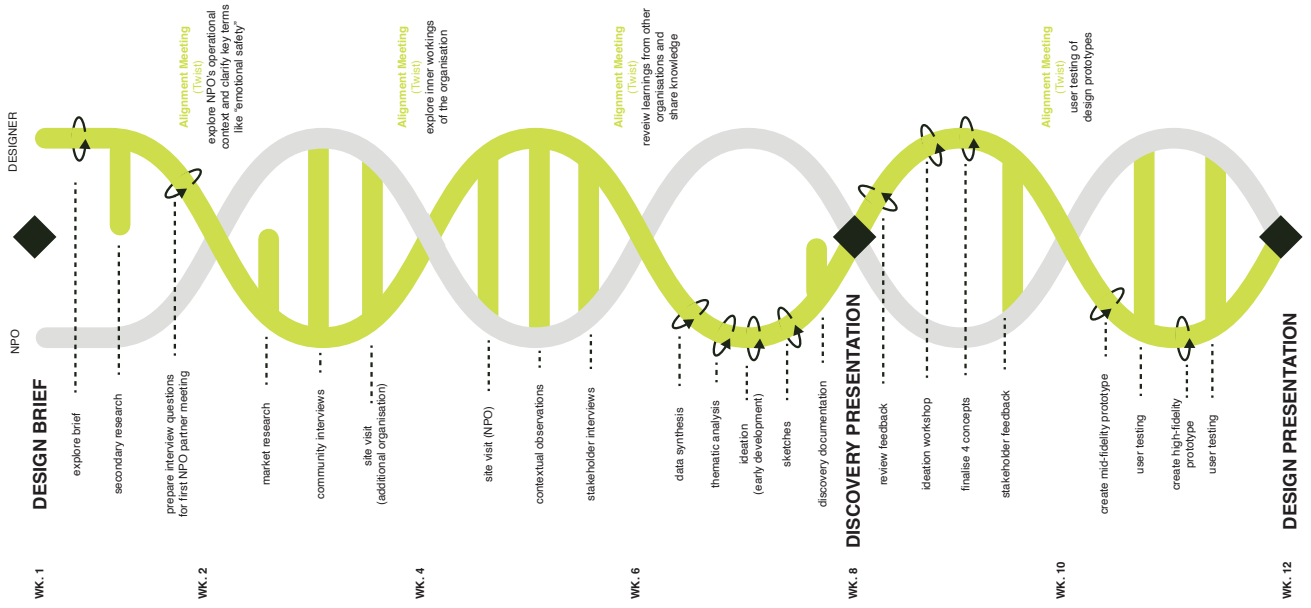


Figure 7.11: Three Cases of Design–NPO Engagement

the partner expected another – revealing how even well-intentioned efforts can falter without shared meaning.

- *A note on design labour:* In Case #1, the designers undertook significant relational work to earn trust from an NPO with limited design familiarity. Although this labour deepened mutual understanding, it added complexity to the process. In contrast, Case #3's high design literacy enabled smoother collaboration with less scaffolding required.
- *A note on design readiness:* Design literacy shaped both pace and process across all cases. In Case #3, the NPO's fluency allowed quick progression from discovery to co-creation. Case #1 required constant explanation and translation. In Case #2, low design literacy contributed to early failure, while the second partner's fluency came too late to fully recover shared understanding.
- *A note on a designer's role:* Clarity around roles and project scope was a key differentiator. Case #1 maintained alignment through steady expectations. Case #2 saw roles destabilised midstream, forcing designers to adapt rapidly. Case #3 offered autonomy but lacked structure, leading to occasional ambiguity. Across all cases, role clarity required ongoing negotiation.

Together, these reflections illustrate how the Design–NPO relationship is continually shaped through the spatial, relational, and symbolic dynamics of each engagement. In the next section, we move from analysing these conditions to examining how design holds itself accountable in practice, and how practitioners make value visible, negotiable, and, at times, unstable.

7.5.2. THE VALUE OF DESIGN WITH/AND/FOR NPOS

An integral investigation of this work was to better understand the practice-based experience of designers seeking to generate value with/and/for Australian NPOs. Framed slightly differently, we were interested in understanding the value of *design with/and/for* Australian NPOs.

However, ascertaining this is no small feat, and the following section ought to be understood as an important contribution to an ambiguous area.

There have been some substantial efforts to evaluate the impact or value of design; for example: McKinsey's *The Business Value of Design* report (2018), the UK Design Council's *Design Economy: The impact of design on the UK economy* (2016), Design Management Institute's *Design Value Index* (2015), or IBM's *Design Thinking Impact Report* (2018). However, assessments consistently reduce design to the narrow measure of economic aims primarily gauged by profit. They (understandably) are rarely able to account for the significance of design in relation to non-economic notions of value, or values more broadly, due to their frequently noncommensurable nature.

As such, when reflecting on the value of design in relation to Australian NPOs, we turn to a more situated, practice-oriented question: in what ways does design help make the ordinary more meaningful, more visible, and more fruitful for those involved? In the sections that follow, we explore five ways design may contribute to deepening the experiences, understandings, and outcomes of everyday organisational life – without reducing its value to solely economic return.

Design with/and/for symbols, artefacts and systems

The first way that design may make the everyday experiences of NPOs more significant, more luminous or more fruitful is through the generation of symbols, artefacts and systems that achieve the same goal. This is by no means a novel idea, there are many writings on design shaping society (Berman, 2008; Tromp and Hekkert, 2018; Winner, 1980) and more on design's specific relationship to symbols (Barnard, 2013; Krampen, 1965; Meggs, 1992; Resnick, 2003), artefacts (Houkes and Vermaas, 2010; Luck, 2007), and systems (Banathy, 2013; Gould et al., 1997). Notably, there is a common thread drawn between these works, one which is neatly surmised by Clatworthy's no-nonsense assertion that "the core design is in the making" (2023, pg. 7).

The emergent designers had experience in various forms of making (making graphics and visuals, user experiences, interactions, product) while the experienced designers offered insight into both the aforementioned and other forms of making (making brands, services and systems). Fundamentally, they had all been engaged for the generative skills they possessed, that is, they were all asked by NPOs to make *something* that would benefit the organisation. That *something* – whether it be symbols or images, artefacts or products, systems, services or environments – is a central offering from designers who act as both form-givers and enablers. As form-givers, designers respond to problems by balancing what something does, how it looks and feels, how it works and how it might be manufactured. As enablers, designers create flexible symbols, artefacts or systems that encourage user adaption to best suit the needs, life and purpose of the individual (Heskett et al., 2017).

As Simon (1969) described, designers are individuals who “devise courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones” (pg. 130). We argue there is value in a designer’s capacity to realise these preferred situations through carefully considered and responsibly crafted symbols, artefacts and systems.

Design with/and/for knowledge

Another helpful Simon (1969) quote posits “design like science is a tool for understanding as well as acting” (pg. 111). Cross (1982), extending the work of March and Marple, argues that a designer’s focus on conjectured solutions is as much about understanding the design problem as it is about solving said problem. These unique forms of understanding, of learning about or knowing problems, is the second way in which design may make the everyday experiences of NPOs more significant, more luminous or more fruitful.

In their conversations about their designerly understanding, emergent and expert designers highlighted the unique knowledge and learnings developed through design practice. Generative workshops or interviews that prioritised storytelling resulted in a slew of benefits for the design team, such as

richer insights and a more detailed understanding of underlying needs and underlying meaning behind why people behave in certain ways, and more description around what actually happened, what people were thinking and feeling without them really feeling the pressure to communicate their experience perfectly. Often taking place with an exploratory intent (i.e. designers who are eager to learn more about something) these conversations offer as much insight into the context of the design problem – and key actors, stakeholders, environments, influences, etc. – as they do to help refine potential solutions. These learnings, which importantly stem from a perspective that rarely exists concurrently within an NPO, are significant to a non-profit organisation in that they shed light on the experiences, wants, needs or frustrations of the individuals they wish to assist. The human-centred perspective of much design activity is capable of translating human experiences into technical requirements that guide, influence or shape other projects and efforts within the NPO.

Beyond insights generated by exploratory research, it is also worth noting the significant learnings generated by design artefacts. During a design project, designers cultivate versions of the world as it is and as it could be. Although these future worlds may differ in their level of elaborateness, they inevitably become externalised and shared via conversation, written accounts (e.g., documentation, slidedecks, practitioner notes, etc.), sketches or prototypes. Blomkvist (2023) further elucidates how these representations act as a stand-in for what the future might look like and create a shared, collective understanding. Significant to us, the shared and collective understandings generated by a designer's representation of what might be are finite grounds for debate, negotiation, clarification and validation. Ultimately, they offer NPOs an opportunity to test whether or not these proposed futures are feasible, appropriate and effective for the organisation.

Design with/and/for new assemblages or realities

Design's third potential use for making the everyday experiences of NPOs more significant, more luminous or more fruitful stems from the practice's

inherent focus on change and altered futures. Commenting on the origins of design, Nelson and Stolterman (2012) write “Genesis is ongoing. As human beings, we continuously create things that help reshape the reality and essence of the world as we know it” (pg. 1). Similarly, Margolin (2007) describes designers as occupying a dialectical space “between the world that is and the world that could be” (pg. 4). He furthers, “informed by the past and the present, their [design] activity is oriented towards the future. They operate in situations that call for interventions, and they have the unique ability to turn these interventions into material and immaterial forms” (Margolin, 2007, pg. 4). Critically, any representation or conceptualisation of a desired future is contingent upon imagination, that is, our capacities to imagine what *might be* rather than to understand what *is*.

In the 1970s critic and futurist Alvin Toffler argued that what the world really needed was “a multiplicity of visions, dreams and prophecies – images of potential tomorrows” (1970, pg. 463). Although often working in conditions defined by others, design has long been concerned with developing thinking and learning process that equip individuals to deal with complex problems and uncertainty (Cross, 1982). Both emergent and expert designers spoke to the idea of “offering more than the expected”, that is, fulfilling the initial requests of their NPOs brief while also identifying and then resolving adjacent challenges. By working closely with their partner organisations, emergent and expert designers (to varying levels of success) were able to open their NPOs eyes to alternative ways of organising, providing service or connecting with their key stakeholders.

Design with/and/for strong relationships

As the myth of the lone “genius designer” continues to dissipate, the significance of collaboration and strong relationships becomes more apparent in design practice. Particularly when acting in complex sociocultural contexts, designers will often take part in interdisciplinary initiatives whereby non-design and design practices co-evolve in reciprocity (Duan, 2023). Although a designer’s role in participative projects is usually ascribed to that

of a facilitator – focusing on the aptitudes and activities required to sensitively ensure democratic and productive participation (Light and Akama, 2012) – we argue it is the way that design builds and maintains fluid relationships with diverse stakeholders that makes the everyday of NPOs more significant, more luminous or more fruitful.

The notion of participatory design was outlined most aptly by some of the emergent designers within this study (due to the nature of their engagement). As they reflected on their creative practices and design approaches, they inadvertently outlined many of Steen’s (2013) virtues of participatory design. Specifically, the emergent designers reflected on cooperative curiosity, which Steen (2013) conceptualises as “being open and receptive towards other people and their experiences, and towards one’s own experiences and learning” (pg. 953). As design projects often begin with inquiry-oriented activities or are initially exploratory in intent, all of the emergent designers were eager to learn about their NPO partners, key actors within the problem space, and those who had everyday experience with the social challenges being addressed. Approaching each of these individuals with respect, empathy and curiosity evidenced a designerly disposition to towards cooperative inquiry and practice and building networks and relationships that could be leveraged by the designers or the NPOs in the future. Navigating a particularly sensitive project, two emergent designers were able to discuss preventative policy and community response tactics with local police officers, building a bridge between the NPO and a key influence in the problem space that had previously been viewed as unapproachable.

Similarly, another emergent designer was eager to learn as much about the problem space as possible during the first few weeks of semester. After reaching out to formally interview a range of academics, practitioners and other NPOs working on community justice initiatives they reflected on a broad network they had cultivated – so much so they were able to connect individuals outside of their own project. In this regard, the nature of relationships stemming from design initiatives are loose and informal, simply expanding the scope of individuals who may be able to offer important feedback or

insight into certain design choices. Other individuals participating in the design project more closely, such as those offering contextual or usability insights, are able to define aspects of the proposed designed artefact while allowing others (like the designer or manufacturer) to create a solution that aligns to those specifications, or even participating fully in the exploration, specification and design of the solution from the beginning.

Design with/and/for value definition and validation

The final way that design makes the everyday of NPOs more significant, more luminous or more fruitful is through encouraging value definition and validation. Designers will assess the functional requirements (or other constraints) of design artefacts against a list of design specifications. After solidifying their idea of a potential future, a designer seeks to translate that proposed future in a series of design specifications as unambiguously as possible. Similarly, NPOs seeking incremental or contractual support will participate in a similar process when crafting documents like a design brief or a Request for Tender. In more industrialised sectors (i.e. manufacturing) these specifications benefit from having fixed meaning and measurement procedures established by governments or industry bodies. The clarity of these standards and measures prevents disagreement about whether or not a specific design artefact satisfies this list of specifications.

NPOs, servicing communities across a swath of causes and missions, do not often benefit from this same clarity of meaning. As we have previously outlined, notions of value (human, moral, or otherwise) are notoriously difficult to pin down and more so, notoriously difficult to consistently operationalise. Writing to address this very challenge, Kroes and van de Poel (2015) highlight “strong analogy between operationalising physical quantities and moral values in the sense that abstract notions first have to be made more concrete by interpreting them in a specific setting or context” (pg. 176). As one expert designer reflected on clarifying their design briefs and terms of engagement with their NPO partner, they described their role in defining (or stabilising existing definitions) value across the project. Beyond these initial

stages, physical artefacts made by designers can ground loose concepts of value (like safety, justice, connection, creativity) and provide early moments for validation and correction. In this, tangibility of varying degrees plays an essential role in allowing designers and their NPOs to thoroughly assess the consequences of decisions, before substantial resources are offered or used.

7.6

CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the practice-based experiences of designers engaging with Australian NPOs. It examines reflections from both emergent and expert designers to better understand what design looks like, how it is implemented and any requisite conditions needed to support NPOs in their pursuit of value.

Our reframing of the Design–NPO relationship as a double helix model underscores how the bonds of understanding, trust, and shared activity between designers and a NPO must be actively maintained. In adapting Lefebvre’s spatial triad, we have illustrated that the success of a design engagement is not guaranteed by methods or outputs alone, but by the conditions that shape collaboration itself. These insights reaffirm the need to situate design within the constraints, rhythms, and lived experiences of non-profit work – and to attend to the social production of value that design makes possible. The work contributes a description of: (1) the material or concrete aspects of design practice – what a designer *does*; (2) the conditions necessitating design integration – what is *known* about design; and (3) the embodied interactions and experiences of designers working within their applied contexts and engagements – what *occurs* from design. This understanding gives way to the work’s second contribution, a series of ways in which design may make ordinary experiences more significant, more luminous and more fruitful.

Investigating the experiences of designers engaging with NPOs shows that designing with/and/for NPOs is not just possible, but a worthwhile effort. Given the rising popularity of design in for-profit contexts and the increasing role of design in shaping better societies, this work is a gentle reminder that there are plenty of individuals outside of the design community who are seeking the same outcomes. The wheel has already been invented (or *designed*) and does not need to be remade. Rather than exploring how design may change the world, we suggest looking at how design might assist the associations, organisations and collectives already doing the work.

DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 8

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8.1

A DISCUSSION IN (AND ABOUT) THREE ACTS

In the tradition of many good books, this chapter begins with a map.

It does so not to chart a final destination, but to offer a navigational aid. This is because many of the central tenets of this Discussion stem from the exploration of value within design engagements involving non-profit organisations. Before we hope to address questions like ‘how might design engage with value?’ or ‘what is the role of value in a design engagement?’, we must lay some groundwork and first locate and situate value in the design engagements of this research. Understanding when (or perhaps *where*) value is recognised or acknowledged in a design engagement affords the opportunity to examine *how* value participates in the design process.

Although I possess no formal cartographic education, it is not my aim to meticulously duplicate the infinite variety and complexity of reality. Rather, this mapping of value invites exploration, stimulates imagination, fosters speculation, aids decision-making and facilitates understanding (Muehrcke and Muehrcke, 1974). Writing on the function of maps in imagined worlds and speculative fictions, Lauer (2018) argues that “maps as frontispieces act as thresholds between our known home and a new world, and they signal to the reader the kind of stories that can take place there” (pg. 12).

The map that follows will return us to roads we have already travelled down – the double-helix of design–NPO relationships. This time, however, you and I will find additional layers of information, situating how value was explored, stabilised, and engaged with in design projects involving Australian non-profit organisations. This revised map (Figure 8.1) builds on the double helix introduced in Chapter 7 – a representation of the entwined nature of design and NPO relationships – and adds a new layer of interpretive structure.

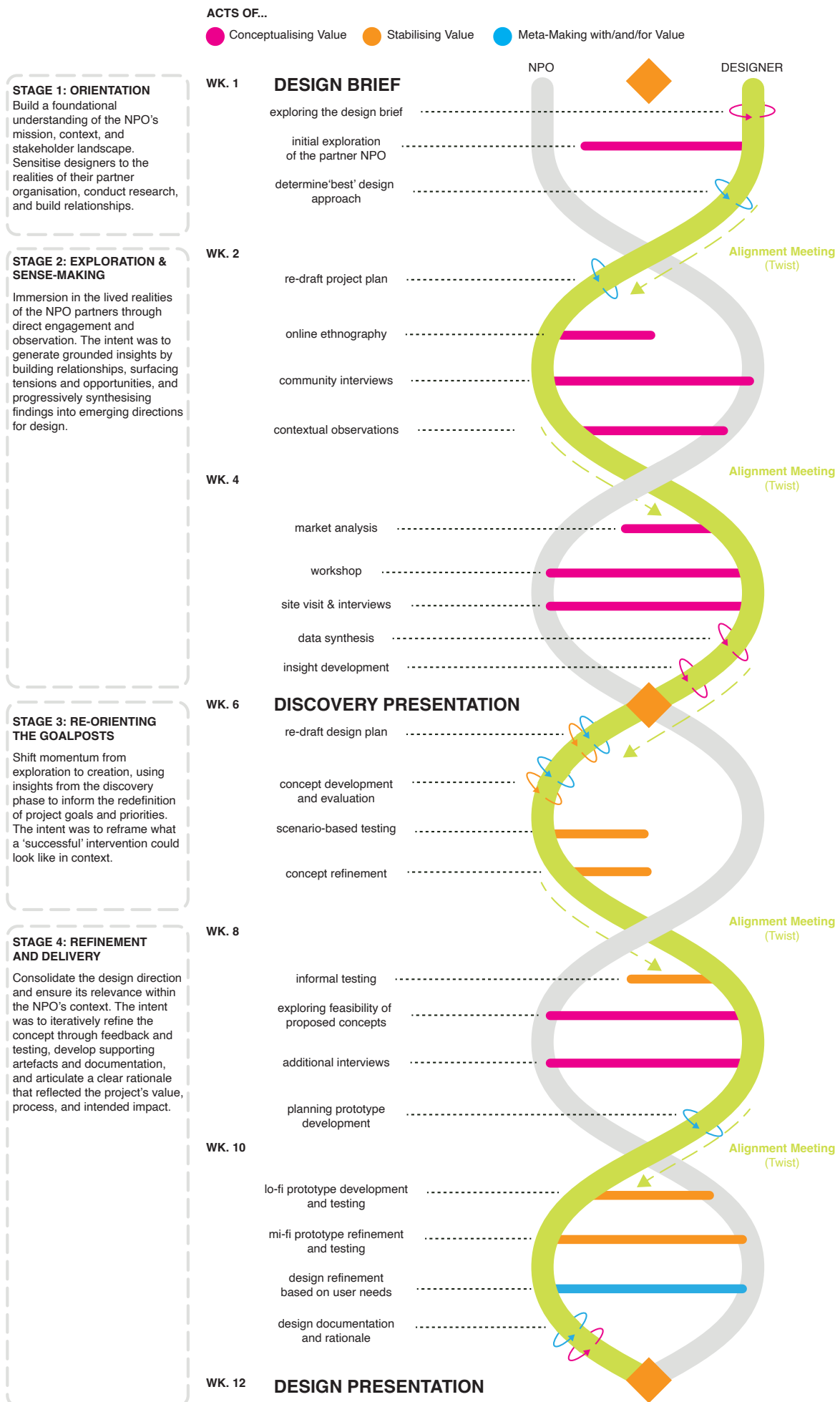


Figure 8.1: Situating Value Map: Revisiting The Double Helix of Design–NPO Relationships

Woven into the helix are three interrelated design acts that animate this chapter: (1) Conceptualising Value, (2) Stabilising Value, and (3) Meta-Making with/and/for Value.

These three acts, introduced here and developed in detail across the remainder of the chapter, constitute the central structure of the discussion. They frame the key contributions of this research and provide a means of examining how design engages with value in practice.

- **Act I: Conceptualising Value**

Conceptualising value refers to the philosophical and interpretive work of identifying, articulating, and defining what is considered valuable in a given engagement. This act involves asking how value is being framed: by whom, in what terms, and with what assumptions. In the *Situating Value Map*, *Act I* stretches across the early stages of the helix, aligning with context and site immersion, brief clarification, and insight development phases. It maps to the moments where designers and NPO partners are orienting to one another, surfacing and sharing prior knowledge, and beginning to define what the design work is for. While this conceptual labour continues throughout the project, it is most visible, and most malleable, in these early stages.

- **Act II: Stabilising Value**

Stabilising value focuses on the ways value becomes anchored (or at times prematurely fixed) through design artefacts, language, and decisions. This act draws attention to how interpretations of value take on form: how ideas are made legible or tangible, how meaning is reinforced, and how certain framings become sticky. In the diagram, *Act II* runs through the middle band of the helix, overlapping with key moments of definition and direction: in alignment meetings, concept development, and the iterative shaping of outputs. Stabilisation is rarely total; instead, it is partial and negotiated, unfolding through artefacts that carry weight, prompt action, and shape what can be seen or said.

- **Act III: Meta-Making with/and/for Value**

Meta-making with/and/for value draws attention to how design practice itself becomes a site of value reflection and critique. *Act III* examines the methodological choices designers make: what tools they use, how they position themselves, and how they reflect on their own participation. It foregrounds the meta-cognitive components of design, highlighting the ways in which practice both shapes and is shaped by underlying theories of value. In the diagram, *Act III* arcs across the later phases of the helix, including prototyping, delivery, and post-engagement reflection, but also loops back to earlier phases, signalling the recursive, self-aware quality of value work. This act centres these questions: how do designers engage with value, and moreover how do their ways of making and working co-construct what value becomes visible or real?

Notably, although I introduce each act separately, there is significance in how these acts interact. In practice, value-based work (much like design practice) is recursive and overlapping. Conceptualisations are rarely confined to the beginning of an engagement, just as reflection is not limited to its end. These acts loop and compound each other – fading and returning in different forms throughout a project's life.

A notion of value might first surface during the early framing of a project (Act I), become provisionally stabilised in a design artefact or decision (Act II), and then be re-interpreted or re-engaged as the designer reflects on their process (Act III). Equally, reflective practice might prompt a re-conceptualisation, challenging a previously stabilised interpretation and reshaping the project's direction. It is important to recognise that these acts are not stages in a linear sequence, but phases of attention that draw focus to different modes of working with/and/for value.

In the *Situating Value Map*, this movement is captured through the layering of acts across the helix. The figure is designed to reflect not only co-existence, but co-evolution: showing how different dimensions of value work emerge, recede, and reconfigure in relation to one another. This dynamic view is

essential to understanding the messiness of design when it engages with significant, but ambiguous, notions of value.

8.2

LET'S GET A LAY OF THE LAND

To better understand how the three acts unfold in practice, it is necessary to first introduce the other structural elements that underpin the *Situating Value Map*. These components provide the contextual architecture through which value is surfaced, enacted, and interpreted across the design engagements. While the preceding section focused on the movement and interrelation of conceptual, stabilising, and meta-making practices, this section outlines the four foundational components that support those movements: (1) domains, (2) knowledge spaces, (3) value-instances, and (4) stages of engagement. The goal of these components is to acknowledge the spatial, epistemic, temporal, and material conditions within which value co-evolves in design–NPO relationships.

8.2.1. THREE DOMAINS: DESIGNERLY, MEDIATION, ORGANISATIONAL

The *Situating Value Map* first and foremost consists of three domains delineating a designer's and organisation's respective spaces of activity and the space of mediation whereby those activities overlap. The term 'domains' is borrowed from the Value Ecosystem outlined in *Chapter 6: Design X NPOs*, where it described the places in which notions of value may be discussed or engaged. The *Situating Value Map* comprises of two strands and space between and around those strands. The designerly domain – the designer strand – represents the position, understandings and actions of the designer(s) participating in the engagement. The organisational domain – the NPO strand – reflects the position, understandings and actions of the non-profit organisation (potentially via a spokesperson(s)). Finally, the mediation domain

references the liminal space between and around the design and NPO strands. It captures interactions between designers and the organisation and enabling the realisation and actualisation of value within the engagement.¹

8.2.2. TWO SPACES OF KNOWLEDGES: DISCOVERABLE AND UNDISCOVERABLE

The notion of discoverable and undiscoverable knowledges aims to acknowledge and respect the boundaries of accessible and communicable knowledges present within individuals, organisations and thusly, design engagements. The term ‘knowledges’ is used here intentionally to account for the interplay of various knowledge forms, particularly those that “interpenetrate perceptual, conceptual, and enactive processes in speech, thought, and action” (Abel, 2012 as cited in Horatschek, 2020, pg. 9).

The term ‘discoverable knowledges’ refers to the insights, understandings, perspectives and meanings that *can* be elicited (via a range of design techniques, approaches or tools) and shared (verbally or non-verbally) within the engagement. ‘Undiscoverable knowledges’ refers to the insights, understandings, perspectives and meanings that, if potentially elicited, *cannot* be shared (verbally or non-verbally) within the engagement. In some ways, this distinction parallels Ikujiro Nonaka’s notions of *explicit knowledge* – which is “stored, explained and disseminated through information technologies and formal procedures” (Nonaka in Semertzaki, 2011, pg. 81) – and *tacit knowledge*, that is “personalised and is shared through person-to-person interaction that takes place in conversations and social networking”(Semertzaki, 2011, pg. 81).

However, a key distinction between explicit and tacit knowledges and the two spaces of knowledges mapped is the understanding that some knowledges, explicit *or* tacit, may not be discoverable at all. This may be due to resource limitations (whereby the explicit knowledge of individuals is never explored),

1. I recognise that this could be interpreted as the suggestion that *value* is, or ought to be considered as, interactional. It is not my intention to advocate for or deny this position. I would much rather suggest that *design* is interactional, and that *design* is responsible for the necessary interactions within this liminal space.

constraints of practice (whereby designers do not have the necessary skills or knowledge to safely and/or respectfully and/or authentically explore tacit knowledges) or a slew of other reasons.

Although it is challenging, recognising these differences is significant for two reasons. Firstly, the distinction between discoverable and undiscoverable knowledges encourages designers to acknowledge which knowledges (tacit, explicit, perceptual, conceptual, enactive, embodied, etc.) are, or might be, accessible within the context of their engagement. Secondly, the dichotomy reminds designers that undiscoverable or inaccessible knowledges still has influence and power in a person's decision making. As such, as designers engage with partners, collaborators or other knowledge-holders or actors, they ought to consider what knowledges might be available to them (surfaced through conversation, interview, workshops, etc.) and which knowledge is too deeply embodied, entrenched or intangible to ever be surfaced.

8.2.3. VALUE-INSTANCES: VALUE IN ALL ITS FORMS

Perhaps the most challenging and subjective component of the *Situating Value Map*, value-instances describe moments in which a notion, concept or idea of value is acknowledged (either in situ or in hindsight). Although these (somewhat) fleeting and transient moments of value realisation manifest in a range of forms – varying in ambiguity, objectivity, scope, tangibility, etc. – they are nonetheless a subject of design. They are acted *upon* by designers (conceptualised, operationalised, specified, realised, created, investigated, shared) and act *on* designers (slipping, stabilising, directing, transforming).

Below are a series of value-instances highlighted in this research:

- **Raw value-instance:** whereby designers understand that value is present within the engagement, but they have not yet explored, articulated, conceptualised, or engaged with the value directly. Although designers may interpret (conceptualise, articulate, define) this value per their own experiences and knowledges, a raw value-instance has not yet been acted upon and may often feel intangible and complex.

- **Conceptualised value-instance:** whereby designers (and others participating in the design engagement) have attempted to explicitly conceptualise value relevant to the project. This value-instance, although perhaps remaining intangible, is clearer and more consistent than a raw value-instance.
- **A value-instance surrounded by stabilisers:** Activities, behaviours and artefacts embodying either a specific value or series of values serve to reinforce peoples understanding of value. That is to say, the activities, behaviours and artefacts associated to the value (stabilisers of value) offer unique representations of a value-instance that may otherwise be challenging to understand on its own.
- **Value slippage:** whereby a value-instance becomes lost, rawer and more removed from those working within the design engagement.

As mentioned previously, value-instances is perhaps the most challenging and subjective component of the map. Although attempting to capture and then describe these intangible and ephemeral manifestations of value has proven difficult, it has highlighted the flexibility and responsiveness of design practice. After all, ambiguity is a common partner of design. In some cases, designers combat ambiguity as they seek clarity, utility or usefulness in their designs. However, in other instances, ambiguity encourages deep and personal relationships between individuals and the world which they have conceptually grappled with.

8.3

ADVENTURE AHEAD!

Reflecting on the development of the *Situating Value Map* more broadly, it is worth noting that any exploration of value in design is a significant undertaking – due not only to the breadth and complexity of practice, but to the inherent ambiguity of value itself. While the engagements captured

in this research have offered meaningful insight into how value is surfaced, stabilised, and negotiated, they were necessarily constrained. The emergent designers worked within a 13-week period – a condition that shaped what could be explored, tracked, and held. Future research would benefit from extended engagements – six, twelve, or even twenty-four months – allowing for a fuller examination of how values emerge, evolve, and settle (or resist settling) across longer arcs of collaboration.

Nonetheless, the work that follows presents a generative account of how value is engaged in design. The chapter unfolds in three acts, each advancing a distinct analytical position.

Act I: Philosophising Conceptualisations of Value argues that the very act of defining value in a design context is inherently philosophical. Drawing on Studies 1 and 4, this section unpacks two key dimensions that influence how value is conceptualised: depth (how abstract or grounded a value is) and scale (how personal or collective its framing). These dimensions are explored through the introduction of the Value Stretch Matrix – a tool designed to help designers surface, interrogate, and extend their working definitions of value.

Act II: Stabilising Conceptualisations of Value shifts focus from how value is framed to how it is materialised and held. Drawing again on Studies 1 and 4, this section examines the stabilising role of artefacts – how sketches, prototypes, documents, and even language serve to reinforce certain value interpretations while resisting others. Value stabilisation is not assumed to be final or permanent; rather, it is understood as provisional and negotiated, often subject to slippage over time. This act interrogates the risks and responsibilities of attempting to ‘hold value still’ and considers how artefacts might also be designed to acknowledge transformation.

Act III: Meta-making with/and/for Value takes up a more reflexive stance, drawing on Studies 1, 3 and 4 to examine how design practice itself becomes a site of value production. Extending Friedman’s (1996) tripartite framework for Value-Sensitive Design, this act introduces a fourth form: methodological

investigations of value. Here, the argument is that design tools, techniques, and methodological decisions do not merely reflect values – they make them. This section invites designers to interrogate how their modes of working reveal, suppress, or reshape value, and what responsibilities they carry in doing so.

These acts represent distinct orientations to value that recur and interweave throughout the design–NPO relationship. With the map now introduced and the act structure established, you and I will begin this Discussion where most design work begins – by asking what matters, and to whom.

8.4

ACT I: PHILOSOPHISING CONCEPTUALISING OF VALUE

Forgive the laborious term ‘philosophising’ – but I fear a more appropriate term is yet to be determined. Oxford Languages (2024) define ‘philosophising’ as “speculating or theorising about fundamental or serious issues, especially in a tedious or pompous way”. And, for what it’s worth, my usage of the word philosophising stems equally from the speculating and hypothesising on serious topics component of that definition as it does the tedious or pompous way in which the speculating and hypothesising will occur. This section posits that the act of philosophising is inherent to the act of conceptualising value. By that I mean that as we create, determine, define, infer, or articulate the *meaning* of value within a design engagement, we fundamentally participate in a mode of production that is directly responsible for the final product.

These philosophical considerations are not offered for the sake of abstraction alone. To conceptualise value – in any engagement – is to make consequential decisions about what matters, to whom, and why. If these decisions are left unexamined, they risk narrowing the scope of possibility or masking

embedded assumptions. To support designers in surfacing and stretching their assumptions early in a project, this section introduces a structured tool: the Value Stretch Matrix. Positioned before the deeper discussion of conceptual characteristics, this framework offers an actionable first step for making the implicit explicit, and for challenging how value is framed in practice.

8.4.1. A FRAMEWORK FOR STRETCHING ONE’S VALUE CONCEPTUALISATION: A STEP-BY-STEP APPLICATION

Recognising how significantly the characteristics of objectivity and scope can affect a conceptualisation of value has led to the development of a novel framework: the 2x2 Value Stretch technique (Figure 8.2). Adapted from the 2x2 matrix commonly used in scenario building (Rhydderch, 2017), this technique places two influencing factors – often referred to as drivers – along intersecting axes to form four distinct quadrants. Originally designed to test the robustness of medium-to-long-term policy directions, the 2x2 matrix is similarly useful for exploring how robust or adaptable a value conceptualisation might be across different audiences, contexts, and environments. The following section introduces a step-by-step application of the 2x2 Value Stretch Matrix, using this adapted method to examine and expand conceptualisations of value in design.

Step 1: Develop a conceptualisation of value

Conceptualisations of value are understood as “the providing of a definition, analysis or description of a value that clarifies its meaning” (van de Poel, 2013, pg. 261). These conceptualisations may vary in abstraction, and are commonly adapted, reiterated, or altered throughout design engagements. Both emergent and expert designers from *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs* discussed gleaning preliminary conceptualisations of value from the initial design brief or request for tender provided by their clients or NPO partners. The emergent designers used these initial meetings “to carry out interviews to learn more about the organisation, to understand the client’s needs, establish expectations, validate assumptions and receive feedback to

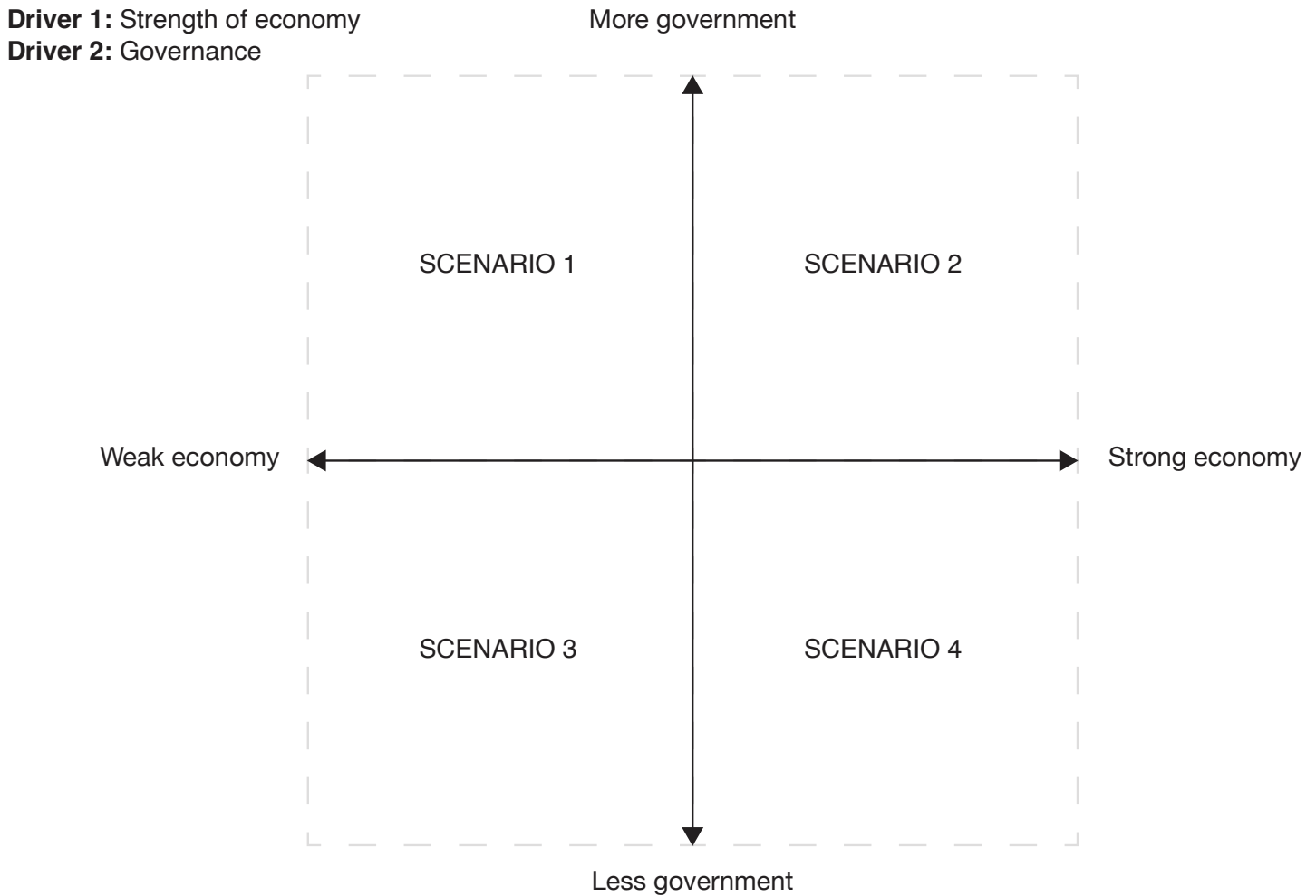


Figure 8.2: Sample Scenario Matrix (Rhydderch, 2017)

improve the design practice [tailored to their context]” (Study 4, EmD 3). And, “the brief itself obviously took a lot of strategising between myself and the client, primarily at the start, to really refine that into something that would make sense for me to share with my business partner as well as our other designer” (Study 4, ExD 2). Similarly, one expert designer described,

When we’re kicking off projects, we really want to understand those things [value conceptualisations] because they’re not usually complex. . . They might be big and kind of hard to get your arms around, but they’re really simple. Help people age with dignity, right? It’s pretty simple to get your head around that idea. (Study 4, ExD 4).

In addition to clarifying conceptualisations of value in preliminary meetings, emergent and expert designers also referred to a range of design methods, approaches and techniques employed to better understand conceptualisations of value in their engagements. These include (1) co-design and workshops with victim-survivors and a lived experience panel to ensure the designers' understandings are authentic and appropriately representative, (2) workshops with individuals working in the community-based arts NPO and interviews with visitors to the space to capture diverse understandings of value, and (3) interviews with NPO employees, victim-survivors, other service providers, and local authorities to understand how the value of safety is conceptualised.

There is no singular way of developing a conceptualisation of value, and I do not mean to suggest any methods are better than others. Nor does this step need to be overly complicated. During this stage, I encourage designers to firstly *identify* notions of value relevant to their project. Although it can be difficult to find fitting language, referencing various value taxonomies may prove to be a helpful starting point: see Kheirandish (2018), Peterson and Seligman (2004), Rokeach (1973), or Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) for extensive lists of human values. Once value(/s) of relevance is/are identified, conceptualisations offering definition, analysis, or description can be made (even tentatively).

For the purpose of this mental exercise, our attention will be focused on creativity – a value common in the conversations of design educators, practitioners, and students. In the context of design education (where this mental exercise took place), the preliminary conceptualisation of creativity is as follows: *understanding the tension between originality and usefulness and reframing a design to minimise that tension.*

Step 2: Identify key characteristics of your value conceptualisation

Rather than selecting drivers of change relevant to society, the 2x2 Value Stretch technique requires designers to select two characteristics *of the value conceptualisation itself* which could change how their conceptualisation of

value is understood, articulated, and realised within their design engagement. Each characteristic placed on each axis should be polarised, similarly reflecting “high-impact” or “high-uncertainty” to again create four distinct spaces.

In Figure 8.3, the characteristics of scale and objectivity were chosen. ‘High-impact’ objectivity is interpreted as an abstract conceptualisation of value, while ‘high-uncertainty’ objectivity is interpreted as a grounded conceptualisation of value. Similarly, ‘high-impact’ scope is interpreted as a generalised conceptualisation of value, while ‘high-uncertainty’ scope is interpreted as a localised conceptualisation of value.

Of note, the poles of each axis are flexibly and subjectively defined by those participating in the activity. They are not intended to be rigidly or quantitatively defined, but instead, they contribute to creating fundamentally different quadrants. The contrasts provide ample room for a full array of possible interpretations to be explored.

Step 3: Stretch your conceptualisation across the quadrants

Armed now with a value conceptualisation and four distinct spaces to explore, a designer is ready to stretch their conceptualisation. By that I mean designers can now place their conceptualisation in each quadrant and consider (1) how their original value conceptualisation looks in each quadrant, and (2) what changes could render their value conceptualisation more robust. Designers struggling to respond to those prompts may find it beneficial to instead identify a few salient characteristics of each quadrant before exploring the robustness of their conceptualisation.

As became evident in this research, varying levels of scale and objectivity can reveal interpretations of a conceptualisation of value that may not have been previously considered. This is important for designers who may have only considered a slim range of possible outcomes, or those who may firmly believe they have explored all relevant facets of their value conceptualisation. Stretching a value conceptualisation across these four distinct quadrants offers

Characteristic 1: Objectivity
Characteristic 2: Scale

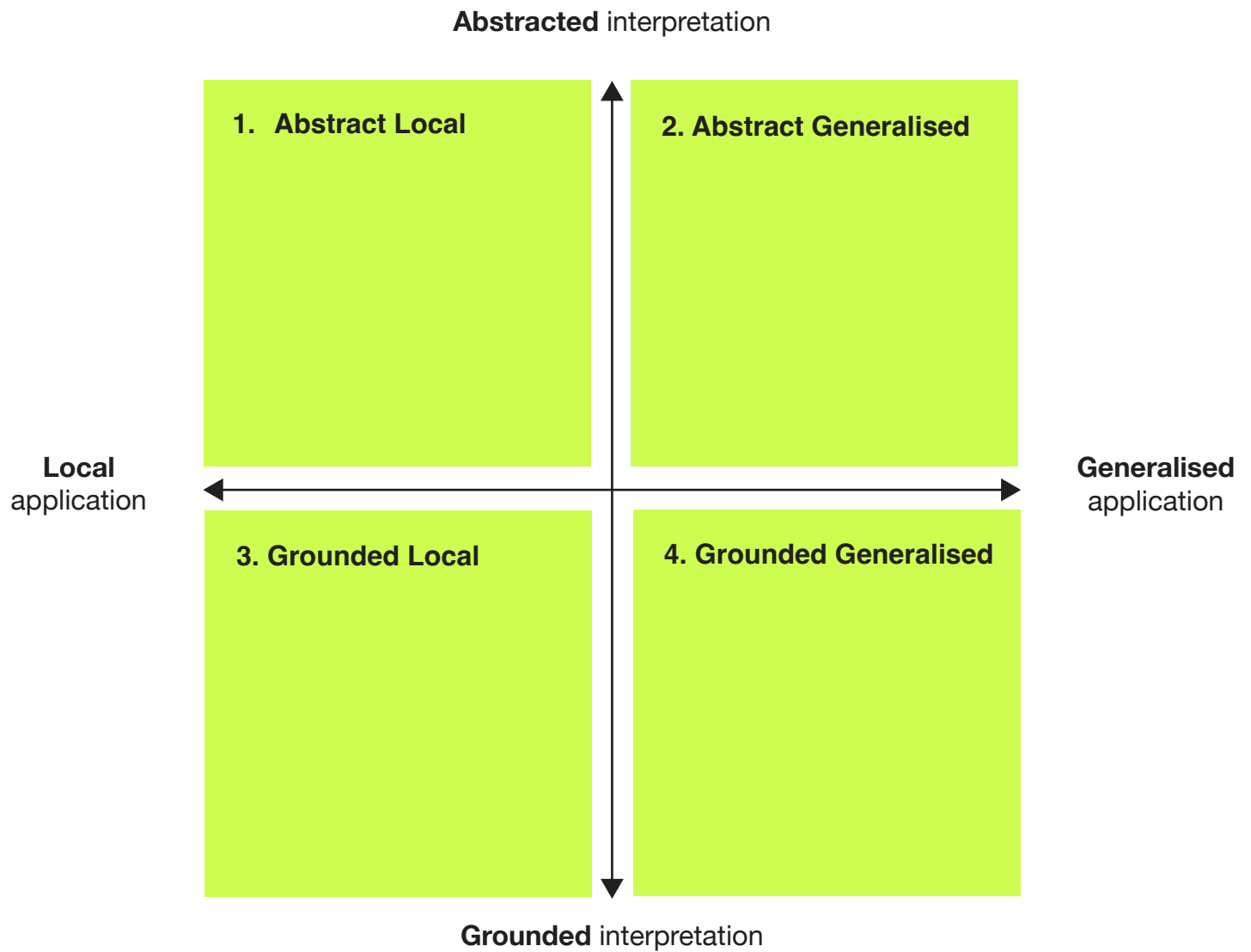


Figure 8.3: 2x2 Value Stretch Framework

designers a chance to create and explore different iterations of the same value, illuminating novel pathways that may not yet have been explored or brought to life.

Returning to our mental exercise, stretching our conceptualisation of creativity across objectivity and scope generated new understandings² of creativity was explored and integrated into our design assessments (illustrated in Figure 8.4).

The initial conceptualisation of creativity (*understanding the tension between originality and usefulness and reframing a design to minimise that tension*) was quickly positioned within the Abstract-Generalised quadrant. From there an Abstract-Local conceptualisation was explored and ultimately articulated as “creative solutions that are surprising and ‘deep’”. This generated a Grounded-Local understanding of creativity, articulated as a design educator’s capacity to “nurture the capacity to reframe and reformulate” in design students. Finally, the Grounded-Generalised conceptualisation of creativity was considered as “strategies for meta-cognition”.

Individually, each of these quadrants in the 2x2 Value Stretch Matrix reflect unique facets and nuances of the design educator’s understanding of creativity. Together, they expose some of the underpinning assumptions about creativity entrenched in their teaching and assignments. Further, this exercise encouraged the educator to more deeply and directly consider what kinds of implicit skills and capabilities they believed it important for design students to possess, and how their educational efforts may support or hinder those ambitions.

8.4.2. CONCEPTUALISING VALUE FOR DESIGN

To more deeply understand what the matrix seeks to stretch, and why this effort is important, we must examine value conceptualisations themselves, and the properties that underpin them: objectivity and scale.

2. This exercise (a very initial pilot test of the 2x2 Value Stretch Matrix) took place in a one hour conversation between the author of this thesis and a design academic within the same School of Design. The prompt asked the design academic to describe creativity and then stretch that conceptualisation across the provided scales. In conversation, the author was able to respond to questions about the tool and keep the conceptual exploration grounded. Explorations of creativity were explored in relation to design education and the specific education units and assignments the design academic was responsible for overseeing. A brief conversation followed the activity, reflecting on the use of the tool and speculating on potential applications in the future.

Characteristic 1: Objectivity
Characteristic 2: Scale

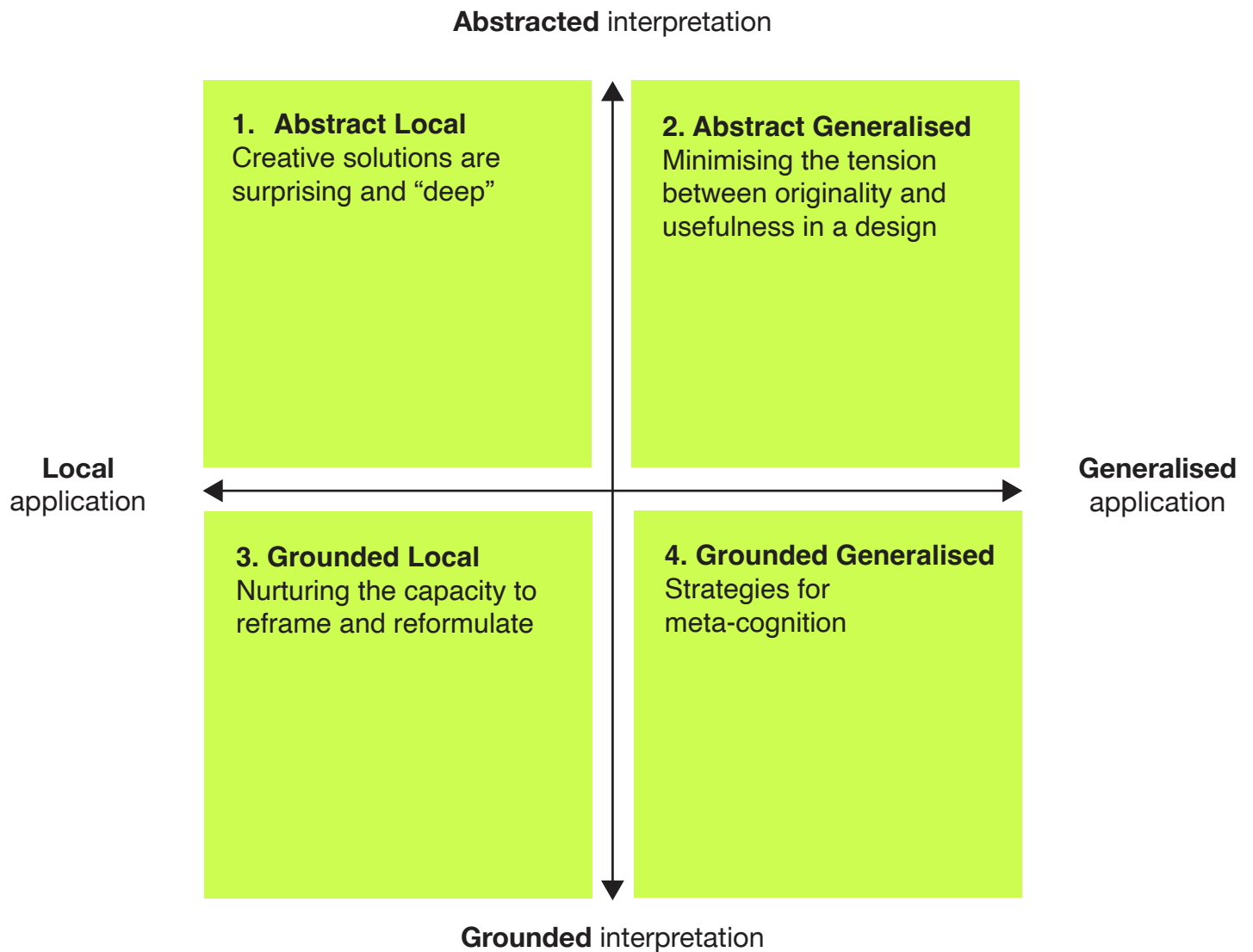


Figure 8.4: Stretching our conceptualisation of creativity

As has been written by both Friedman and Hendry (2019, May) and van de Poel (2020), developing careful working conceptualisations of value in a design engagement is a fundamental requirement for any design process that intends to meaningfully interact with value. Given that this work presupposes that *all* forms of design shape society in some capacity, and vice versa, I go so far as to argue that developing careful working conceptualisations of value is essential to *all* forms of design. Put simply, designers and designed artefacts are influenced by or enmesh value, while value influences or enmeshes designers and designed artefacts. Exploring

(or investigating) and understanding (or articulating) *what* is meant by ‘value’, *who* conceptualisations of value pertain to or affect, as well as *how* a conceptualisation of value may affect individuals is critical to informing which decisions may be considered ‘appropriate’, ‘beneficial’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in a specific context.

As a reminder, Friedman and Hendry (2019, May) describe the conceptual investigations of Value-Sensitive Design as “analytic, theoretical, or philosophically informed explorations of the central issues and constructs under investigation” (pg. 33). They continue, “the depth and robustness of an initial conceptual investigation can vary” – citing the difference between cursory “armchair” value analyses and expert analyses conducted by experts in an interdisciplinary team – and that “in subsequent project phases, initial propositions are likely to be refined or even substantially revised to respond to findings from other investigations” (Friedman and Hendry, 2019, May, pg. 33). Although they present the ultimate goal of these investigations as a desire to “clarify fundamental issues raised by the project at hand and provide a basis for comparing results across research teams” (Friedman and Hendry, 2019, May, pg. 33), little acknowledgement is given to the *slipperiness* of value conceptualisations. By this I mean that although Value-Sensitive Design acknowledges that conceptualisations of value are iterative and dynamic, the approach is lacking in practical suggestions for managing the inherent instability and dynamism of a value conceptualisation.

As acknowledged by Friedman and Hendry (2019, May), the depth and robustness of a conceptual investigation can vary. Comparing the conceptualisations of value uncovered in *Study 2: What Do We Mean When We Talk About Value?* and *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs* evidences Friedman and Hendry’s argument nicely, as each study demonstrates significant differences in the semantic breadth of value conceptualisation. These value conceptualisations, discussed in further detail below, vary primarily in their objectivity (concrete or abstract) and scale (localised or generalised). These characteristics – objectivity and scale (likely only two of many) – encourage a designer or investigator of value to stretch

their conceptualisation of value across potential contexts and audiences, enabling the designer or investigator to determine if their conceptualisation is sufficient for their project. These characterisations are explored further below.

Is the conceptualisation of value grounded or abstract?

Rather than ask if it is valid or correct – as a pluralist and subjective stance would deem those measures impossible to prove – it is instead worth asking whether or not a conceptualisation of value is corroborated. The onus here is not necessarily epistemological, but teleological; I am less concerned with how justified the conceptualisation might be, and more concerned with how consistently that conceptualisation is understood within a team, engagement, organisation, collective, or community. More so, it is also worth asking how *applied* the conceptualisation of value may be and to what extent is the value conceptualised characterised by, or dependent on, a specific context or environment? How broad might we consider that context or environment to be?

Showcasing a *grounded* conceptualisation of value, an expert design participant in *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs* described how their organisation had “an agreement on the definition of inclusive design. . . We use the Inclusive Design Research Centre’s definition³ which states ‘inclusive design is design that considers the full spectrum of human diversity’, and that’s with respect to age, ability, gender, race, or any other type of human difference.” This agreement, distributed throughout the organisation and accessible to all employees, enables designers within the organisation to navigate a central interpretation. Although additional nuances result (as there is room to interpret how one might *conduct, practice* or *engage in* inclusive design), they are not as wide-ranging as they might be without the central agreement.

3. The Inclusive Design Research Centre in Ontario, Canada writes, “Inclusive design is design that considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference.” For further detail, see: <https://idrc.ocadu.ca>

This is in stark comparison to conceptualisations of value revealed in *Study 2: What Do We Mean When We Talk About Value?*, in which social value was commonly interpreted as “serving to better the lives of individuals, and in turn, transform society as a whole” and economic value was characterised as “value derived from the market, and direct and indirect processes of exchange”. By no means am I suggesting that these conceptualisations of value are *unhelpful*, but rather that they are *abstract* and allow more room for interpretation than concrete conceptualisations of value. For some authors writing on social value in non-profit organisations, ‘social value’ refers to “[a non-profit organisation’s] long-term goals of social justice and transformation” (Banks et al., 2015, pg. 707) or “making a difference in society” (Akingbola and van den Berg, 2019, pg. 50). For others, conceptualisations of ‘social value’ are developed in accordance with pre-existing frameworks. In O’Dwyer and Boomsma (2015) the priority areas and social value of NPOs is “complementary to Dutch bilateral and multilateral aid, and were linked to broader policy goals including the Millennium Development Goals” (pg. 56).

All the examples above fall within the motif of ‘social value’. The broad but distinct references to ‘social value’ in *Study 2: What Do We Mean When We Talk About Value?* illustrates the capacity of an abstract conceptualisation to encompass a significant range of meanings. This space for interpretation offers great benefit: a wider array of individuals may become invested in an abstract conceptualisation of value precisely *because* they have the semantic room to ascribe their own interpretation. But it also contains potential risk: abstract conceptualisations of value may struggle to capture or maintain the attention of stakeholders if individuals cannot identify an element of the abstract conceptualisation they believe to be worth their time or attention.

Examining whether a value conceptualisation is grounded or abstract can uncover additional dimensions of how value is understood and communicated. This can enable designers to more deeply consider what may be perceived as valuable or worthwhile in their project and use those considerations to guide their decision-making throughout their project.

Is the conceptualisation of value localised or generalised?

The second consideration of value conceptualisation is to determine how localised or generalised the conceptualisation is or may need to be. As previously argued, value can readily ‘slip’ away from individuals engaged in design. This can either result *from* or be a consequence *of* value conflict, a moment in which individuals disagree due to different understandings or beliefs about a value conceptualisation. Learnings from *Study 3: Design X NPOs* and *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs* suggest that conceptualisations of value can be interpreted differently depending on a person’s proverbial distance from the project.

Localised conceptualisations of value are understood and brought to life by the day-to-day actions, behaviours, and conversations of those directly involved in the project – i.e. those who are in close physical, cultural, or social proximity. These can be more easily understood by an audience because of context clues which can reinforce specific interpretations of value.⁴ Generalised conceptualisations of value can be recognised as those affecting the thinking and actions of a more widespread audience (e.g., a local community, state, or country as a whole). References to these generalised conceptualisations may be less explicit and more entrenched in the general social fabric – unquestioned or unknown until they are brought into focus.

To demonstrate the distinction between localised and generalised conceptualisations of value, I offer two examples: one from current affairs, and another from the design engagement in *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs*.

First, from politics: although I write this thesis in a city 14,867km from Chicago, USA, political messaging from the 2024 American presidential elections made their way resoundingly across waters and skies. On the 22nd of August, Minnesota Gov. and Vice-Presidential nominee Tim Walz cast

4. A drop-in centre with open communal tables and art on the walls may reinforce notions of *accessibility* and *inclusion*. An organisation showcasing collaboratively-made posters or community drawings in design meetings could reinforce *shared ownership* or *participation*. Having flexible meeting times or allowing sessions to run long may reflect a value placed on *attentiveness* over *efficiency*.

himself and Democrats as the party for “freedom”. He did so on the third night of the Democratic National Convention (DNC), labelled ‘Freedom Night’ in a political positioning understood as an intentional recasting of a traditionally Republican theme.⁵ He declared the following:

This is a big part about what this election is about. Freedom. When Republicans use the word freedom, they mean that the government should be free to invade your doctor’s office. Corporations – free to pollute your air and water. And banks – free to take advantage of customers.

But when we Democrats talk about freedom, we mean the freedom to make a better life for yourself and the people that you love. Freedom to make your own health care decisions. And yeah, your kids’ freedom to go to school without worrying about being shot dead in the hall. (Walz, 2024)

The notion of freedom is, of course, significantly debated beyond the major political parties of the United States of America. However, what this example aptly highlights is that the notion of freedom, like other theories of complexity, can be characterised differently depending on the angle from which it is defined. Walz levies representations of freedom to distinguish between political offerings of a Republican future and that of a Democrat future. Per the intention of the DNC, Walz’s speech is crafted to “show America what Democrats stand for” and “tell the [Democrat] story” (Walz, 2024). His examples of freedom are rooted in the ordinary spheres of American life (health, education, finance) relevant to the broad population, but are uniquely interpretable depending on a person’s position in relation to the message. “Freedom to make a better life for yourself and the people that you love” (Walz, 2024) ought to be considered as a generalised conceptualisation of value, as the intricacies of how this would be enacted remain undefined – something which importantly allows the audience to fill those details however they see fit.

5. A longstanding campaign theme of the American Republican party was “freedom, faith and family”.

In comparison, in *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs*, the value of emotional safety was repeatedly outlined, recorded and debated amongst employees of NPO #2, as well as with the emergent designers who engaged with the organisation. In prior documentation developed by the NPO, suggested measures to ensure emotional safety include strong referral pathways, positive and strength affirming language, validation from staff, private space for consultations, safe and nurturing features within the interior of the space, strict policies for confidentiality, and trauma-informed and violence-informed staff training. Even without direct reference to documentation, the premise of emotional safety appeared to be well understood by those working at the NPO and was a cornerstone of their organisational behaviour. The localised conceptualisation of safety as a value (specifically emotional safety) was understood, communicated and enacted within the specific context of the NPO, its employees and volunteers, and the community members they seek to assist.

Together, these examples illustrate how conceptualisations of value – shaped by objectivity and scale – influence not only what is considered valuable, but how that value is enacted and recognised within a design engagement. Whether explicit or implicit, grounded or abstract, localised or generalised, such framings guide decision-making and structure outcomes.

8.4.3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE VALUE STRETCH MATRIX

The act of philosophising about value is more than an intellectual exercise, it is an unavoidable part of the design process, shaping decision-making, project interactions, and the development of design artefacts. While discussions of value in design often appear theoretical or abstract, the 2x2 Value Stretch Matrix provides a tangible method for expanding, challenging, and validating how value conceptualisations are understood and applied. The practical implications of the framework, demonstrating how it supports designers in navigating the complex landscape of value, are outlined below.

- **Expanding our understanding of value:** Fundamentally, the Value Stretch Matrix encourages designers to extend their conceptualisation of value beyond immediate definitions, articulations or descriptions. Although value conceptualisations may be reworked throughout a design engagement – evolving as the context, knowledge, and understanding also evolves – the risk of a designer’s iterations hinging upon consistent biases, preconceptions or assumptions remains. Requiring designers to apply their conceptualisation in distinct and different quadrants encourages them to proactively elicit facets of the value conceptualisation that may not have otherwise been explored.
- **Bridging gaps and combating misunderstanding:** Value tensions and conflicts often arise due to different interpretations or understandings of a value. Value tensions and conflicts can also result from differences in value prioritisation – whereby the worth or importance of a value is not agreed upon. This phenomenon that can also occur due to misunderstandings or miscommunication. Utilising the Value Stretch Matrix to not only expand, but in fact, clarify a value conceptualisation enables designers to communicate their understandings and intentions with other designers, and other individuals relevant to the design engagement. Akin to the use of personas in a design process, the Value Stretch Matrix can be used to combat misunderstanding at a variety of stages: (i) steadily reflecting conceptualisations of value informed by research and lived experience, (ii) guiding decision-making with clarity and common understanding of strategic ambitions, and (iii) orientating evaluative criteria with unambiguous descriptions.
- **Anchoring design activity:** Designers can use their more extensive explorations of a value conceptualisation to better inform their practice within the engagement. Although not all novel facets of value uncovered may be relevant to the design engagement, the act of determining what is and is not relevant will have implications on which design approaches, behaviours, and tools may be best suited to the context of the design engagement and achieving the desired outcomes of the project.

8.5

ACT II: STABILISERS AND STABILISATION OF VALUE

As has been stated previously, the notion of value is slippery. The idea of value – in its entirety or as a specific – mutates, dissolves, and emerges across contexts more akin to a spectre than a fixed principle. Descriptive studies of values from psychology and sociology have long sought to describe what values are held by individuals and societies and why they may be considered significant, important or worthwhile. In recent decades, design approaches have been developed in response or relation to specific notions of value – for example, privacy and privacy-by-design (Hustinx, 2010), safety and safety-by-design (Hale et al., 2007), and wellbeing and design for wellbeing (Brey, 2015). However, as van de Poel and Kudina (2022) highlights, many of these approaches are predicated on the idea that these notions of value are static – that, once established, the meaning of the value will not change. This fails to account for numerous real-world examples⁶ and scholarly critiques that champion the existence of value change. Writing specifically on the idea of value change, and how designers may account for it, van de Poel (2013) distinguishes between three basic dynamics:

- **Value dynamism**, whereby interpreted value may change (or be re-interpreted) due to changing judgements of a given situation
- **Value adaption**, whereby the re-interpretation of value (due to value dynamics) is carried over to new situations and becomes generalised
- **Value emergence**, whereby inquiry of indeterminate situations identifies an additional notion of value distinct from pre-existing values (adapted or otherwise)

6. Consider how social media has changed our relationship to freedom, truth, or harm, or how it is only in the wake of the energy transition that sustainability became a focus of technological innovation in the energy sector.

The fluidity of value – whether it be changing interpretations or the surfacing of new ones – presents a significant challenge in design practice, where decisions often hinge on an assumed or shared understanding of value. When these assumptions shift (due to changing project teams, evolving organisational priorities, or broader societal changes) designers risk experiencing value slippage, where the intended meaning of a value gradually erodes or mutates, potentially leading to unintended consequences in the design engagement. Inconsistent or unstable interpretations of value would make the assessment of an existing or proposed design challenging. Inconsistent or unstable interpretations of value would offer little assistance in discovering what may be considered worthwhile, important, or valuable in various situations.

Attending to this fluidity (what I refer to here as value stabilisation) is not merely a theoretical concern but a practical necessity for designers. With this in mind, it is time to shift our attention from the act of *philosophising* value to explore how design artefacts not only represent value, but *stabilise* our understanding of value for sustained periods of time.

The notion of value stabilisation will be discussed in two parts. The first part explores the role of artefacts as value *stabilisers* – things which enable and facilitate these sustained and consistent understandings of value. By embedding values into material forms, artefacts ensure that conceptualisations of value are not left solely to interpretation or memory but are actively reinforced through tangible, iterative engagement. Examples of artefacts as stabilisers are also drawn from *Study 3: Design X NPOs* and *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs* to evidence the breadth and range of artefacts developed. The second part is centred on the idea of *stabilisation* – the process of sustaining a consistent understanding of values across multiple stages of a project and across multiple projects. An example of value change is drawn from *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs*. *Act II* concludes by outlining the practical implications of value stabilisation and how it may prevent phenomena like value slippage.

8.5.1. DESIGN ARTEFACTS AS VALUE STABILISERS, OR “FINDING THE LIGHT AROUND A BLACKHOLE”

Before diving further into *Act II*, let me start with a moment of personal clarity – one that arrived in the haze of a flu-ridden weekend. When I started writing out this section, I found myself battling a brain-splitting headache and chest-rattling cough. Like any self-respecting adult, I called my mum. Over the phone, she cooed the following phrase, “sana, sana, colita de rana; si no sanas hoy, sanarás mañana”. For the benefit of a reader who may not immediately recognise these words, it is a common rhyme taught to Spanish-speaking children and is a phrase spoken by parents when their child is hurt.

Despite hearing the rhyme commonly enough throughout my childhood, it wasn't until I was in my 20s that I learnt that my mother, for a reason exceeding translation, was calling me a *frog* as she promised a return to good health. No matter my hurt or ailment, anytime I felt poorly the soft hand of my mother would rub my back and whisper in Spanish, “heal, heal, little tail of the frog, if you don't heal today, you will tomorrow”. In those early years, although I never understood what my mother was saying (as I didn't learn Spanish until much later in life), I implicitly understood that she wanted me to get better. Even though I never understood her words, there were enough clues in her tone, expression and associated actions to glean her intention – because communication never lies solely in the words that are spoken.

This, after all, is a lesson also evident in design practice – meaning is rarely confined to words alone. Door handles and door plates quietly suggest to individuals whether they need to push or pull to enter a space, and safety caps on medicine bottles that require both pushing and twisting actions to make it clear that the intent of opening these containers must be deliberate and controlled. Just as a whispered Spanish rhyme and gentle hand conveys care without translation, artefacts in design embed and communicate values beyond explicit verbal articulation.

By ‘design artefacts’, I refer to objects made either as a result or embodiment of design intent (such as sketches and drawings, research reports and

syntheses, low-fidelity mock-ups and high-fidelity prototypes, journey or service or experience maps, graphics, products, interactions, services, systems). Although the form of the artefact may differ in shape or material, the consistent theme amongst these objects is that they all occupy an intermediary space within a design engagement, serving as a common ground for discussion and debate. When made, each artefact represents the current understandings of the design at that current moment.

Writing on the role of artefacts (specifically drawings) as mediating devices between architects and building users, Luck (2007) describes the ‘act of interpretation’. She writes, “the process colloquially known as ‘reading’ a drawing is a semiotic one, where one person prepares a representation or an aspect of a building, which is then interpreted by other people” (Luck, 2007, pg. 29). Further research from Perry and Sanderson (1998) describe how

Discussion about the artefacts allowed information represented in them to be highlighted, problematised, changed provisionally, and confirmed, at which point the artefact (drawing) could be modified. Artefacts were therefore a resource for discussion, although they were also generated and modified through these discussions. . . drawings appeared to provide a common basis through which people with different skills and perspectives could gain a common understanding of the problems discussed. (pg. 283)

This ‘common basis’ outlined by Perry and Sanderson (1998) is of particular significance in this context, given how challenging it can be to clearly and consistently articulate conceptualisations of value. In the same way that a blackholes are effectively invisible to telescopes⁷ and primarily detected based on how they affect their surroundings, ambiguous notions of value may remain invisible except for the auxiliary artefacts that offer materially meaningful clues about the conceptualisation. Artefacts help identify the boundaries of the concept, and themselves can make a conceptualisation of

7. As they do not emit or reflect light.

value more fixed and stable – less susceptible to change, transformation or mutation.

Take, for example, the concept of privacy. At the turn of the millennium Daniel Solove (2005), the John Marshall Harlan Research Professor of Law at the George Washington University Law School, described privacy as a “concept in disarray” (pg. 477). He writes: “Nobody can articulate what it means. Currently, privacy is a sweeping concept, encompassing (among other things) freedom of thought, control over one’s body, solitude in one’s home, control over personal information, freedom from surveillance, protection of one’s reputation, and protection from searches and interrogations.” (Solove, 2008, pg. 1)

Debates about the meaning of value, or what a conceptualisation of value may *mean*, does not negate the fact that manifestations of value exist. It does not negate the fact that artefacts (graphics, products, experiences, systems) which embody, reflect, or even implicate value, *exist*. Surveillance technologies *exist*.⁸ Activities involving personal information not only *exist* but may enable a greater risk of identity theft or fraud (Kalvet et al., 2019). In both cases, these technologies and activities shed light on *how* privacy is conceived.

To provide an example more local to this research, we can return to NPO#1 from *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs*, who sought to foster emotional safety for victim-survivors of family, domestic, or sexual violence. For the emergent designers working on this engagement, an early question was “what is emotional safety?” Although this question proved surprisingly difficult to answer, identifying measures that themselves *exemplify* emotional safety was not. It became quickly evident within the design engagement that emotional safety looked like strong referral pathways to mitigate (re)traumatisation. Emotional safety looked like positive and strength affirming language and validation from staff in all communications and interactions. Emotional safety looked like private spaces for consultation, safe and nurturing interiors, nurture rooms, confidentiality policies, and

8. Surveillance systems common in American schools (Birnhack and Perry-Hazan, 2020), Automatic Content Recognition systems within Smart TVs (Anselmi et al., 2024).

trauma-and-violence-informed staff training. When a description of emotional safety was hard to come by, this constellation of measures began to pave the way towards understanding.

Two other artefacts that warrant particular attention as examples of value stabilisers include the design brief and the Discovery or Design presentations. These emerged as crucial stabilising forces in *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs*. Although the design brief is often thought of as a starting point (a summary of context, goals, constraints, and hoped-for outcomes), it served a more enduring function in the design–NPO engagements; it encoded organisational value in a durable form. For many of the emergent designers, the brief became a rich representation of the value they sought to understand and contribute to. Similarly, alignment documents such as the Discovery presentation and Design presentation helped stabilise values through collaborative sense-making. In another case, an expert designer reflected on how brand documentation was used by their partner NPO to re-centre value discussions across multiple projects. Its language, style and tone were referenced in other forms of organisational communication, like newsletters to donors and internal project presentations. Like a compass, the alignment document offered orientation.

8.5.2. ARTEFACTS AS STATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF VALUE OR “A PLIGHT FOR VALUE STABILISATION”

Beyond assisting designers and teams to understand and communicate notions of value, the static and material nature of artefacts plays a significant role in sustaining a consistent understanding of values across multiple stages of a project, and across multiple projects. Interestingly, artefacts can be viewed as historical records of these stabilisations – preserving a snapshot of value at a particular moment in time. The act of inscribing or embedding value into a material form suggests a level of permanence that is, in many ways, at odds with the fluidity of value itself. This raises an important question worth further exploration: what is the role of design artefacts in sustaining,

reinforcing, or even distorting the conceptualisations they were originally designed to embody over time?

A tale of two stabilisations

The first example of value stabilisation comes from insights generated in *Study 2: What Do We Mean When We Talk About Value?* The frames of practiced and proposed value identified in that work refer to approaches employed to suppose, organise or project a perception of value within an organisation. These frames (mission statements, value propositions, value orientations, organisational behaviour, etc) are all artefacts used to serve as a crucial mechanism for stabilising meaning in the short term, capturing singular value instances to inform decision-making and guide behaviour.

Mission statements and value propositions establish a strategic direction and articulate intended impact. These frames function as reference points, aligning stakeholders around a shared vision and providing a basis for evaluating decisions. However, at this stage, the value remains aspirational – symbolic rather than concrete – until translated into action. As such, these stabilisations are inherently temporary, serving to direct intent before the value is made tangible in practice.

Value orientations – the implicit rules, beliefs, and preferences that shape organisational culture – sets the foundation for decision-making, while organisational behaviour reflects how certain value conceptualisations manifest through day-to-day actions. However, because value is fluid, these stabilisations require continual negotiation. Thus, while frames of value and similar organisational artefacts provide a necessary structure for directing action, they ought to be periodically reassessed to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

The second example of value stabilisation comes from insights generated in *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs* and explores value stabilisations across a 13-week design engagement. In this partnership, one pair of emergent designers initially received a brief that framed design as a strategic tool to

develop a concrete digital arts solution. However, a miscommunication with their original NPO partner around those expectations led to a sudden change: the emergent designers were reassigned to a new NPO partner whose brief focused more broadly on creating a strategy to attract and support early-stage digital arts initiatives. In response, the emergent designers revised their approach and began engaging in regular, weekly meetings to clarify the new brief. Early artefacts – such as visual diagrams and strategic frameworks – were developed and iteratively refined during these meetings, reinforcing the students’ understanding that their work was aligned with the revised expectations.

Despite these intensified communication efforts and the apparent confirmation of the updated brief, the final design presentation revealed a surprising misalignment. Their NPO partner felt the proffered solution was completely unaligned with the original brief, and that the concept “came out of left field”, even though the last series of meetings (in which concepts and ideas had been shared for feedback) had remained largely positive.

The miscommunication was perhaps because the emergent designers remained reliant on a single intermediary for communication, which meant that the broader group of NPO stakeholders remained out of the loop. The absence of direct, multi-stakeholder interaction exacerbated the miscommunication, leaving the designers unable to verify whether their approach was understood as intended. Ultimately, despite regular meetings and iterative refinements of design artefacts, the inherent challenge of conveying a conceptual, strategic vision resulted in persistent uncertainty – underscoring how value can slip away even when stabilising mechanisms are in place.

Is it fixity or flux we seek?

The stability that artefacts provide is both their strength and their potential limitation. By materialising values, artefacts make abstract principles tangible, allowing for structured engagement and operationalisation in practice. However, if the conditions surrounding their creation evolve, these artefacts

risk becoming misaligned as interpretations shift, requiring active negotiation and reinterpretation by those who engage with them in the future. This is likely of particular concern in long-term design engagements, where artefacts produced in the early stages of a project may come to function as rigid references for decision-making, even as the foundational value they represent undergo transformation. This raises concerns about the persistence of outdated or unchallenged assumptions embedded in artefacts, particularly in contexts where adaptation is critical.

The challenge of balancing stability and adaptability is particularly pronounced in contested spaces where value conceptualisations, or the prioritisation, are not universally agreed upon. In domains such as non-profit organisations, where for-profit and non-profit value may be at odds, artefacts serve as battlegrounds for competing interpretations and strategic debates. Design artefacts, interpreting a problem and suggesting responses, embody stabilised conceptions of impact – but these interpretations are constantly challenged by new insights and societal shifts. Take privacy policies embedded within digital platforms as an example: while originally drafted to reflect existing legal and ethical norms, they may become outdated as public expectations around data rights evolve. In such cases, artefacts that were once stabilising forces risk becoming barriers to progress, necessitating a process of re-negotiation and re-articulation.

8.5.3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF STABILISING VALUE THROUGH ARTEFACTS

Design artefacts play an essential role in stabilising value. Rather than describing artefacts as passive representations of value, I argue that artefacts are active stabilisers of value that materially encode, constrain, and communicate conceptualisation over sustained periods of time. This is predicated on the idea that meaning is not confined to words alone. Just as physical objects and interactions guide human behaviour in everyday life, design artefacts provide tangible, material anchors that help particular interpretations of value endure across complex and evolving design contexts.

The following points highlight the practical implications of artefacts in maintaining coherence, continuity, and accountability in design engagements with value.

- **Artefacts combat value slippage:** The interpretative nature of value makes it susceptible to shifts in meaning, particularly in long-term design engagements. Changes in project teams, shifting organisational priorities, or evolving external conditions can lead to different interpretations of originally agreed-upon value, which may result in unintended consequences for the final design. By embedding values into artefacts – such as maps, frameworks, prototypes, or guidelines – designers can create tangible reference points that reinforce a consistent understanding of a value over time. These artefacts ensure that value interpretations are not left solely to memory or assumption but are instead documented and continuously reinforced through material engagement.
- **Artefacts are an alternative form of communication:** Artefacts afford designers the unique opportunity to bridge conceptual gaps apparent in verbal or written communication, allowing them to make complex, vague or ambiguous values more accessible, interpretable, and actionable for diverse partners, knowledge holders, collaborators and/or stakeholders. Many conceptualisations of value (e.g., privacy, safety, or dignity) are complex and context-dependent, almost impossible to describe, articulate or define in universally accepted terms. However, artefacts provide an embodied representation of these value conceptualisations, enabling individuals to engage with them intuitively. Engaging with artefacts allows stakeholders to experience value conceptualisations rather than rely solely on abstract discussions.
- **Artefacts constrain infinite potential into finite forms:** One of the key challenges in working with value is its semantic breadth; value conceptualisations often encompass multiple interpretations and can shift based on context. Without clear material constraints, discussions

about value can become unfocused or overly theoretical. Artefacts counteract this by providing a fixed reference point that captures a value at a particular moment in time, making it more tangible and open to critique. This allows design teams to iteratively refine values in a controlled manner, with a finite number of features, facets or factors that could be debated.

- **Artefacts act as a historical record of value iterations:** Not only do artefacts stabilise notions of value, but the artefacts themselves provide a record of historical value interpretations that may be revisited and refined. Functioning as long-term repositories, a collection of artefacts would allow designers and organisations to, if they wish, track how and when interpretations of value may change as institutional knowledge, team members and contexts may change. The consistency of interpretation afforded to a design team by an artefact's material form is not a proclamation for rigidity, rather, artefacts serve as checkpoints that externalise value conceptualisations at different stages of a project, offering a means for designers to re-evaluate, update, and adapt over time.
- **Artefacts remind us of the *'Politics of Things'*:** The central role of artefacts in supporting value stabilisation serves as a helpful reminder of Langdon Winner's seminal (1980) essay *Do Artifacts Have Politics?*, which suggests that objects and technologies embody particular power dynamics and social structures – whether intentionally designed to do so or not. As we recognise the role of artefacts in the stabilisation of value, we are forced to explicitly consider how these objects actively participate in reinforcing or shifting value priorities. A designed artefact does not simply represent an abstract value – it materialises it, shaping behaviour and organisational practice. Whether through affordances, constraints, or symbolic meanings, stabilised artefacts become embedded in systems and societies, influencing how that conceptualisation of value is enacted in everyday contexts.

8.6

ACT III: META-MAKING WITH/AND/FOR VALUE

Design, as a practice, does not merely engage with values – it constructs the conditions in which value is made legible, actionable, and real. The decisions designers make about how they work – what methods they adopt, how they position themselves, and how they define success – directly influence which values are surfaced, stabilised, or suppressed. While prior acts in this chapter focused on the conceptualisation and stabilisation of value, *Act III* turns inward to examine the designer’s role as a methodological agent. This final act argues that engaging with value in design requires not only attention to what is designed, but how it is designed. That is: the tools, techniques, and practices of design are not neutral. They carry with them histories, assumptions, and logics that shape the terrain of value itself.

To articulate this perspective, this section proposes an extension to Friedman’s (1996) well-established Value-Sensitive Design (VSD) framework. In addition to the existing tripartite structure – consisting of Conceptual, Empirical, and Technical Investigations – I argue for the formal inclusion of a fourth mode: Methodological Investigations.

8.6.1. THE MORE THE MERRIER: THE NEED FOR A FOURTH FORM OF INVESTIGATION

At its core, VSD “seeks to position the design team to robustly address the value implications of sociotechnical design” (Friedman, 1996), and it does so by employing an *iterative* tripartite methodology that integrates Conceptual, Empirical and Technical Investigations of value.

Conceptual Investigations lend themselves to identifying interpretations of value implicated in a design engagement, and how direct and indirect

stakeholders may be affected. Empirical investigations contribute an understanding of the context and environment in which a new design artefact is applied and reveals how stakeholders negotiate specific value interpretations in the applied context. Technical investigations delineate between technologies that may amplify or hinder certain interpretations of value, by nature of their inherent properties or mechanisms. Current models representing VSD's integrative and iterative approach are consistent with Figure 8.5.

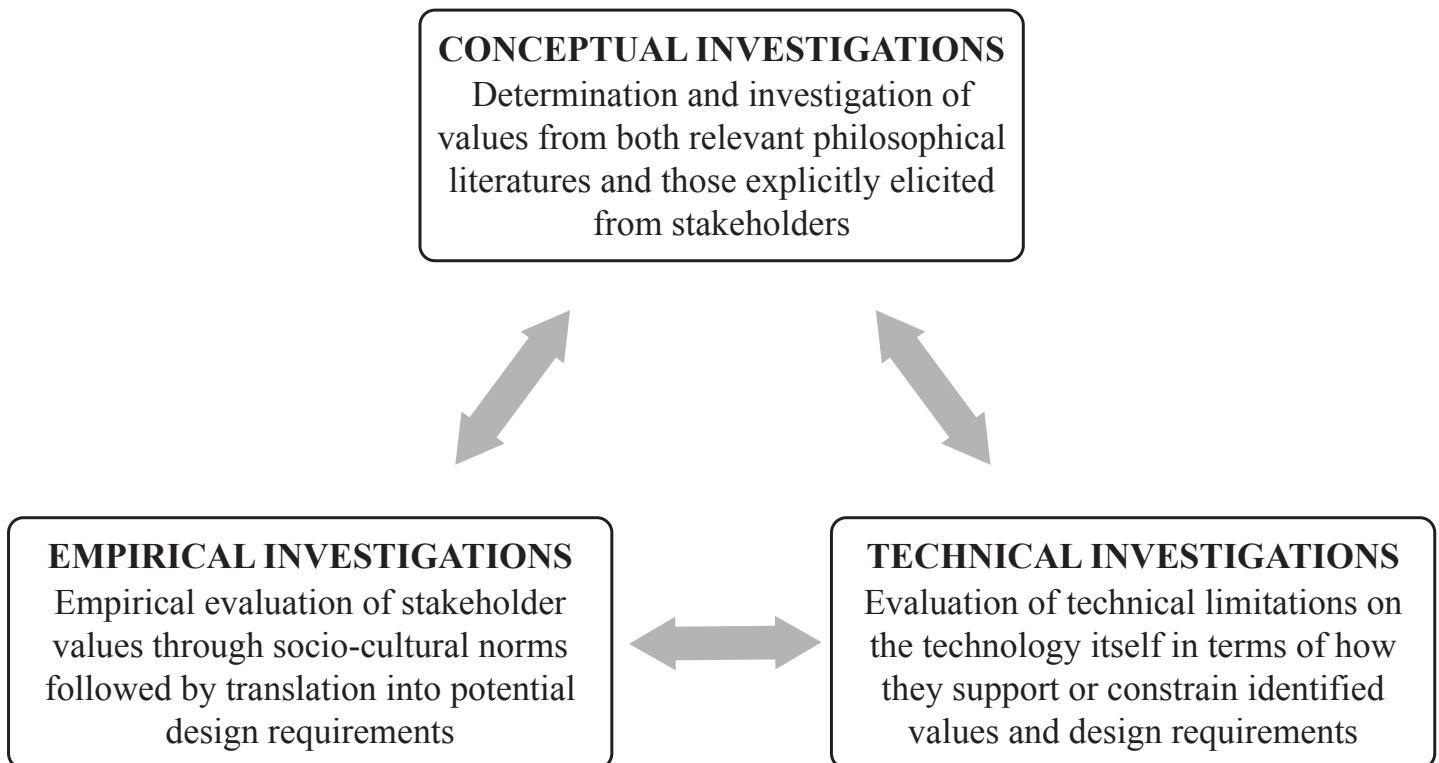


Figure 8.5: The recursive VSD tripartite framework (adapted from Umbrello, 2020)

Yet, reflecting on arguments made in *Study 1: Grand Narratives of Value in Design* and the experiences of emergent designers in *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPO*, I argue that the explicit consideration of a designer's methodology and its value implications are necessary.

For the emergent designers working with NPOs for value-oriented outcomes (i.e. sustainable community relationships, emotional safety, or youth and community justice), conceptual investigations enabled them to clarify the focus of the project (i.e. develop a stable understanding of the value they hope to contribute to) and understand their stakeholders – both direct and indirect.

Empirical investigations provide insight into the organisation with whom they are partnering. Designers cultivate an understanding of the organisation's resources, processes, capabilities, capacities, behaviours, cultures, attitudes, and environments. It was particularly evident that emergent designers participated in design exercises akin to technical investigations in their ideation and prototyping phases, as they debated how certain artefacts and technologies may afford certain value more than others.

However, none of these investigations acknowledge that a designer's methodology will influence *which* conceptualisations of value are surfaced, *how* those conceptualisations are surfaced, or how future value may be realised in the design artefacts generated. Understanding how different methods, tools, approaches, and attitudes for investigating, identifying, creating, sharing or producing value is essential in a design process engaging with value. This, as it is with technical investigations, is because these methods, tools, approaches, and attitudes possess inherent properties or underlying mechanisms that support or hinder certain interpretations of value.

The consequences of these properties and mechanisms are twofold: extant in the present (i.e., how we interpret and understand value as it is) and the future (i.e., how certain value may be manifested, amplified or suppressed in the design artefacts, products, interactions or systems created). Fundamentally, methodological investigations seek to understand which methods, tools and approaches are most suitable for certain activities or outcomes, as well as how those methods, tools and approaches may undermine or challenge the development of negatively perceived or unwanted value.

Briefly, I want to clarify how Methodological Investigations differ from reflection in design. Scholars readily suggest that reflection in design is both important and common (Lauche, 2001; Pahl et al., 1999; Reymen and Hammer, 2002; Schön, 1983). When designers reflect (in-action, on-action, on-practice, etc.) they have an opportunity to identify and modify inadequate strategies and strengthen successful ones (Pahl et al., 1999). Although there

is still much debate regarding the goal, theoretical basis and possible use types of design reflection, reflection as a whole is generally understood as a diffuse activity intuitively woven into all aspects of design practice. In contrast, Methodological Investigations ought to be considered as a *particular* activity, occurring at *particular* points in the design process, as a response to *particular* stimuli, and following a *particular* process. Capitalising on several key principles from archaeology, a Methodological Investigation ought to be considered as an independent, robust and critical activity within the design process – as distinct from the act of reflection as the conduct of Conceptual, Empirical or Technical Investigations.

The rationale for Methodological Investigations is simple: when we believe that design is a practice intent to make the world a ‘better place’, we are responsible for critically considering *how* that ‘better place’ comes about – the modes of thinking, methods of practice, and the positionality of the designers who *make* this ‘better place’. We must afford the same level of critical investigation to the *process* of designing value as we do to debating how value is conceptualised, how it is embodied and/or embedded in various materials and technologies, and how it is manifested and realised in the actions of individuals. The act of determining the appropriate methodology for a design project is fundamentally designer-driven. That is to say, it is the designer who examines the intent and context of the engagement, resources available to them, their professional designerly position, etc. before determining the appropriate course of action. Methodological Investigations afford designers the opportunity to critically examine what modes of practice or methodologies they employ when engaging with value, with the intent of exploring *if* and *how* these modes or methodologies may elevate, oppress, hide, distort, or illuminate certain representations of value. If not for the purpose of making informed decisions regarding practice, Methodological Investigations encourage designers to at least be aware of any potential legacy biases inherent to the approaches, methodologies or tools that they have adopted.

With the case for Methodological Investigations made, it is worthwhile clarifying what this form of investigation ought to consist of. As I have outlined, the aim of a methodological inquiry is to explore how the processes and practices utilised by designers may influence how value is uncovered, explored, manifested, realised and designed. Methodological investigations are focused on the relationship between design methodologies, tools and approaches and the notion of value. Core questions proposed to guide Methodological investigations include: How does the design method, tool or approach characterise value (sociologically, economically, linguistically, etc)? Who does the design method, tool or approach engage? Are there any interpretations of value made explicitly visible or invisible by the chosen design methods, tools or approaches?

Currently, it is challenging to find existing tools that would support designers in conducting a structured methodological investigation in their own practice. Unfortunately, this scarcity of tools makes it easy to speculate that Methodological Investigations may initially follow in the footsteps of Technical Investigations, “[relying] mostly on the background knowledge of the authors, but in some cases additionally considered input from stakeholders” (Winkler and Spiekermann, 2021, pg. 19). However, I hope that as the case for Methodological Investigations strengthens and socially-oriented design methods continue to be developed, tools that inform responsible design practice will arise. For now, I suggest the following tools that can be adapted to question the relationship between methods and value: decision matrices, impact analysis and scenario analysis.

Table 8.1 presents a summary of the three existing forms of investigation (Conceptual, Empirical, Technical) in VSD, as well as the proposed fourth component (Methodological). Relevant guiding questions, tools and the focus of each inquiry is listed. A non-comprehensive selection of insights are drawn from a range of System Reviews of VSD – namely, Winkler and Spiekermann (2021) and Gerdes and Frandsen (2023) – and cases of applied VSD. Where possible, specific papers have been referenced alongside the tool of inquiry utilised in case additional clarity is sought.

Table 8.1: Outlining Value-Sensitive Design as a Quadripartite Approach

Investigation and Aim	Guiding Questions	Tools of Inquiry	Focus of Inquiry
<p>Conceptual Investigations aim to identify direct and indirect stakeholders within the project and understand how they could be harmed or benefit from a new design.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the direct and indirect stakeholders affected by the design? • What values are implicated? • How should we handle competing or conflicting values? • Should moral values outweigh non-moral ones? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided brainstorming (Rector et al., 2015) • Literature review and interviews (Boyd et al., 2016) • Stakeholder harms/benefits analysis (Miller et al., 2007) • Case studies and content analyses (Azenkot et al., 2011) • Literature review of existing technologies (Azenkot et al., 2011) 	Value
<p>Empirical Investigations aim to evaluate how stakeholders experience products, services, or systems in relation to values they consider important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do stakeholders prioritise values in context? • What are trade-offs between values and usability? • Do actions align with espoused values? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observational studies, surveys, interviews, co-design workshops (Azenkot et al., 2011) • Content analysis (Brush and Borning, 2005) • Value scenarios (Czeskis et al., 2010; Epstein et al., 2013), focus groups (Walton and DeRenzi, 2009) • Prototypes (Friedman et al., 2002), field experiments (Dahl and Holbø, 2012) and experimental manipulations (A/B testing) 	Beliefs, actions and behaviours

Continued on the next page...

Table 8.1 (continued): Outlining Value-Sensitive Design as a Quadripartite Approach

Investigation and Aim	Guiding Questions	Tools of Inquiry	Focus of Inquiry
<p>Technical Investigations aim to explore how certain materials, technologies, mechanisms or features might be designed to support desired values identified.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What frameworks or features enable designers to meet value-oriented goals? • How do policy or regulation impact the design? • Do quantifiable objectives align with value-oriented goals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical feature mapping (e.g., encryption) • Stakeholder collaboration and interviews (Bleumers et al., 2015; Boyd et al., 2016; Davis, 2008; Miller et al., 2007) • Bias audits, data analysis • Prototyping and envisioning exercises • Value dams and flows (Miller et al., 2007) and value tensions 	Artefacts
<p>Methodological Investigations aim to explore how design methods and tools represent and enact certain values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do methods frame or shape value? • Who is engaged or excluded by chosen tools or approaches? • What values are emphasised or overlooked? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision matrices, scenario analysis • Method reflection and critique • Impact assessments 	Design methods

8.6.2. METHODOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN ACTION

The addition of Methodological Investigations expands the Value-Sensitive Design framework from a tripartite to a quadripartite approach. This inclusion does not disrupt the iterative, interdependent character of the original model; it simply hopes to extend it. Each investigation – conceptual, empirical, technical, and now methodological – represents a distinct perspective through which designers can interrogate the relationship between design and value. As shown in Figure 8.6, these investigations are in constant dialogue with one another, informing, reinforcing or even challenging each other over time.

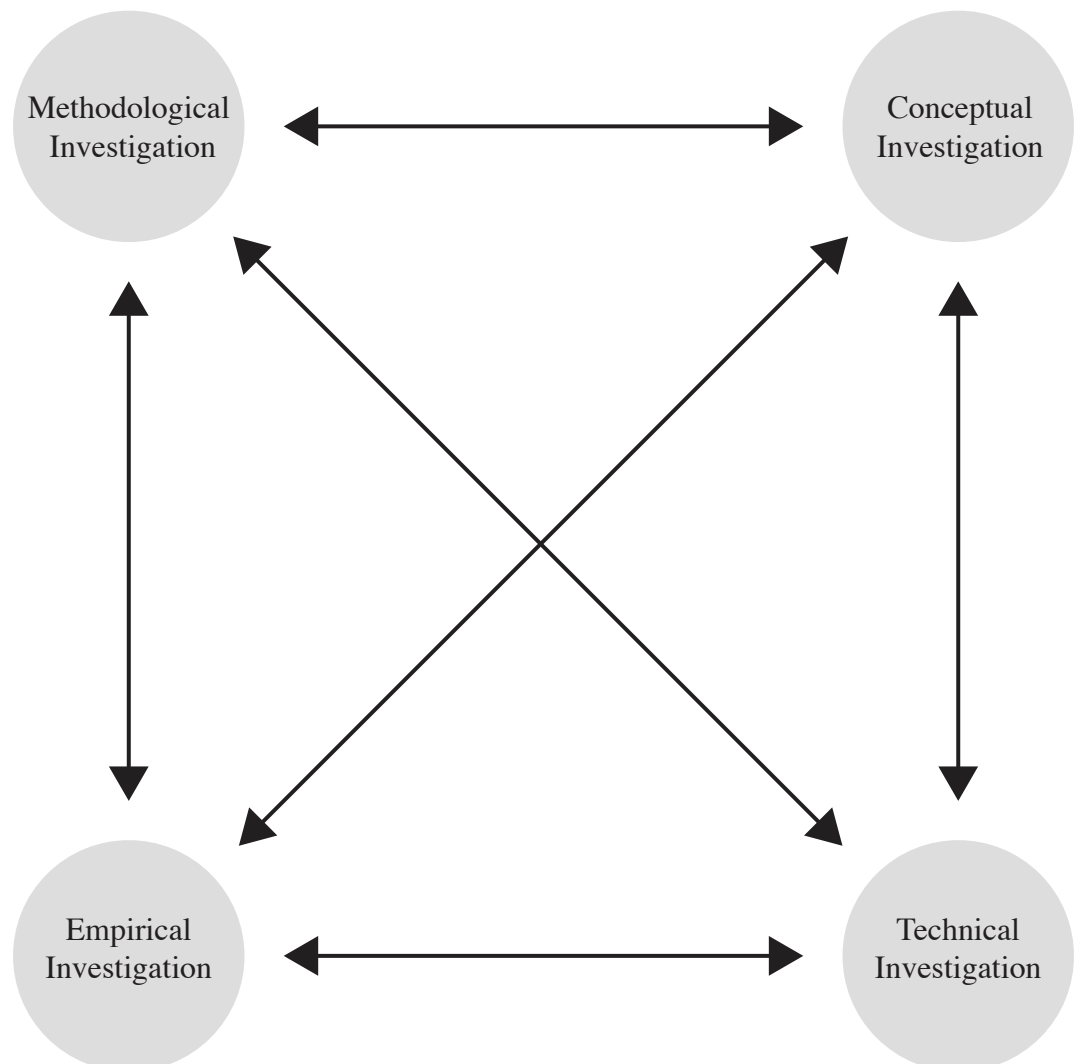


Figure 8.6: Quadripartite Approach to Value-Sensitive Design

Figure 8.7 takes a slightly different view, positioning each investigation as a discrete lens through which we might view and learn about value. Just

as frameworks like STEEPLE or PESTLE (Rastogi and Trivedi, 2016) offer distinct but overlapping perspectives on a shared issue, this quadripartite model invites designers to adopt multiple orientations to value. These are distinct vantage points, each capable of generating insights depending on the questions asked, the values in focus, and the stage of design practice being examined.

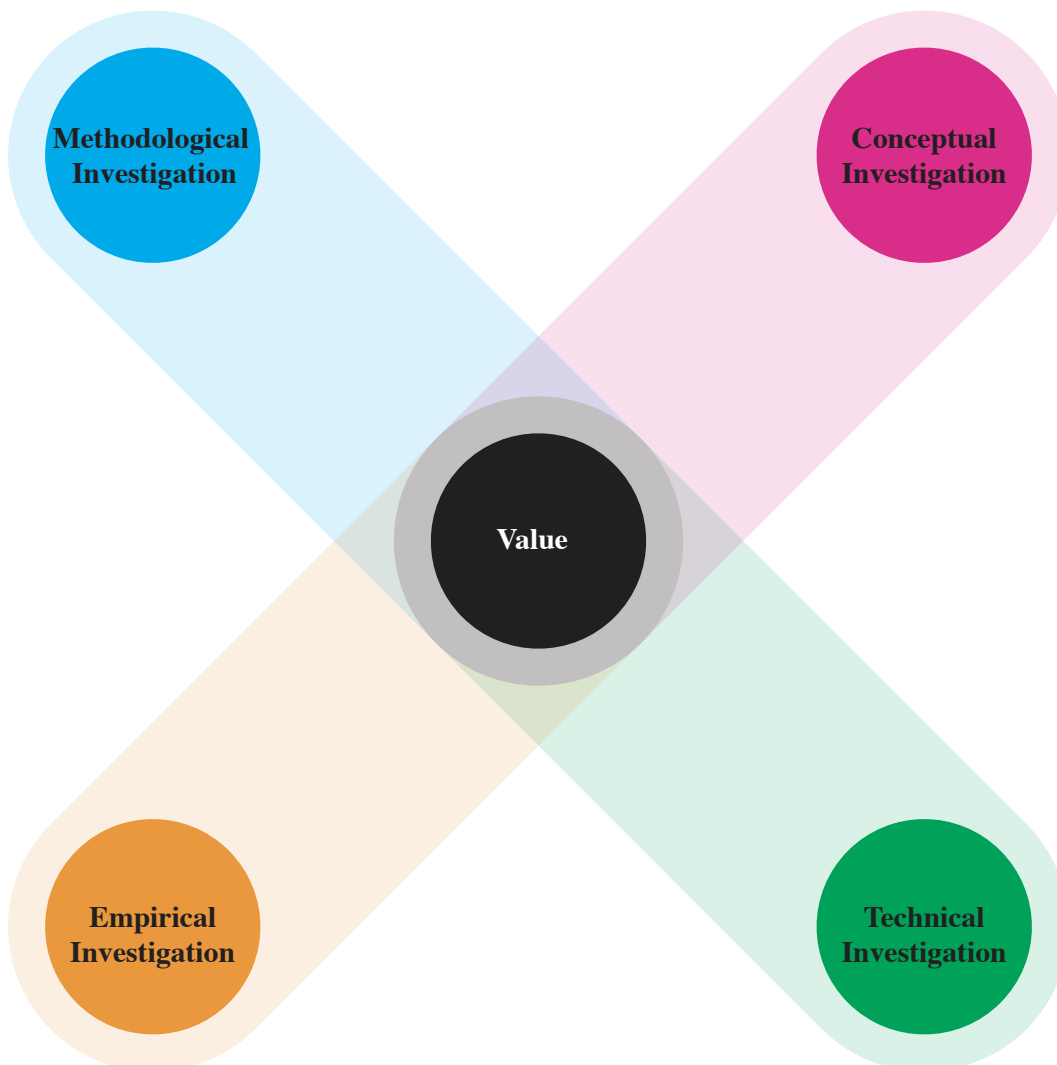


Figure 8.7: Four Investigations of Value

The opportunity to conduct a Methodological Investigation is most evident when a designer finds themselves at a strategic crossroad – a moment where the path forward is unclear, and a plan of action is needed. More obvious opportunities include: the initial moment a project brief is received, and a designer (or design team) is planning how they may respond; after identifying

a gap in knowledge and additional research or exploration is needed; and following insight synthesis when a designer (or design team) begins to speculate on possible solutions. Each of these instances reflects a moment in which a diverse range of design methods may be implemented – each with their own benefits and consequences. Intuitively, designers make decisions on how to proceed in each of these moments, sometimes acting entirely independently and other times discussing options and plans collectively.

As such, Methodological Investigations could occur thusly:

1. Designers must recognise moments at the ‘crossroads’ of their practice, in which they have an opportunity to plan their design practice.
2. Rather than follow the most intuitive approach, designers ought to spend time clarifying their potential pathways forward, i.e. the range of methods, approaches or tools available to them that they believe to be appropriate to that stage of design.
3. Critical consideration for each method, approach or tool available is then given to recognise if and/or how each method, approach or tool may prioritise or undermine certain representations of value.
4. Insights gleaned from this consideration is then used to inform resulting actions.

An example of a ‘planning crossroad’ is drawn from the emergent designer experience outlined in *Study 4: Design with/and/for Australian NPOs*, and the proposed implementation of a Methodological Investigation is described.

Mapping Design Methods and Value for a Community Organisation

The first opportunity for Methodological Investigations is drawn from reflections shared by Emergent Designers #2 and #3 working with a local arts-oriented NPO seeking to establish stronger relationships with their concept. After reading their design brief and beginning preliminary research into their partner organisation, the grassroots character of their NPO partner became evident – an understanding that became more prominent to them

over time. This characterisation of their NPO partner had an interesting effect on their design process, as the emergent design team made a conscious effort to balance both ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives with the intention of developing a more holistic understanding of the organisation. By this I mean that the emergent designers made a conscious effort to utilise methods that both *aligned to* and *contrasted with* how they understood their partner NPO.

To develop an understanding of their NPO from an insider perspective, the design team leveraged a range of approaches to become embedded within the organisation (e.g., co-design workshops, contextual observations, pop vox interviews with visitors and volunteers, working out of shared spaces within the NPO and attending as many events hosted by the NPO as possible). The goal of these methods was not just to understand the context and organisation better, but to cultivate that understanding through methods and tools that aligned to the value of the organisation itself. Discussing this insider perspective further, Emergent Designer #1 wrote:

Knowing who the non-profit organisation really is, their essence and core are essential when developing solutions that fit their mission and goals and align with what they intend to do and how they intend to grow. (EmD #1)

This was contrasted with the ‘outsider’ perspective the emergent designers actively sought to cultivate as well. Emergent Designer #1 describes their motivation thusly:

By utilising an outsider perspective, we were also able to draw from design business innovation frameworks to conduct a market analysis of competitors. . . We were able to map and differentiate competitors by their target segment, value proposition, core values, offerings and channels and identify opportunities to market [the NPO].

They later clarified that it wasn’t that they felt strictly *barred* from using market-driven design approaches – such as those commonly used in

Business and Design Innovation – but rather, they understood that a *purely* market-driven exploration of the organisation would be a disservice to the cultural and community value the NPO strives to develop.

Although these considerations would not constitute the formal Methodological Investigation that has been proposed earlier, they *do* evidence the founding opportunity for one to occur. The emergent designers' critical deliberation in balancing both 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives (and corresponding value conceptualisations) evidence a foundational awareness that certain design methods prioritise certain conceptualisations of value.

Extending the key arguments made in *Study 1: Grand Narratives of Value in Design* and offering a tangible example of a Methodological Investigation, Table 8.2 outlines the design methods, approaches and tools employed by the emergent designers in the Discovery Phase of their engagement. The 'Potential Legacy Perspective of Value' in each method is offered, and the 'Mutability of Legacy Perspective(/s)' is discussed in brief detail below.

'Legacy Perspective of Value' refers to the overall lens through which value is framed and understood in each method. *Study 1: Grand Narratives of Value in Design* identified three common narratives for value that has informed and shaped design practice: sociological, economic and linguistic. The strengths and limitations inherent to each of these narratives influences (a) *which* notions of value may be of interest to onlooker (e.g., sociological values are more likely to highlight human values and suppress those of a scientific or economic nature), and (b) how those notions of value are treated (e.g., as ideals, resources to be exchanged, descriptions, evaluations, etc.). Explicitly identifying these Legacy Perspectives provides designers with the opportunity to more critically consider potential strengths and limitations within their proposed practice.

'Mutability of Legacy Perspective(/s)' describes how much a tool or method may be able to adapt in order to account for perspectives of value outside of their original narrative context (i.e. the extent to which a design method, developed from an economic perspective, may be able to

Table 8.2: Design Methods and Value in a Design Engagement with a Local Community Organisation

Design Method	Aim of Method (in the context of the engagement)	Legacy Perspective(/s) of Value	Mutability of Legacy Perspective(/s)
Semi-Structured Interviews (internal)	Understand how the NPO came to be, their mission, strategy and goals and principles of operation.	Sociological	Highly mutable – Legacy Perspective determined by the types of questions asked.
Semi-Structured Interviews (external)	Understand how visitors to the NPO perceive and understand the goals of the organisation.	Sociological	Highly mutable – Legacy Perspective determined by the types of questions asked.
Contextual Observations	Explore how visitors interact with and behave in relation to the NPO.	n/a	n/a
Workshops	Identify key operating principles leveraged by leaders of the NPO.	Sociological, Economic	Somewhat mutable – can be adapted depending on the activities included. Most commonly used to capture Sociological perspective.
Online Ethnography	Explore community perceptions of the NPO and its mission.	Sociological	Not very mutable
Pop Vox interviews	Explore community perceptions of the NPO and its mission.	Sociological	Not very mutable
Content Analysis	Examine common representations of value in the NPO's internal documentation and reporting.	Economic	Highly mutable – easily extended to encompass sociological value
Market Analysis	Map and differentiate competitors by their target segment, value proposition, core values, offerings and channels to identify opportunities for the NPO.	Economic	Highly mutable – easily extended to encompass sociological value

account for sociological notions of value). The importance of recognising these boundaries is evidenced with the example of the Business Model Canvas (BMC). Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) developed one of the more commonly recognised and applied frameworks for a BMC. Consisting of nine building blocks⁹, the BMC visualises the core components of a business. Although many variations of this tool have developed (i.e. Blended Business Model Canvas (Alberti and Varon Garrido, 2017), the Social Enterprise Model Canvas (Sparviero, 2019), Business Models for Circular Economies (Lewandowski, 2016)), they are all deeply rooted in processes of production and exchange. The application of this tool (and those of similar ilk) in a non-profit context has come under significant criticism (Bratsberg and Eknes, 2019; Coes, 2014; Landoni and Trabucchi, 2024). Examining the theoretical boundaries of design methods, specifically in relation to ideas of value, offers designers an opportunity to recognise how malleable (or rigid) their design methods, tools and approaches may be and make corrections where necessary.

8.6.3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF METHODOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

How designers choose to practice design – their chosen methods, approaches and tools – informs the values they are likely to encounter. Design methodology influences what knowledge is explored in the design engagement, and which insights are determined to be significant. Design methodology informs the type of design solutions ideated, prototyped, and developed. Design methodology shapes the evaluation criteria against which designs and decisions are assessed. Methodological Investigations aim to

9. (1) Customer segments that an organisation serves, (2) Value propositions that seek to solve customers' problems and satisfy their needs, (3) Channels which an organisation uses to deliver, communicate and sell value propositions, (4) Customer relationships which an organisation builds and maintains with each customer segment, (5) Revenue streams resulting from value propositions successfully offered to customers, (6) Key resources as the assets required to offer and deliver the aforementioned elements, (7) Key activities which are performed to offered and deliver the aforementioned elements, (8) Key partnerships being a network of suppliers and partners that support the business model execution by providing some resources and performing some activities, (9) Cost structure comprising all the costs incurred when operating a business model (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010).

make these often-intuitive decisions more explicit (to an individual designer) and more accessible (to their audience).

As designers strive to transform existing scenarios into *desired* scenarios, there is an essential need to examine *how* those desired scenarios are conceived and brought about. Although significant future work is required in order to more carefully identify if, how and which value may be implicated in design methods, four immediate implications of Methodological Investigations – touching on ideas of responsibility, pluralism, development, and power – are outlined below.

- **Foregrounds responsibility in design practice:** The consequences of poorly designed artefacts, products, and systems are well documented. As written by Monteiro (2019):

Design is a discipline of action. We make things! They go out into the world and they affect people. People don't look at our interfaces to appreciate them, they use them to get things done in their lives. The things we make have consequences. (pg. 24).

As is with technical investigations, methodological investigations serve as helpful reminders to designers that their practice has impact: that they as designers are shaped, and conversely shape others, by specific interpretations of value. If someone is willing to call themselves a designer, they must take on the responsibility and consequences of their decision making. Similar to existing practices encouraging accountability in design practice (i.e. positionality statement, bias clarification, etc.), Methodological Investigations encourage designers to critically assess their role in surfacing or hiding value interpretations as they mediate the design process amongst stakeholders. By explicitly questioning how design methods surface, amplify, or obscure particular values, designers take greater responsibility for the intended or unintended consequences of their work.

- **Emphasises the pluralism of design practice:** It is readily acknowledged and understood that design is not a singular, universal process. Further, it is sensible to acknowledge that an exploration of design methods would afford the opportunity to see how distinct approaches influence problem framing, knowledge production, and decision-making. Recognising methodological pluralism also allows designers to challenge assumptions about expertise and standardisation and instead champion multiple ways of knowing (i.e. empirical, intuitive, speculative).
- **Encourages the extension of current (or development of specifically value-oriented) design tools:** Proactively incorporating detailed Methodological Investigations affords design teams the opportunity to extend, develop and share frameworks, heuristics, and approaches more sensitive to notions of value in design. Interrogating current methods – especially those implemented in community-based contexts – from the perspective of value may reveal legacy biases (i.e. capitalist, Western-centric, techno-solutionist, etc.) stemming from their original context of creation (corporate or market-driven environments).
- **Power, strength, and constraints:** Importantly, the critical and reflective nature of Methodological Investigations may reveal both the pluralism of design practice and the limitations of capability within a team. Critically examining how methods respond to or influence value may highlight unwanted power dynamics within a team, i.e., which perspectives shape the design process, and which voices are marginalised? Are participatory approaches genuinely inclusive or merely performative? When the idea of cost is raised, what cost are we talking about? From a strategic and leadership perspective, Methodological Investigations enables design managers to identify gaps in knowledge, execution or inclusivity. Instead, critical methodological decision-making can expand a team's ability to navigate complexity, ultimately leading to more innovative and contextually attuned outcomes.

8.7

THINKING OF UNCHARTED TERRITORY

This is where the discussion arrives: in a dense terrain where the stabilising role of design artefacts, methods, and interactions reveal both the affordances and the ambiguities of value-oriented practice. The ordinary work of design is not reducible to its outputs—it is an ongoing process of making and remaking what counts as important, meaningful and worthwhile.

This chapter has aimed to illuminate the complexity of value: to trace how design negotiates, mediates, and sometimes unsettles our understanding of what is, or ought to be, considered *of value* across an engagement. In doing so, I propose that the power of design practice lies in its ability to bring value into view – however imperfectly – so that it might be worked with, questioned, or reimagined.

INTERLUDE VI:

ON THE POWER OF THE ORDINARY

Dear Reader,

This research has always been grounded in an attention to ordinary action and curiosity. In a field that often feels preoccupied with novelty and disruption, I have been motivated by a different kind of question: how do we recognise, sustain, and strengthen the practices that already make life more liveable?

Throughout this work, I have resisted the posture of expertise. Rather than claiming a proven pathway, I have approached design as a critical and reflective practice that attends to how value is created, negotiated, and defended in everyday life, particularly within non-profit organisations and community contexts.

I offer these final green pages as a return to that intention. Not to provide answers, but to stay with the questions that matter: What holds us together? What sustains care? What forms of value are worth protecting and how might we *all* contribute to that ambition?

What follows are five reflections on the power of the ordinary – five reflections on how design, value, and social life meet, and sometimes move beyond, formal systems.

Thanks for walking alongside me. Enjoy, good luck, and goodbye for now.

1. Something's brewing in Brisbane

In the final days of summer 2025, Cyclone Alfred was barreling towards the south-eastern coast of Queensland. After roiling off Australia's north-east coast for over a week, the Category 2 tropical storm system took a sharp left turn,¹ heading west towards Brisbane, Australia's third most-populated city and my hometown.² It was the first tropical cyclone to make landfall in Brisbane since 1974. Fuelled by anomalously warm waters in the Coral Sea (some of the warmest recorded for January and February), the Bureau of Meteorology warned almost 1 million residents that the slow-moving storm would bring heavy wind and significant rainfall. These forecasts brought sandbags and silence but also humour and mateship. In the lead up to Cyclone Alfred's arrival, news reports cut between disaster updates and footage of strangers helping each other board up windows.

As a state, Queensland experiences more than its fair share of natural disasters, ranging from cyclones, floods, fires and drought. Emergencies like Cyclone Alfred have an uncanny ability to thrust government leaders into the spotlight – Premier of Queensland David Crisafulli was almost unmissable, appearing on radio, news, and more from dawn to dusk keeping residents informed and updated. Making regular appearances either on the ground in Queensland or from a situation room in Canberra, Australian Prime Minister, at the time, Anthony Albanese, consistently argued that it is in the face of natural disaster that “our bureaucracy, our systems of government, come into their own” (Albanese in McKay, 2025). He continued:

When nature does its worst, Australians are at our best. We rally, we lift each other up, we look out for our neighbours, we look out for our local community. Communities come together at a time like this. (Albanese in Tingle 2025).

And as heartening as this message was, and as comforting as it may be to lean into the notion of Australia as a country of helpers, I found myself

1. A turn so distinctly sharp, many joked it was personal.

2. Early predictions had Cyclone Alfred spending its final day as a Category 2 system directly over my childhood home and dairy farm.

asking “Isn’t this true in all places? In what country are there not people banding together to respond to tragedy?”³

I begin here not to romanticise disaster, but to offer a reflection on how ordinary people, acting within and beyond formal systems, already design better worlds. I write this for designers who believe that their work might contribute to a more just or generous future. I write this as a reminder that such futures are already being made, constantly, and by communities, by neighbours, by those who would never call themselves designers at all. While disasters can briefly reveal the infrastructure of mutual care, it is collectives, communities, coalitions, and indeed non-profits, that often hold these structures of support in place well beyond the moments of visible crisis.

2. Ordinary People, Extra-Ordinary Labour

I can’t say Cyclone Alfred taught me anything new. Instead, I found it a timely reminder of what this research has always been about: ordinary people doing quiet, difficult, necessary work. The word ‘ordinary’ can sound like an insult, but I have come to think of it as a deeply political category. Ordinary, as in shared. Ordinary, as in unremarked upon but essential.

Reflecting on how disasters bring about the possibility for societal change, Solnit (2009) observed that perhaps the most startling thing about disasters is often not what falls apart but what comes together. She writes, “horrible in itself, disaster is sometimes a door back into paradise, the paradise at least in which we are who we hope to be, do the work we desire, and are each our sister’s and brother’s keeper.” (Solnit, 2009, pg. 3). This notion that crisis reveals rather than invents our social potential has shaped the way I’ve come to see the work of non-profit organisations.

Although the work may often appear modest, non-profit organisations contribute greatly to our social infrastructure: the institutions, relationships, and everyday practices that sustain collective life (Klinenberg, 2018). Community programs, advocacy groups, mutual aid networks, and volunteer-led initiatives hold things together when other systems fail, “play[ing] a crucial part in supporting people during the crisis, going above

3. As I write this, I am sensitive to a range of global tragedies that many communities would readily (and rightly) argue are not being responded to well *enough*.

and beyond their everyday duties to provide for people in need” (Benton and Power, 2021, pg. 2). There must be more recognition of, and energy towards, this as a design opportunity – one no less real, complex, or demanding than the kinds of design work that unfold in the service of commercial clients. Commenting on who we design for, journalist and feminist activist Laurie Penny argues, “There is nothing wrong with making things that people want. The problem is that personhood and desire are constrained by capital; money affects whose wants appear to matter” (Penny in Costanza-Chock, 2020, pg. 76).

If designers can find a role in shaping value for corporations (Alexander and Fry, 2019; Straker et al., 2021; Verganti, 2009), then they must also see the legitimacy of supporting non-profits and sustaining value within their own communities. This is not charity work – it is serious design work that asks for care, reflection, and long-term commitment. To meet this opportunity, designers must shift how they frame their contributions (Lima, 2023, May; Thorpe et al., 2011). The challenge is not how to introduce design into the social sector, but how to recognise, support, and sustain the design work already underway. More than just methods or tools, this requires a different orientation: a commitment to reflective practice, grounded in relationships, that helps organisations stabilise and defend their own definitions of value – especially in the face of external pressures to measure, optimise, or grow.

3. Ordinary Language and Ordinary Value

At the outset of this research, I found myself overwhelmed by definitions of value. The literature was saturated with them – from economic notions of utility to managerial or scientific models of measurement, to moral frameworks of worth. Although each seemed to promise clarity about some parts of the world, the more I searched, the more elusive the term became. It was through Toril Moi’s (2017) reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein that the impasse began to shift. Drawing on ordinary language philosophy, Moi (2017) argues that the search for essential definitions is a distraction, and that we do not learn the meaning of a word by memorising definition but by learning its use in a variety of situations. This seemingly simple claim had radical implications – not just on how I approach language, but for how I understand value throughout this project.

Rather than treat value as a universal principle (such as Derrida translated by Bass, 2007), I began to attend to how the word was used in everyday organisational life. In non-profits, ambiguous notions of value (i.e., freedom, safety, justice, sustainability, good, etc.) surfaced constantly – in meetings, fundraising communications, funding proposals, hallway conversations. It was used to justify decisions, defend programs, evaluate outcomes, and in each usage, it legitimised, contested, or negotiated an understanding of value. These acts of valuation appeared particularly charged in a non-profit context, as decision-makers had to balance internal commitments with the external pressures of funder requirements, policy expectations, and obscure impact metrics in their everyday, ordinary responsibilities. Das (2015) argues that the ordinariness of everyday life must be imagined in order to be found: “it’s very ordinariness makes it difficult for us to see what is before our eyes” (pg. 71).

Language here is not just descriptive; it is generative and performative. Austin’s speech act theory (Austin et al., 1975) helps clarify this: to say something – to call a program “valuable,” or describe a service as “impactful” – is action (to legitimise, provoke, reassure). And if design is to take language seriously, it must learn to listen not just for content, but for function, force, and consequence.

One of the most important lessons of this research has been recognising that design can serve not only as a tool for generating new outcomes, but as a reflective practice – a way to help organisations surface, stabilise, and defend their own understandings of value over time.

4. Against Design Exceptionalism

This thesis argues that attending to the ordinary, situated, local, or social through design is not a specialist activity, but rather a form of participation in collective life, open to anyone willing to listen, observe, and contribute. As Lal (2020) reminds us, “design, to a large extent, is already an open field with almost no entry barriers. This has made possible the existence of multiple approaches to solving problems through design” (pg. 244). Writing on participatory design engagements, Ehn (2008) suggests that participatory design begins not with mastery but with mutual experience.

I raise these examples not to dismiss design expertise, but to suggest that when expertise becomes a prerequisite for participation – when it functions as a gate, rather than a guide – it risks excluding exactly the kinds of energy and perspective that social sectors need most (Greenbaum and Kyng, 1991). Lorusso (2024) critiques the professionalisation of design as a project that defines itself by scarcity, one that implies that only those with sanctioned knowledge can act. But this framing not only narrows who gets to design; it also limits what design is understood to be. In contrast, Tonkinwise (2013) suggests that designers might instead cultivate capabilities, like supporting others to design, to adapt, to care, rather than centralising power in themselves.

This is where I see real opportunity. Many non-profits are not seeking breakthrough innovation. They are seeking someone to help design a service form, prepare a visual to communicate information, create clarity for a client or funder. These tasks, often dismissed as minor or procedural, are foundational. They are part of how value is communicated and sustained, and part of how communities stay legible to themselves. As Akama and Yee (2023) argue, what matters is not heroic problem-solving, but relational accountability: being attuned to the specific, ongoing needs of the communities you work with, and recognising that small acts of design can have disproportionate impact in the right contexts.

To designers reading this: there is much to be done. You do not need to be an expert to participate in social life. You only need to begin, and to stay attentive to what the world is already asking of you.

5. Making Do, Making Real

I don't believe that attending to the ordinary is to lower the stakes of design. Instead, I'd argue it raises them. If we take seriously the work that happens outside formal economies (the unpaid or unnoticed), we begin to see the world differently. We see how infrastructure is maintained by the unacknowledged labour of community members. We see how social life is designed not only through policy and products, but through patterns of care, mutual aid, and collective maintenance.

This is not simply a philosophical point, but a political one. Silvia Federici (2020) maintains the work of reproduction, of keeping life going, is political precisely because it is overlooked, devalued, and expected to continue without question. Care, according to Joan Tronto (1993), is both a set of practices and a framework for evaluating justice. To centre care is to ask what sustains people, and who is responsible for that sustaining. Non-profit organisations do this work every day. So do my neighbours, various local community volunteers, and people who simply decide to make things a little better. This is the work of maintenance: of making do and making real.

To say that design belongs here within these ordinary arrangements is to suggest a future for design that is neither heroic nor spectacular. It is not about saving the world alone, but about joining the work already underway. Sasha Costanza-Chock (2020) makes a case for design to not simply be evaluated by what it creates, but by how it redistributes power, sustains relationships, and builds collective capacity. This, in my opinion, is the design that matters.

Throughout this thesis, I have sought to trouble the distinction between “designer” and “non-designer,” between the extraordinary and the ordinary, between innovation and maintenance. What emerges instead is a stronger and deeper view of design as a shared human practice, one that does not require special tools or titles, but an orientation towards care. And if that is the case, then I’d argue the work ahead for designers is not to claim more ground, but to tread more lightly.

CONCLUSION

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9.1

ON ENDINGS

The work of this thesis began with a deceptively simple question: what does it mean to design for value in the Australian non-profit sector? From the outset, the inquiry acknowledged that value is a contested and mutable concept, one that resists straightforward definition. This research has traced how value is named, how it is enacted, and what it does when it moves through the practices of both non-profit organisations and designers. Across multiple studies and sites, the thesis explored how value is not only constructed through discourse, but also mediated through artefacts, negotiated in relationships, and embodied in practice.

Rather than offering resolution, the research sought to understand the conditions under which value becomes legible, how it is stabilised in particular moments, and what becomes possible when we attend to its multiplicity. In doing so, this thesis reframes design's role in social contexts not as a vehicle for value creation in the abstract, but as a way of engaging with the practices through which value is continually made and remade.

Each study within this doctoral research project has offered a distinct, situated perspective on value: its representations (Chapters 4 and 5), its organisational entanglements (Chapter 6), its lived practice (Chapter 7), and its synthesis (Chapter 8). The result is a thesis that advocates for design work outside the dominant logics of government and market, where value is shaped not by scale or efficiency, but by relationships and care.

And so, dear Reader, we re-enter the field now with different eyes. We see our founding question not as a problem to be solved, but as an exploration that needs to be traced, interrupted, and re-storied. It is a recognition that design does not always need to prove its worth. Sometimes, it simply needs to listen better, loosen its grip, and find a way to stay with the trouble of value.

9.2

ON WHAT THIS THESIS OFFERS

To move from questions to contributions, this next section outlines the central claims of this thesis, connecting each to the research questions, methods, and audiences they aim to serve.

This thesis set out to explore a deceptively simple question: what does it mean to design for value in the Australian non-profit sector? This question unravelled into three guiding lines of inquiry:

- What are the prevalent conceptualisations of value in NPO literature?
- What are the opportunities for design to contribute to value in NPOs?
- What are the practice-based experiences of designers engaging with NPOs for value creation?

Across four empirical studies and a reflective essay, the thesis responds to these questions through a combination of literature analysis, theory-led reflection, and real-world exploration (survey, fieldwork, interviews). Each study contributes to the broader aim of understanding how design might contribute to an Australian non-profit's pursuit of value. A summary of contributions is presented below (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1: Contributions of this work

#	Research Question	Research Objectives	Contributions	Audience
1	What are the prevalent conceptualisations of value in NPO literature?	I. To explore how value is represented in NPO literature. II. To understand existing use of value-oriented language and create foundational knowledge for future design activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides stronger understanding of how 'value' is used in NPO and design literature. Analyses historical shaping of value across economic, sociological, and linguistic narratives. Articulates thirty-two distinct perceptions of value, and four approaches to framing value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designers NPO academics NPO stakeholders
2	What are the opportunities for design to contribute to value creation in NPOs?	I. To develop informed speculations on the potential remit of design in NPOs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces the Value Definition Tool to a NPO context. Proposes a value ecosystem model across organisational, mediation, and public domains. Identifies five thematic notions of value specific to non-profits. Contributes empirical data to a sparsely researched intersection. Offers speculative insights on design's remit in NPOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design academics Designers Government (policy) NPO academics NPOs
3	What are the practice-based experiences of designers engaging with NPOs for value creation?	I. To design and embed a novel value-centric pedagogical framework for designers engaging with NPOs. II. To understand the reflective accounts of designers engaging with NPOs. III. To understand and explore how modes of practice and contexts of application inform the experience of designers engaging with NPOs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers a spatial-relational (double helix) model to re-interpret the relationship between designers and NPOs. Offers insights from emerging and expert designers to surfaces tensions, improvisations, and value conflicts in collaborations. Develops a 2x2 Value Stretch Matrix for conceptualising value. Introduces Methodological Investigation to extend existing Value-Sensitive Design practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academics Design educators Designers NPOs

In addition to these specific findings, the thesis offers the following broader contributions:

- **To theory:** It strengthens a reframing of value as a dynamic, socially constructed process – one that cannot be separated from the contexts and relationships in which it is enacted.
- **To practice:** It evidences alternative modes of designing beyond solutionism, offering examples of design practice rooted in collaboration, capacity building, and helping organisations navigate ambiguity and complexity.

Taken together, these contributions also hold several implications for designers. The frameworks and concepts developed in this thesis are generative proposals that warrant further testing and refinement. Their primary value lies in encouraging designers to adopt a more reflexive and critical stance — to consider how their methods, artefacts, and engagements actively shape what becomes understood as valuable, and to question what may be unintentionally displaced or obscured in the process. By making questions of value more explicit and discussable, these contributions support designers in navigating ambiguity, negotiating competing priorities, and articulating strategic directions with greater clarity. In this way, the thesis invites designers not only to develop solutions, but also to grapple with the more fundamental question of worth: what matters, to whom, and how might design responsibly participate in shaping those futures?

These contributions respond directly to the empirical findings of the thesis and provide a platform for future research and practice that takes seriously the everyday, contested, and dynamic nature of value.

9.3

ON INCOMPLETIONS AND CONTINUED INQUIRY

Developing concrete and systematic (read: *valuable*) approaches to integrating value into design remains a complicated endeavour, given the ever-elusive nature of value itself. While addressing a challenge that has occupied many scholars (from design and other disciplines) has been a thrilling pursuit, it is clear to me now more than ever that there are limitations – and that continued work is needed.

9.3.1. ON LIMITATIONS

To write of value is to write of something that resists being pinned down. This work moved through complex and sometimes contradictory positions due to the plural and negotiated nature of its subject matter. As a result, there are, inevitably, things this thesis could not do.

Most significantly, this thesis does not (and cannot) offer a singular account of how design creates value in non-profit contexts. Instead, the thesis foregrounds ambiguity, contradiction, and the specificity of context. What it offers is a set of situated learnings and the practice-oriented contributions I hope might be transferable, for those navigating similar tensions.

The research acknowledges that much of what matters in value-oriented work is difficult to evidence: informal conversation, emotional labour, the entrenched politics of language. Although these dimensions resist capture, they cannot escape our attention. Throughout the thesis, I have worked to hold space for these experiences, even when they fall outside the boundaries of conventional academic form. In this sense, the thesis does not aim for closure, but a reframed sense of what it means to ask better questions – and stay with them.

9.3.2. ON CONTINUING INQUIRY

With respect to value conceptualisations and the philosophication of value, additional testing and refinement of the 2x2 Value Stretch Matrix is needed across disciplines and contexts. The matrix, developed to encourage critical reflection of value descriptions, definitions or articulations in design engagements, requires validation to assess its applicability. Testing its efficacy in different professional, cultural and practice contexts – such as commercial design practice, policy development, or community-driven initiatives – would help determine its flexibility and effectiveness as a tool for generating valuable accounts of value.

With respect to the dual role of design artefacts as both value stabilisers and mediators in value negotiation, further research across longer-term design engagements could provide deeper insights into the conditions under which artefacts successfully stabilise value versus when they contribute to reconfiguration or disruption. Investigating how artefacts facilitate strategic negotiations could offer practical guidance for designers and managers navigating complex, value-laden environments

With respect to Methodological Investigations of Value and extended VSD, there is a critical need for approaches and tools that help designers evaluate how design methodologies are chosen and implemented, and more so, how each of these methodologies are related to value. Future research seeking to understand how designers select design methods and how these methods influence the long-term trajectory of design engagements would contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical guidance for design practitioners.

Finally, I firmly argue for the continued collaboration of design and non-profit organisations. The Australian non-profit context provides a fruitful environment for future research exploring how design practice and designers might navigate complex, value-oriented environments, where trade-offs, competing priorities, and ethical dilemmas are the norm rather than the exception. For all that design professes to improve the world, we must

continue to be critical of *who* benefits from these improvements and *how* these benefits are distributed. As design practice continues to be lauded for its capacity to strengthen the competitive advantage of for-profit organisations, we ought to consider which elements of innovation and design praxis might be reimagined for the purpose of community stewardship.

My demand for continued design with/and/for Australian non-profit organisations represents more than just a research opportunity, it is a call for responsibility. If design as a discipline is truly committed to fostering meaningful change, we ought to remember all the individuals who already quietly strengthen our social fabric from within – those who are already doing the work.

9.4

ON GOODBYES

If limits invite humility, then endings require care. For the last time, I want to circle back to the navigational metaphor that opened this thesis.

This thesis began with the hope that I might chart a clearer course through the contested waters of value and design. I imagined fixed points, empirical markers or reliable, conceptual stars. Instead, I found myself in a process of slow navigation: drifting close to shore at times, veering into the fog at others, and adjusting course as new winds arose. The work unfolded not in pursuit of certainty, but in sustained engagement with the tensions and ambiguities that define value in practice.

I leave this project without a map, but instead, with a deeper understanding of the vessel I have travelled on. I've learnt how to listen when the instruments fail, how to sit with the unknown, and how to accompany others through choppy seas.

Design, in the context of non-profit work, may never provide a singular route to value. But it can help us read the weather. It can remind us to pay attention to our companions. And it can offer a steady hand in the work of holding meaning – even when the waters rise.

The horizon still beckons, and that is enough.

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APPENDIX A

Table A.1: Explicit and implicit references to social value

Definitions	References	Source Type	Reference Source
Explicit	Social Value is created when resources, inputs, processes or policies are combined to generate improvements in the lives of individuals or society as a whole	Primary	(Abella et al., 2017)
	The organization is their conduit to making a difference in society.	Primary	(Akingbola and van den Berg, 2019)
	The value produced by non-profit organizations lies in the achievement of social purposes rather than in generating revenues.	Primary	(Alford et al., 2017))
	We are at a point in the NGO debate at which serious questions are being raised about the ability of NGOs to meet their long-term goals of social justice and transformation.	Primary	(Banks et al., 2015)
	One definition of a successful project is one that “has been able to successfully demonstrate that it has achieved the outcomes that it set out to achieve... and which has made a real difference to the lives of disadvantaged people.”	Primary	(Lee and Nowell, 2015)
	Fulfilling a social mission and creating social value; collective-focused aspirations... societal or environmental problems such as poverty, hunger, health, unemployment, education, human rights.	Secondary	(Lurtz and Kreutzer, 2017)
	This social value includes initiatives that improve health, education, freedom and social order... They generate social value by helping society or the environment.	Secondary	(Meyskens and Bird, 2015)
	A sustainable organisation is one that is capable of delivering social value via the pursuit of its social mission...	Secondary	(Mitchell and Schmitz, 2019)
	The selected priority result areas were based on what the Ministry assumed to be the added value of NGO activities...	Primary	(O’Dwyer and Boomsma, 2015)
	They are about mobilizing and combining multiple resources and distinctive capabilities to generate benefits for each partner and social value for society.	Primary	(Sanzo et al., 2015)

Table A.1 (continued): Explicit and implicit references to social value

Definitions	References	Source Type	Reference Source
Implicit	In contrast, those small and less professionalized NPOs...	Primary	Yu and Chen, 2018
	While social entrepreneurship remains a somewhat contested realm...	Primary	(Woronkowicz et al., 2020)
	The authors of this research have tended to consider joint value consisting of social, economic, and environmental value.	Primary	(Weber et al., 2017)
	This story concerns the transformation of Congolese social value and incremental time into volatile price...	Primary	(Smith, 2015)
	The model of an entrepreneurial university arose to generate socio-economic value.	Primary	(Secundo et al., 2016)
	Organizational relationships... with the goal of creating social value.	Primary	(Murphy et al., 2015)
	For many respondents, the social value of this activity... had considerable multiplier effects.	Primary	(Manzi and Morrison, 2018)
	The sector's long-term legitimacy does not depend on its business-like facade...	Primary	(Maier et al., 2016a)
	Some organizations, such as nonprofits, are focused almost exclusively on creating social value.	Primary	(Kuratko et al., 2017)
	SEs focus on creating social value...	Secondary	(Ko and Liu, 2020)
	Aims to assess the social value and impact...	Primary	(Karytsas et al., 2020)
	Organizations can combine complementary resources to create additional benefits...	Secondary	(Jones et al., 2017)
	In our study, managers sought to derive measures of social value in SROI...	Primary	(Hall et al., 2015)
	The rise of measures of social value.	Primary	(Bromley and Meyer, 2017)

Table A.2: Explicit and implicit references to financial value

Definitions	References	Source Type	Reference Source
Explicit	We are at a point in the NGO debate at which serious questions are being raised about the ability of NGOs to meet their long-term goals of social justice and transformation at a time when the development sector is narrowly focused on short-term results and value for money.	Primary	(Banks et al., 2015)
	For many respondents, the social value of this activity not only could be translated into financial value, but also had considerable multiplier effects.	Primary	(Manzi and Morrison, 2018)
	However, an emphasis on value for money and results-based cultures is widely expected to become even more pervasive in the next five years against a backdrop of decreasing funding and greater potential for donors to significantly influence NGOs' agendas.	Primary	(O'Dwyer and Boomsma, 2015)
Implicit	In SROI analysis, qualitative issues are quantified, translated into monetary values, and compared to each other. Most of those analyses were good value for money.	Primary	(Maier et al., 2016a)
	In conjunction, the current economic climate has had an adverse effect on the value of public donations made to the nonprofit sector.	Primary	(Lee and Nowell, 2015)
	Cookie sales introduce financial value to an organisation that exists to create social value.	Primary	(Kuratko et al., 2017)
	One scholar noted that, to be considered philanthropy, giving must be well-planned and of significant monetary value.	Primary	(Herzog et al., 2020)
	Thank you notes and social interactions outsourced financial incentives like tickets or meals.	Primary	(Alfes et al., 2017)

Table A.3: Explicit and implicit references to economic value

Definitions	References	Source Type	Reference Source
Explicit	Economic value is created by transforming inputs into products or services that gain greater market value.	Primary	(Abella et al., 2017)
	Social ventures generate direct economic value through revenue and indirect value by supporting wealth creation.	Secondary	(Meyskens and Bird, 2015)
Implicit	This research considers joint value consisting of social, economic, and environmental value.	Secondary	(Weber et al., 2017)
	The entrepreneurial university model aims to generate socio-economic value.	Primary	(Secundo et al., 2016)
	Festival production enhances economic value for businesses.	Secondary	(Luonila and Johansson, 2016)
	Organisations co-create economic value through shared resources and collaboration.	Secondary	(Jones et al., 2017)
	Donor focus on material deprivation pushes NGOs toward economic transformation.	Primary	(Banks et al., 2015)

Table A.4: Explicit and implicit references to public value

Definitions	References	Source Type	Reference Source
Explicit	Public value refers to “what the public values” and “what adds value to the public sphere.”	Primary	(Abella et al., 2017)
	The concept of a public value account provides a structured way to approach the complexity of the term.	Primary	(Alford et al., 2017)
	Public value emphasises community-oriented outcomes and the broader societal benefits nonprofits can offer.	Secondary	(Lee and Nowell, 2015)
	Public value arises from balancing multiple collectively consumed public services.	Primary	(Panagiotopoulos et al., 2019)
	A secular definition of public benefit focuses on individual rights, scientific methods, and systematic social outcomes.	Primary	(Bromley and Meyer, 2017)
Implicit	Housing Associations must protect the embedded public value in their assets.	Secondary	(Manzi and Morrison, 2018)
	A shift from outputs to impacts reflects a performance focus grounded in public value.	Primary	(Maier et al., 2016b)

Table A.5: References to mission statements

	References	Source Type	Reference Source
Definition	The organization and the employees are not only vested in one another's future growth and development (Barrick et al., 2015; Blau, 1986), the mutual interest and outcomes are inherent to the organization due to its mission, values, and characteristics.	Secondary	(Akingbola and van den Berg, 2019)
	Mainstream literature in Marketing and Strategic Management holds that the organizational mission is a powerful tool to deliver superior value to customers and other stakeholders while enhancing organizational performance.	Primary	(Macedo et al., 2016)
	The power of meaningful mission statements to enhance an organization's success derives mainly from its main premises. Defined as a formal written document intended to capture an organization's unique and enduring purpose, practices, and core values (Bart & Hupfer, 2004), the mission statement gives a sense of purpose and direction to the organization, legitimizes its existence while providing the context for the development and implementation of a successful strategic plan (Bartkus et al., 2006; Gray & Smelzer, 1985; Pearce & David, 1987).	Secondary	(Macedo et al., 2016)
	This is in line with other authors (Verma, 2010) who maintain that mission statements are no longer "decorative motherhood statements with very little implications". In fact, our results corroborate previous studies suggesting that managers who develop a mission statement with the aim of inspiring organizational members, promoting shared values, and providing a common direction, are most likely to increase their organization's performance (Bart, 1997b, 1998; Bart et al., 2001; Davis et al., 2007; Desmidt et al., 2011).	Secondary	(Macedo et al., 2016)

Table A.5 (continued): References to mission statements

	References	Source Type	Reference Source
Definition	Organizations, therefore, must exhibit commitment to the production of social goods—as may be signalled by mission statements or salary suppression, for example, and elicit social trust that resources intended for societal benefit are not being privately captured by managers.	Primary	(Mitchell and Schmitz, 2019)
	This perspective would enable them to continuously deliver their social value by pursuing their social missions (Weerawardena, Robert, and Mort 2010).	Secondary	(Moldavanova and Goerdel, 2018)
Attributes	Consequently, to improve performance, organizations effectively need to make sense of their mission since it may act as a route leading to the achievement of long-term strategic objectives (Mullane, 2002; Siciliano, 2008).	Secondary	(Macedo et al., 2016)
Outcomes	While the work roles of the employees are important, it appears the mission and values of the organization affect behaviour more than job engagement.	Primary	(Akingbola and van den Berg, 2019)
	According to prior studies, key beneficial effects of a suitable mission on performance include, among other aspects, its role in facilitating strategy formulation and providing a framework for decision-making (Pearce & Robinson, 1991), its positive influence on staff and volunteer motivation, and its emphasis on reinforcing the organization’s legitimacy to its stakeholders (Forbes & Seena, 2006; Kirk & Nolan, 2010).	Secondary	(Macedo et al., 2016)
	This is in line with other authors (Verma, 2010) who maintain that mission statements are no longer “decorative motherhood statements with very little implications”. In fact, our results corroborate previous studies suggesting that managers who develop a mission statement with the aim of inspiring organizational members, promoting shared values, and providing a common direction, are most likely to increase their organization’s performance (Bart, 1997b, 1998; Bart et al., 2001; Davis et al., 2007; Desmidt et al., 2011).	Secondary	(Macedo et al., 2016)

Table A.6: References to value propositions

	References	Source Type	Reference Source
Definition	Moore argued that public managers should actively develop what it called ‘public value propositions’ for the agencies, units or programmes they are responsible for.	Primary	(Alford et al., 2017)
	Thus, the service design includes value propositions that meet physical needs (e.g., clothing), relational needs (e.g., recreation in the park), emotional needs (e.g., artistic activities), and community service (e.g., local mission trips), to name a few.	Primary	(Blocker and Barrios, 2015)
	This would improve the joint value proposition of youth sport nonprofits in cross-sector or cross-industry negotiations and help alleviate issues of trust, power, and dependence that typically develop during the formative stages of partnerships.	Primary	(Jones et al., 2017)
Attributes	A public value proposition is somewhat akin to a mission statement but is much more task-specific and focused. It is inspired by the notion of a ‘business case’ that business managers have to make to their senior management or to investors and shareholders, but it is articulated in terms not of business-like metrics such as financial ‘bottom lines’ or customer satisfaction, but in terms of the public’s aspirations and concerns as well as the procedural norms and values associated with good public sector governance.	Primary	(Alford et al., 2017)
	Holistic value propositions also contest the compartmentalisation of life and instead invite members to create transformative value through therapeutic meanings about one’s body, mind, spirit, and relationships.	Primary	(Blocker and Barrios, 2015)

Table A.6 (continued): References to value propositions

	References	Source Type	Reference Source
Outcomes	Beyond these, the holistic approach develops individuals' personal capabilities and potential for flourishing by connecting them to the social service ecosystem for programs like supportive housing, job training, and live-in addiction recovery.	Primary	(Blocker and Barrios, 2015)
Primary Stakeholders	Moore makes the pivotal point that public managers who want to fulfil their organization's mission and create public value need to engage with many other actors whose support can provide them with a licence (as well as resources) to operate on their public value proposition.	Primary	(Alford et al., 2017)
	Beyond these, the holistic approach develops individuals' personal capabilities.	Primary	(Blocker and Barrios, 2015)

Table A.7: References to value orientation

	References	Source Type	Reference Source
<i>Definition</i>	Thus, the emergence of a nonprofit is rooted in a specific value orientation (Jeavons, 1992).		(Akingbola and van den Berg, 2019)
	The mission and goals of a NPO is therefore a by-product of specific values that founding stakeholders have deemed worthy of their resources.	Primary	(Akingbola and van den Berg, 2019)
	The organization and the employees are not only vested in one another's future growth and development (Barrick et al., 2015; Blau, 1986), the mutual interest and outcomes are inherent to the organization due to its mission, values, and characteristics.	Secondary	(Akingbola and van den Berg, 2019)
<i>Outcomes</i>	While the work roles of the employees are important, it appears the mission and values of the organization affect behaviour more than job engagement.	Primary	(Akingbola and van den Berg, 2019)

Table A.8: References to organisational behaviour

	References	Source Type	Reference Source
<i>Definition</i>	Government funding also produces normative isomorphism as NGOs adopt behaviors conforming to the values of government funders to maintain legitimacy (Schmid et al., 2008; Klüver and Saurugger, 2013).	Secondary	(Bloodgood and Tremblay-Boire, 2017)

APPENDIX B

B.1

PARTICIPANT DATA

The following figures provide an overview of the NPOs that participated in *Study 3: Design X NPOs*:

- Figure B.1 maps the size of each NPO according to their state of origin
- Figure B.2 visualises the geographical spread of their operations across Australia
- Figure B.3 presents the primary charity subtypes under which each NPO is registered
- Figure B.4 outlines the key beneficiary groups served by these organisations

Together, these visual summaries offer important context for understanding the diversity of the participating NPOs. These figures are followed by a series of tables which offer more detail.

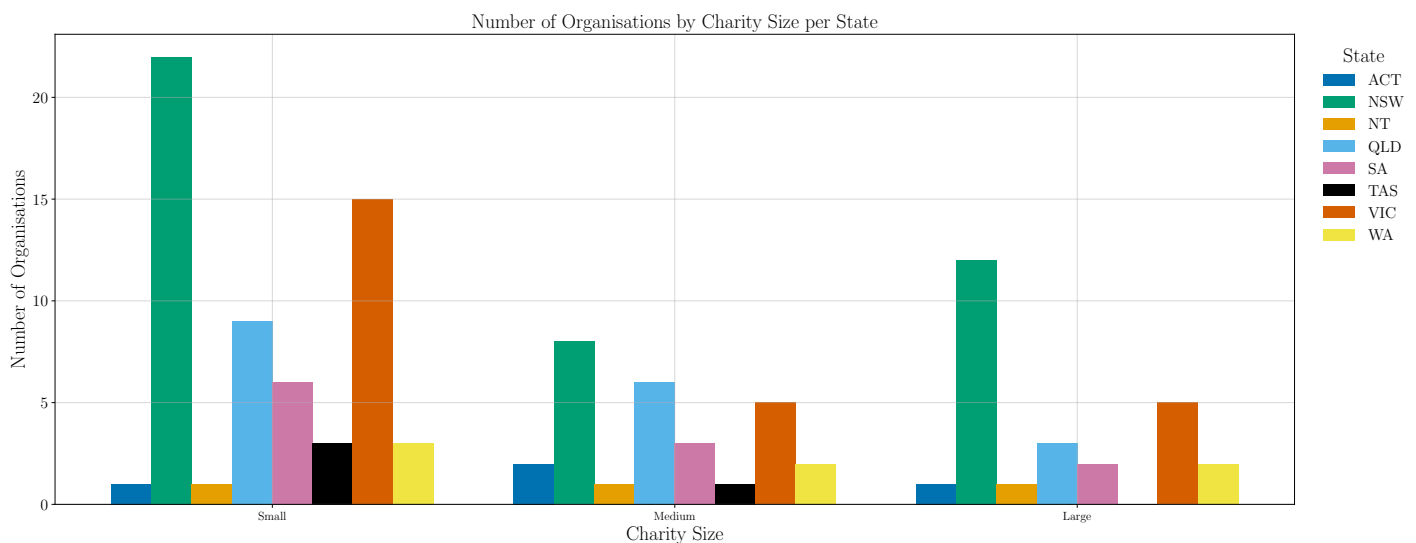


Figure B.1: Number of Organisations by Charity Size per State

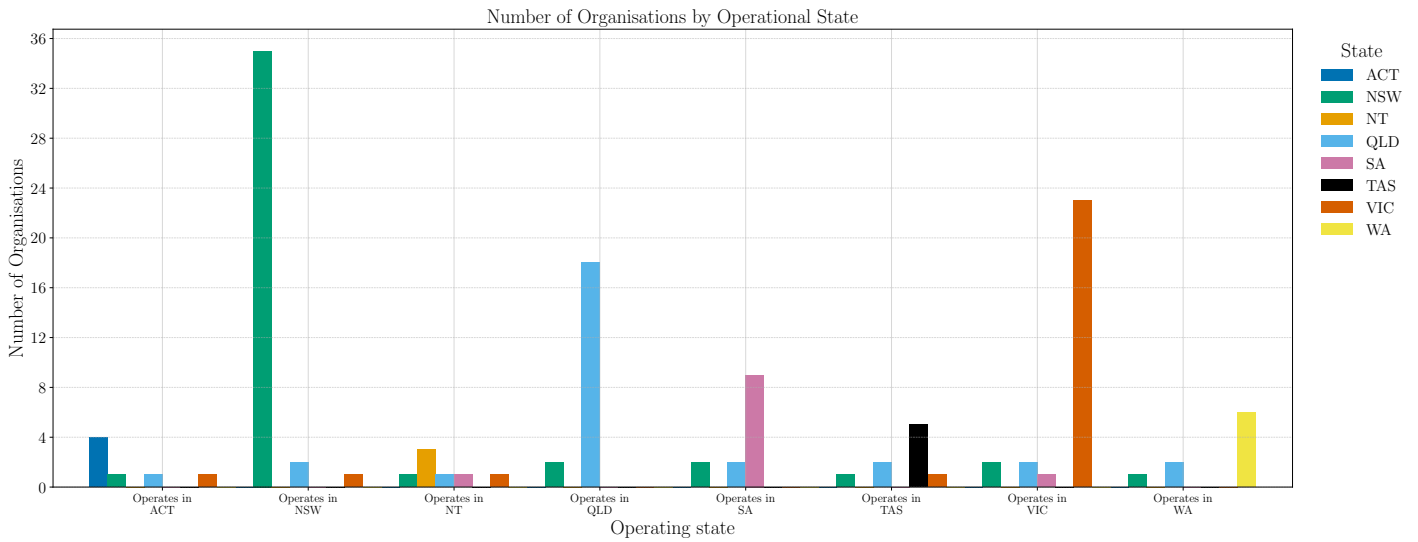


Figure B.2: Number of Organisations by Operational State

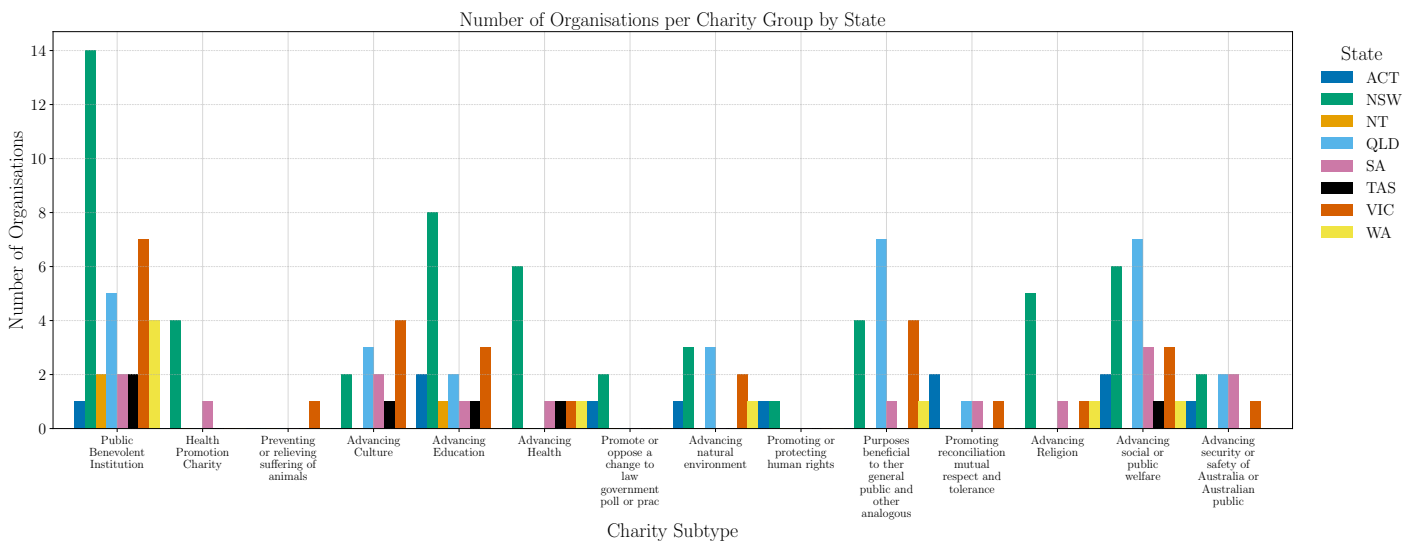


Figure B.3: Number of Organisations per Charity Subtype by State

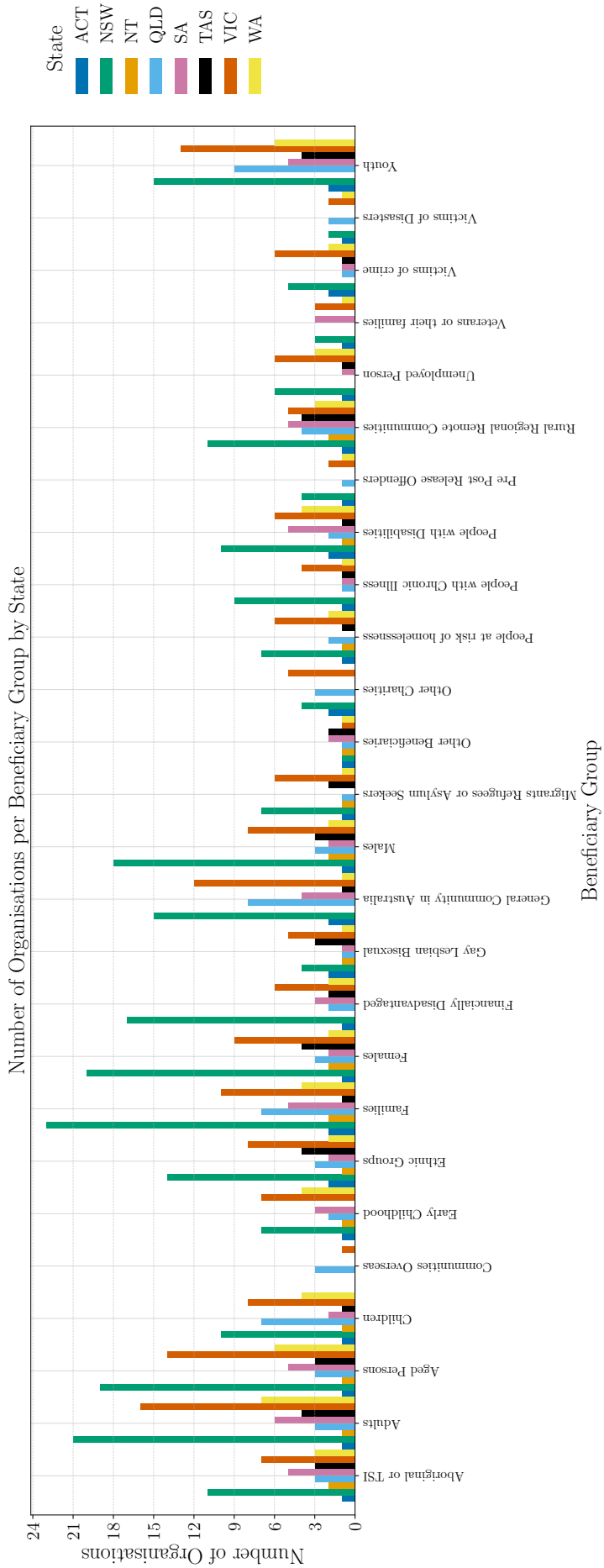


Figure B.4: Number of Organisations per Beneficiary Group by State

Table B.1: Participant Locations of Operation

#	State	Charity Size	Operates in ACT	Operates in NSW	Operates in NT	Operates in QLD	Operates in SA	Operates in TAS	Operates in VIC	Operates in WA
1	ACT	1	•							
2	ACT	2	•							
3	ACT	2	•							
4	ACT	3	•							
5	NSW	1								
6	NSW	1		•						
7	NSW	1		•						
8	NSW	1		•						
9	NSW	1		•						
10	NSW	1		•						
11	NSW	1		•						
12	NSW	1		•						
13	NSW	1		•						
14	NSW	1		•						
15	NSW	1		•						
16	NSW	1		•						
17	NSW	1		•						
18	NSW	1		•						
19	NSW	1		•						
20	NSW	1		•						
21	NSW	1		•						
22	NSW	1		•						
23	NSW	1		•						
24	NSW	1		•						
25	NSW	1		•						
26	NSW	1		•						
27	NSW	2		•						
28	NSW	2		•						
29	NSW	2		•						
30	NSW	2		•						
31	NSW	2		•						
32	NSW	2		•						
33	NSW	2		•						
34	NSW	2		•						
35	NSW	3		•						
36	NSW	3		•						
37	NSW	3		•						
38	NSW	3		•						
39	NSW	3		•						
40	NSW	3		•						
41	NSW	3		•	•					
42	NSW	3		•						
43	NSW	3		•						
44	NSW	3		•		•			•	
45	NSW	3	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
46	NSW	3		•						
47	NSW			•						
48	NSW			•			•			
49	NSW			•						
50	NT	1			•					
51	NT	2			•					
52	NT	3			•					
53	QLD	1				•				
54	QLD	1				•				
55	QLD	1				•				
56	QLD	1				•				
57	QLD	1				•				
58	QLD	1				•				
59	QLD	1				•				
60	QLD	1				•				
61	QLD	1				•				
62	QLD	2				•				
63	QLD	2				•				
64	QLD	2				•				
65	QLD	2				•				
66	QLD	2				•				
67	QLD	2				•				
68	QLD	3		•		•	•	•	•	•
69	QLD	3		•		•				
70	QLD	3		•		•				
71	QLD		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Table B.1 (continued): Participant Locations of Operation

#	State	Charity Size	Operates in ACT	Operates in NSW	Operates in NT	Operates in QLD	Operates in SA	Operates in TAS	Operates in VIC	Operates in WA
72	QLD					•				
73	QLD					•				
74	SA	1								
75	SA	1					•			
76	SA	1					•			
77	SA	1					•			
78	SA	1					•			
79	SA	1					•			
80	SA	2					•			
81	SA	2			•				•	
82	SA	2					•			
83	SA	3					•			
84	SA	3					•			
85	TAS	1						•		
86	TAS	1						•		
87	TAS	1						•		
88	TAS	2						•		
89	TAS							•		
90	VIC	1								
91	VIC	1	•	•				•	•	
92	VIC	1							•	
93	VIC	1							•	
94	VIC	1							•	
95	VIC	1							•	
96	VIC	1							•	
97	VIC	1							•	
98	VIC	1							•	
99	VIC	1							•	
100	VIC	1							•	
101	VIC	1							•	
102	VIC	1							•	
103	VIC	1							•	
104	VIC	1							•	
105	VIC	2							•	
106	VIC	2							•	
107	VIC	2							•	
108	VIC	2							•	
109	VIC	2							•	
110	VIC	3			•					
111	VIC	3							•	
112	VIC	3							•	
113	VIC	3							•	
114	VIC	3							•	
115	VIC								•	
116	WA	1								•
117	WA	1								•
118	WA	1								•
119	WA	2								•
120	WA	2								•
121	WA	3								•
122	WA	3								•
123	WA									
124		1		•						
125		1					•			
126		1		•						
127		1					•			
128		1		•	•					
129		1							•	
130		1		•						
131		1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
132		1		•					•	
133		2		•						
134		2				•				
135		2		•		•			•	
136		2								
137		3					•			
138										
139			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
140									•	
141									•	

APPENDIX C

C.1

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE ON VALUE AND DESIGN

The following lecture was delivered in Week 1 as part of the Independent Study Unit to help students begin thinking critically about the concept of value in design. It was designed to sensitise students to the complexity and multiplicity of value before they engaged with their assigned non-profit organisations. Drawing on examples from both everyday life and design practice, the session encouraged students to discuss and reflect on how value is defined, perceived, and negotiated – and to recognise that value is often relational and contextual.

Please note: some specific information and key pages of this lecture have been removed to maintain the anonymity of the partner NPOs.

2022

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND PLANNING
The University of Sydney

**DECO3441: Independent
Study Unit A**

*A design-led approach
to generating value
in non-profit organisations*

///

Natalia Gulbransen-Diaz

///

1

// Unit outline

// Design briefs

// Value and design

// Next steps

///

Natalia Gulbransen-Diaz

///

2

Unit Introduction

Semester 2, 2022 | 6 Credit Points

This unit provides an opportunity to high achieving students to develop an interest in a specific Design Computing topic; to develop skills in independent study; and to develop advanced report writing skills. This elective is undertaken with an agreement between the student and a supervisor on an agreed topic related to Design Computing. The student will meet with the supervisor weekly to discuss progress. The outcome should be a reflective report on a selected topic demonstrating mastery of the topic.

Class will be held on [REDACTED]

Throughout this semester, each of you will be working closely to develop a design solution for one of our three non-profit partners:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Your design briefs will be unique to your NPO partner, their context and their needs (outlined later in this document). They will be engaging with us regularly throughout their semester, and you should note the proposed dates of engagement outlined in the *Unit Schedule*.

Additional support will be offered by Dr. Clare Cooper and Dr. Rohan Lulham per their availability.

///

Section 1: Unit Introduction

Unit Schedule

Week #	Date	Content	Attending
1	05/08	Induction	NGD
2	12/08	Introduction and scoping meeting	NPO & NGD
3	19/08	Self-directed work and consultation	NGD
4	26/08	User research	NPO & NGD
5	02/09	Self-directed work and consultation	NGD
6	09/09	Discovery Phase presentation	NPO & NGD
7	16/09	Self-directed work and consultation	NGD
8	23/09	Initial concept reviews	NPO & NGD
Mid-Semester Break			
9	07/10	Self-directed work and consultation	NGD
10	14/10	Usability testing	NPO & NGD
11	21/10	Self-directed work and consultation	NGD
12	28/10	Design presentation	NPO & NGD
13	04/11	Self-directed work and consultation	NGD
Study Vacation			
Exam Week 1	18/11	Reflective essay due	NGD

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Design Milestones and Assignments

Throughout the semester you will be working to meet two design milestones (Phase 1: Discovery and Phase 2: Design) for your non-profit partner. These will take the form of verbal presentations accompanied by visual slide decks. Suggested outlines of each milestone presentation is detailed below:

Phase 1: Discovery presentation | Due 9th of September, 2022

- Secondary Research
- Primary research (e.g. user interviews)
- Outline of user needs
- Outline of market landscape (e.g. existing precedents)
- Synthesis of findings
- Early Ideation

Phase 2: Design presentation | Due 28th of October, 2022

- Concept selection/evaluation
- Concept consultation
- Low-fidelity development and testing
- Concept refinement
- Mid-fidelity development and testing
- Synthesis of findings

Your assessable deliverable for this unit will be a **reflective essay**. Drawing on reflections from your own design process and experience (i.e. engagement with your NPO partner), describe (1) what value design can create in a non-profit organisation, and (2) how design can contribute to a non-profit organisation's pursuit of value.

The essay should be 2,000 word (+/-10%) and is due on the 18th of November, 2022.

The format of this reflective essay is open and flexible, as long as the content addresses the above two points. At minimum, it should include:

- an introduction to the topic and work
- outline of methods or design process
- responses to the two prompts
- drawn on data from your weekly logbooks and in class discussions

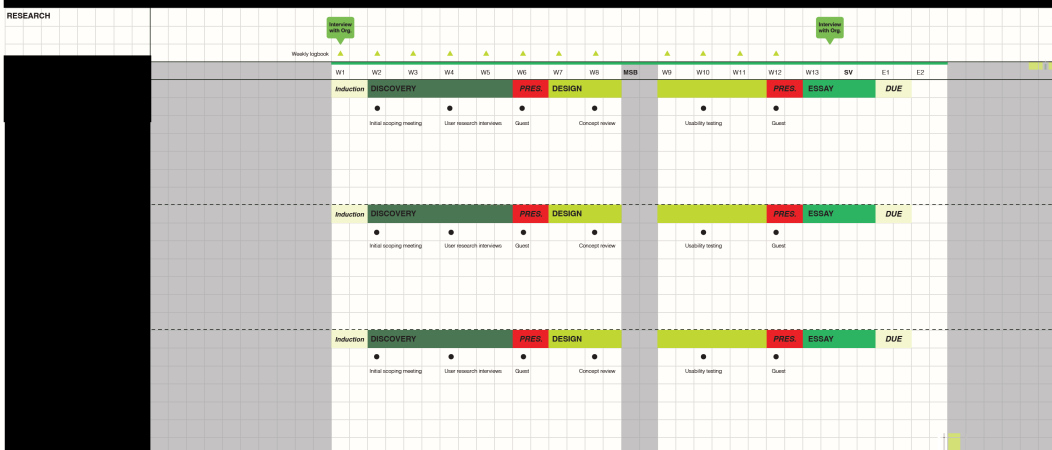
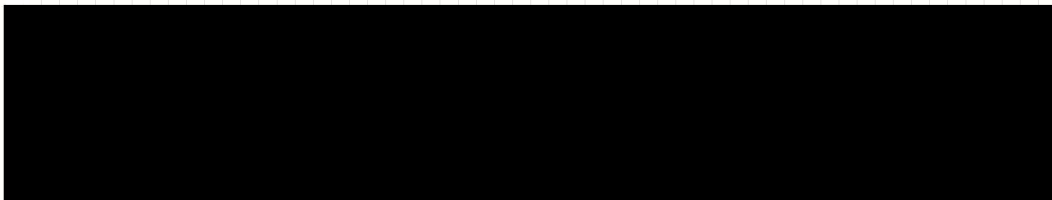
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Section 2: Design Milestones and Assignments

Research Objective: Explore design-led approaches to generating value in Non-Profit Organisations

Study 3 | Embedded Action Research
Natalia Gulbransen-Diaz

RQ2: What value can design create in a NPO?
RQ3: How can design contribute to a NPOs pursuit of value?



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Introduction to Value in Design

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Natalia Gulbransen-Diaz

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12

Mankind is unique among animals in its relationship to the environment. ... Only mankind transforms earth itself to suit its needs and wants ... This job of form- giving and reshaping has become the designer's responsibility.

—Victor Papanek (1971, pp. 157–158)

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Value and Design

13

2022

What is wrong, I think, is that we have permitted technological metaphors ... and technique itself to so thoroughly pervade our thought processes that we have finally abdicated to technology the very duty to formulate questions. ... Where a simple man might ask: “Do we need these things?,” technology asks “what electronic wizardry will make them safe?” Where a simple man will ask “is it good?,” technology asks “will it work?”
—Joseph Weizenbaum (1972, pp. 611–612)

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Value and Design

14

2022

We encounter the deep questions of design when we recognize that in designing tools we are designing ways of being.
—Terry Winograd and Fernando Flores (1986, p. xi)

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Value and Design

15

2022

In contrast to analysts or critics, designers put things together and bring new things into being. ... Almost always, designers' moves have consequences other than those intended for them. Designers juggle variables, reconcile conflicting values, and maneuver.

—Donald A. Schön (1987, p. 42)

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Value and Design

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2022

Interactional Stance

Technology in itself **does not** determine society (technological determinism), and society in itself **does not** determine (social determinism) how technology is used.

Human beings acting as individuals, organisations, or societies shape the tools and technologies they design and implement; in turn, those tools and technologies shape human experience and society.

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Value and Design

17

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Human beings acting as individuals, organizations, or societies shape the tools and technologies they design and implement; in turn, those tools and technologies shape human experience and society.

But what informs our actions?

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Value(S) and Value()

Values refer to what a person or a group of **people consider important in life**. In this sense, people may value many different things, both lofty and mundane: their children, friendship, morning tea, education, art, a walk in the woods, nice manners, good science, a wise leader, clean air...

In Value Sensitive Design, there were 13 human values with ethical import of interest:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) human welfare, | (8) informed consent, |
| (2) ownership and property, | (9) accountability, |
| (3) privacy, | (10) courtesy, |
| (4) freedom from bias, | (11) identity, |
| (5) universal usability, | (12) calmness, |
| (6) trust, | (13) environmental sustainability |
| (7) autonomy, | |

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One S to rule them all...

There are a range of ways we can explore ValueS and ethics in design:

- The notion of user-centered design (UCD) or human-centered design already implies some ethics. In user-centered design, both the design product and the design process aim to satisfy the needs and desires of the “user”.
- Value-Centered Design
- Participatory Design (PD) and Values-Led Participatory Design
- Value-Sensitive Design is one of the most reviewed approaches pertaining to values in technology design so far.

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Whose Value(S)?

Those who are or will be significantly implicated by the technology = **the stakeholders**

ROLES NOT INDIVIDUALS: Defining stakeholders in terms of roles positions designers to understand how the same ‘entity’ could hold multiple relationships to the same technology

DIRECT AND INDIRECT STAKEHOLDER ROLES: A fundamental distinction in role concerns the distinction between stakeholders who directly interact with a system and those indirect stakeholders who, although they never or rarely interact with the system as users, are nevertheless affected by the system.

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Whose Value(S)?

EXPLICITLY SUPPORTED PROJECT VALUES, DESIGNER VALUES AND STAKEHOLDER VALUES: Designers bring their own personal and professional values to their work. These are referred to as designer values. In the case of tensions between designer values, project values and stakeholder values, these tensions need to be mitigated, i.e. value workshop for both designers & stakeholders.

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2022

Let's talk about Value()

But what about value? We all *value* things: relationships, particular people, particular events, or particular objects.

This means that we *feel and behave towards them as if they possessed a certain value*, whether or not we consciously judge them to be valuable. Sometimes we also *evaluate* the same and other things as good, significant, worthy of our interest (or bad, worthless, and so on). In this case, we might well fail to feel and behave towards them as we think we should. But both **in valuing and evaluating things not only do we express our attitudes or convictions; we do so by employing, more or less explicitly, a rich and sophisticated conceptual repertoire.**

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Value and Design

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How might we investigate Value()

Conceptual investigations aim at understanding and articulating the various stakeholders of the technology, as well as their values and any values conflicts that might arise for these stakeholders through the use of the technology.

Empirical investigations are qualitative or quantitative design research studies used to inform the designers' understanding of the users' values, needs, and practices.

Technical investigations can involve either analysis of how people use related technologies, or the design of systems to support values identified in the conceptual and empirical investigations.

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Conceptual Investigations

Comprise **analytical, theoretical, or philosophically informed explorations** of the central issues and constructs under investigation.

Questions like: What theoretical commitments and choice of conceptual framework are made? If the design team makes a commitment to particular ethical or cultural frameworks to support principled reasoning, how would it be articulated and integrated into the design process? What values are likely to be implicated and how can they be understood and characterised? What conceptual models for operationalising the value(s) will be employed?

Value-related design projects commonly develop careful (philosophically informed) working conceptualisations of specific values. Conceptual investigations are often generative, leading to **framing propositions (design guidelines)**

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Empirical Investigations

Many analyses will need to be informed by **empirical investigations of the human context in which the technology is situated** drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Questions like: How do stakeholders apprehend values in the sociotechnical context? How do stakeholders prioritise competing values or otherwise envision resolution of value tensions? Are there difference between espoused practice (what people say) compared with actual practice (what people do)?

Value-related design projects are challenged to **select a method that fits** the particular project at a particular point in the design process. Range of methods we can lean on, from VSD, PD, HCD, etc.

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Technical Investigations

A given technology, game system or controller is **more suitable for certain activities and more readily supports certain values**, while rendering other activities and values more difficult to realise. These investigations have technology, system, controller as the unit of analysis

Questions like: What features of technical infrastructure enable, hinder, or even foreclose certain kinds of designs for supporting human activity? How do policies, laws, regulations create opportunities for technological development?

Technical investigations exist in the spectrum between retrospective analysis of existing systems and proactive design of new systems to (better) support values identified in the conceptual and empirical investigations

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Conceptualisations of Value in NPO Literature

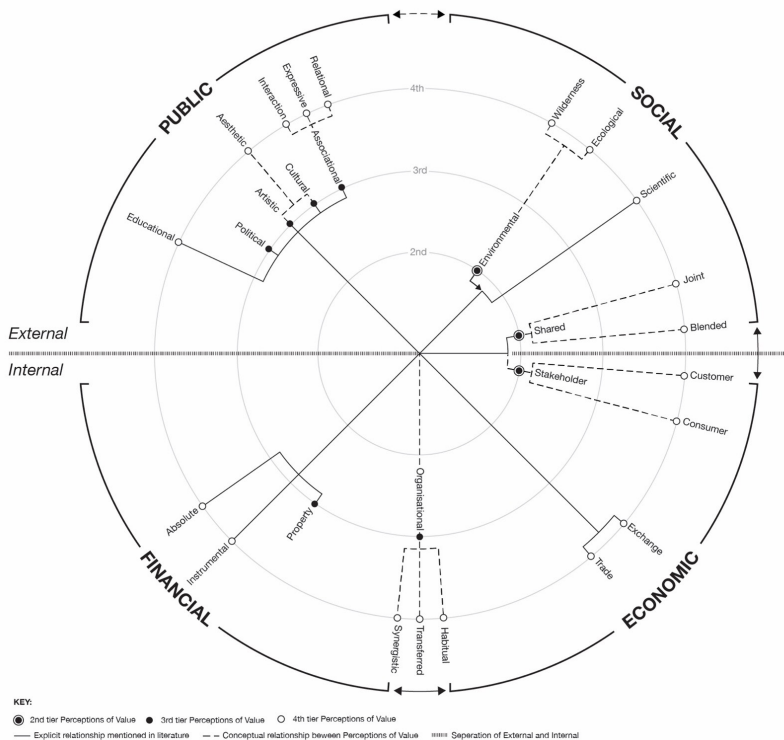
Table 2. Perceptions of value according to prevalence

Tier #	Mean number of articles referenced	Perceptions of value
I	11.75	Social, financial, economic, public
II	3	Stakeholder, shared, environmental
III	2	Property, political, cultural, associational, artistic
IV	1	Absolute, aesthetic, blended, consumer, customer, ecological, educational, exchange, expressive, habitual, instrumental, interaction, joint, organisational, relational, scientific, strategic, synergistic, trade, transferred, wilderness

Table 3. Defining Tier I and Tier II perceptions of value

	Value (# of mentions/# of articles)	Definitions
Tier I	Social value (48/24)	Serving to better the lives of individuals, and in turn, transform society as a whole.
	Financial value (17/9)	The monetary worth of an action, commitment, collaboration, process, or artefact.
	Economic value (11/9)	Value derived from the market, and direct and indirect processes of exchange.
	Public value (11/7)	Benefiting and/or improving the rights and capacities of individuals as citizens, and communities or societies as a whole.
Tier II	Stakeholder value (3/3)	Materials, both financial and human resource-oriented, that promote optimal return for all parties invested.
	Shared value (5/3)	Conceptualised by Porter and Kramer (2011) as the creation of economic value in a way that also creates value for society.
	Perceived value (10/3)	The believed importance or worth of an action, document, or process. Can be proven or remain unquestioned.
	Moral value (3/3)	Balancing the protections of the self and others.
	Environmental value (4/3)	Supporting the long-term health and wellbeing of the natural world.

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What value can design create in a non-profit organisation?

How can design contribute to a non-profit organisation's pursuit of value?

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TEXTUAL VIGNETTES	

PRACTITIONER TO ORGANISATION	ORGANISATION TO PRACTITIONER
What value did your work generate for the NPO this week, and how did it do so?	What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?

CONCEPT MAPPING

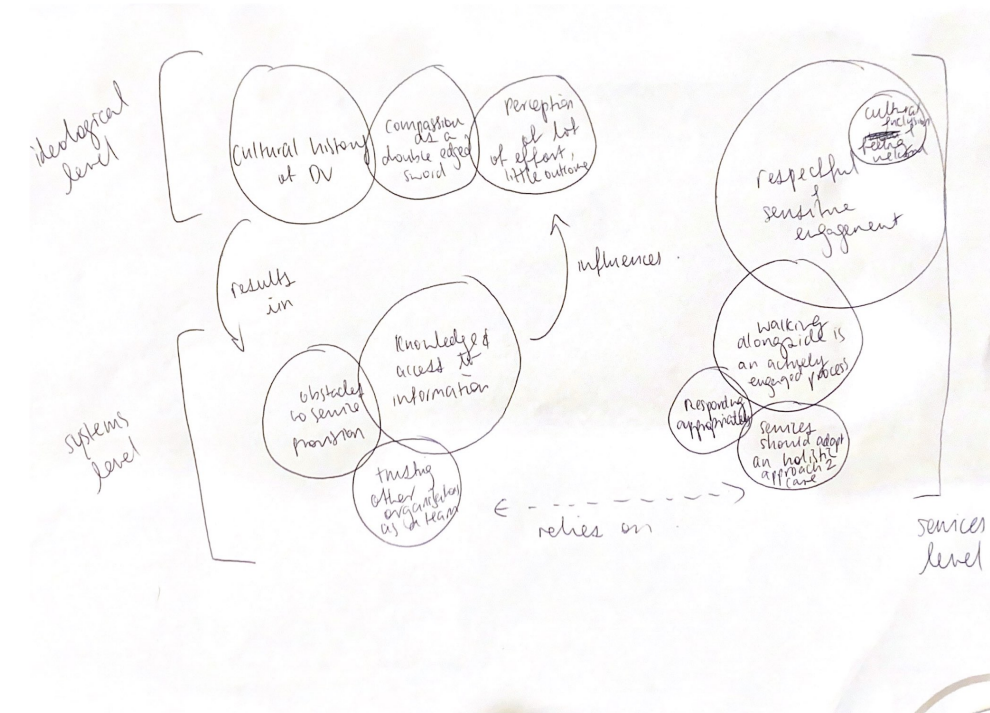
C.2

MATERIALS FOR AND FROM DATA COLLECTION

C.2.1. WEEKLY REFLECTIVE DIARIES

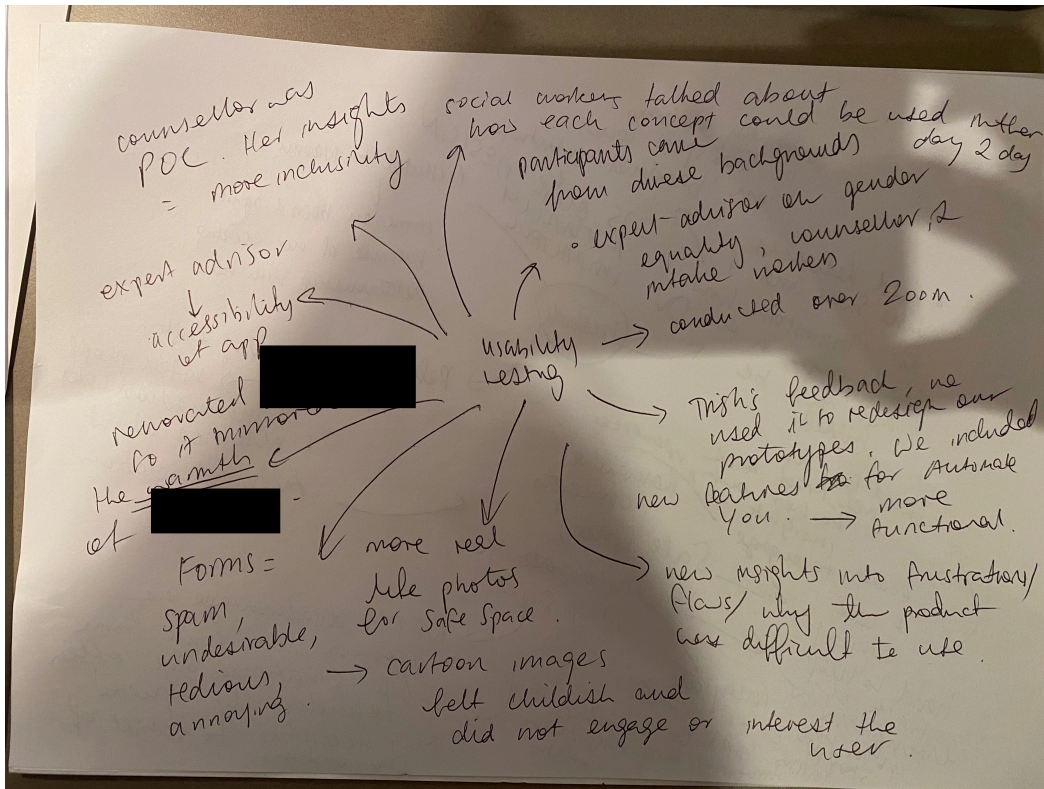
The following pages include five reflective diary entries completed during the engagement period. These entries illustrate how three emergent documented their weekly activities, challenges, and developing insights.

- Figure C.1 presents Weekly Reflection #7 from EmD 2
- Figure C.2 presents Weekly Reflection #12 from EmD 2
- Figure C.3 presents Weekly Reflection #2 from EmD 3
- Figure C.4 presents Weekly Reflection #5 from EmD 3
- Figure C.5 presents Weekly Reflection #4 from EmD 4



TEXTUAL VIGNETTES	
<p>This week, we completed the bulk of our research analysis and synthesis. We started off transcribing interviews, and extracted the most important quotes from our transcripts. For our thematic analysis, we coded our quotes and rigorously cross-checked them to ensure we were on the same page and that there was mutual agreement for the codes. While cross-checking, we flagged the codes we wanted to discuss - one issue we discovered was abstracting the first level codes too far - it's naturally easier to abstract the codes and make meaning out of them, but it was necessary to keep the codes as close to the original quotes as possible. Also, it was difficult to code the longer quotes, as they were very rich and insightful, and held multiple themes within them. We eventually finalised 11 themes; these included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural history of DV - Knowledge and access to information - Responding appropriately - Cultural inclusion and feeling welcome - Walking alongside is an actively engaged process - Respectful and sensitive engagement - Compassion as a double edged sword - Trusting other organisations as a team - Services should adopt an holistic approach to care - Perception of lot of effort, little outcome - Obstacles to service provision <p>When synthesising our insights, we discovered the themes could be grouped on three levels: ideological, systems, and services level. We found that it was easiest to address the insights that lay on the services level. The relationship between our insights became much clearer once we established this model, and understood how different factors influence and impact one another, as well as the actionables that can address the issues.</p>	<p>ORGANISATION TO PRACTITIONER</p> <p>What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?</p> <p>[REDACTED] was thoroughly impressed by our research and presentation - she resonated deeply with the insights and was keen to hear about our initial concepts. I believe she could see the value of our findings and greatly appreciated her involvement in the process. By having a service provider's perspective, we were better informed about which concepts were feasible, which concepts addressed the needs of survivors, and which concepts did not have much of an impact. [REDACTED] spoke fondly of [REDACTED] and was excited to see where the potential solutions were heading.</p>
<p>PRACTITIONER TO ORGANISATION</p> <p>What value did your work generate for the NPO this week, and how did it do so?</p> <p>This week, we spoke to [REDACTED] about our findings and shared our research around the key areas and gaps with current referral pathways that need to be addressed. This information would be valuable to our NPO, as they can use our findings to improve or inform their services.</p> <p>We also presented potential concepts for feedback - by involving [REDACTED] throughout our design process, and by getting her input on what she thought was most feasible, impactful and useful, we have greater confidence that our solutions are aligned with the needs and wants of our users.</p>	<p>ORGANISATION TO PRACTITIONER</p> <p>What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?</p> <p>[REDACTED] was thoroughly impressed by our research and presentation - she resonated deeply with the insights and was keen to hear about our initial concepts. I believe she could see the value of our findings and greatly appreciated her involvement in the process. By having a service provider's perspective, we were better informed about which concepts were feasible, which concepts addressed the needs of survivors, and which concepts did not have much of an impact. [REDACTED] spoke fondly of [REDACTED] and was excited to see where the potential solutions were heading.</p>

Figure C.1: Weekly Reflection #7, EmD 2



TEXTUAL VIGNETTES	
<p>and I had back to back usability testing sessions from Monday to Thursday. We managed to speak to an expert advisor on gender equality, a counsellor, and two intake workers over Zoom. Since the prototype we used to test with [redacted] was very rudimentary, we spent the weekend taking on [redacted] feedback and redesigning our prototypes. We included more features for [redacted] making it more functional since it was hard to tell what the purpose of the original prototype was due to its lack of features. Moreover, we included her suggestions for [redacted] adding in more real-life photos since she did not really like the feel of the 'cartoon images'. We also changed the form, making it more intuitive and simpler. [redacted] didn't like the long form and said she would not fill it out due to spam concerns. We also renovated [redacted] making it more similar to the [redacted] while also preserving a sense of warmth and openness.</p> <p>With each usability testing session, we were able to glean various insights from our participants. The expert advisor offered a lot of advice on the accessibility of the app, and was vocal about whether things were easy or simple to understand, with consideration to the target user group (DV victim survivors). The counsellor was a person of colour, and spoke about incorporating more inclusivity into the app, which was something we hadn't picked up on since our previous participants were non-POC. The two intake workers offered a lot of insight to how [redacted] and [redacted] would work in their day-to-day lives; how they could see women using it, and how it would impact their lives. The intake workers were able to bring in their personal experiences and apply it to the concepts, giving [redacted] and I a lot of richness to back up our concepts. Following each interview, [redacted] and I listed out the actionables and changes we had to implement, and split up the workload between us. I worked a lot on redesigning the [redacted] homepage, making it warm and inviting. [redacted] worked a lot on the nurse practitioner's form, simplifying it and making it easy, stress-free and intuitive to use. Women didn't need to provide a lot of their details to complete the form, and also redesigned the [redacted] interface, making each section much clearer by implementing a step by step checklist. It was interesting to see how each participant brought their own insight and perspective to the table, offering a new angle and new suggestions on how we could improve our concepts.</p>	<p>PRACTITIONER TO ORGANISATION</p> <p>What value did your work generate for the NPO this week, and how did it do so?</p> <p>This week, we moved from low/mid-fidelity prototypes to functioning high-fidelity prototypes. There was a lot of value in extracting insights from our interview participants during usability testing, because we were able to see their own frustrations (including how it relates to our users' needs), as well as the weaknesses and frustrating aspects for users we could improve on. By continuously iterating our prototypes, we strengthened its quality, making it more tailored and catered towards our users.</p>
<p>ORGANISATION TO PRACTITIONER</p> <p>What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?</p> <p>Our NPO can see our concepts taking tangible shape. When our concepts are tangible, they're also much easier to communicate to other parties and stakeholders, since they interact with the prototypes themselves. Moreover, our NPO would be able to see the extensive usability testing we have done - gaining our participants' perspectives on their own, and our contributions. Our testing also gives the NPO more confidence about the validity of our product, and its impact on other service organisations.</p>	<p>PRACTITIONER TO PRACTITIONER</p> <p>What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?</p> <p>Our NPO can see our concepts taking tangible shape. When our concepts are tangible, they're also much easier to communicate to other parties and stakeholders, since they interact with the prototypes themselves. Moreover, our NPO would be able to see the extensive usability testing we have done - gaining our participants' perspectives on their own, and our contributions. Our testing also gives the NPO more confidence about the validity of our product, and its impact on other service organisations.</p>

Figure C.2: Weekly Reflection #12, Emd 2

TEXTUAL VIGNETTES	
<p>Female prisoners also commented feeling "stressed" about their children outside prison and their finances. Female prisoners with "severe distress" outcomes were twice as likely to have previously received treatment for depression as males, and more likely to have been treated for anxiety (one-third compared to one-fifth). The NSMHW reported females in the general population experienced high or very high distress at a greater rate than males (11.57% compared to 7.22%) and indicated "a strong association between high scores on the K-10 and the diagnosis of anxiety and affective disorders" (ABS, 2008a, p. 19), which may help explain these findings. Analyses also confirmed that prisoner sentence length and amount of time already served were not correlated with reported level of distress.</p>	<p>We solicited feedback from participants, staff, and faculty to determine the program's effectiveness during this time. Many demonstrated how much they appreciated the encouragement and positive regard afforded them through the written communications from the art therapists in the workbooks. The participant responses to the workbooks were mixed. Some clients responded well, engaging fully in the process, while a few rarely completed the requests. Some revealed initial insecurities, particularly in their drawing abilities, writing. "I don't know what to</p>
<p>* Imprisonment growth has higher among women in several jurisdictions, particularly since 2010. Nonetheless, men still make up the bulk of the prison population.</p>	
<p>Art as a necessary creative process that expresses and heals—art is therapy—and as a guided tool of a formal therapeutic process—art in therapy—both have demonstrated rehabilitative values (Johnson, 2008, 103, 108). Prison art programs are generally implemented under the philosophical basis of "art is therapy", though there are an increasing number of initiatives that use a form or forms of the creative arts as a mediated process of psychotherapy.</p>	
PRACTITIONER TO ORGANISATION	ORGANISATION TO PRACTITIONER
<p>What value did your work generate for the NPO this week, and how did it do so?</p> <p>• Before the meeting with [redacted] (our NPO representative), I believed that we had narrowed down our goals and found some interesting areas of inquiry. I pursued our value in terms of our separation with design with my and non-verbal approaches to thought, our direction was with with specificity especially in terms of off low level explicit normal heads.</p> <p>• I was also hoping to apply my knowledge of social design, especially the things I had learned about allyship and user avatars my</p>	<p>What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?</p> <p>• After the meeting with [redacted], having I saw that there was a clear distinction between the way that [redacted] had interpreted our value as designers and what we thought we were going to do as the mentored us to approach the problem from a product-centred perspective and what we were doing there to help him develop an</p>

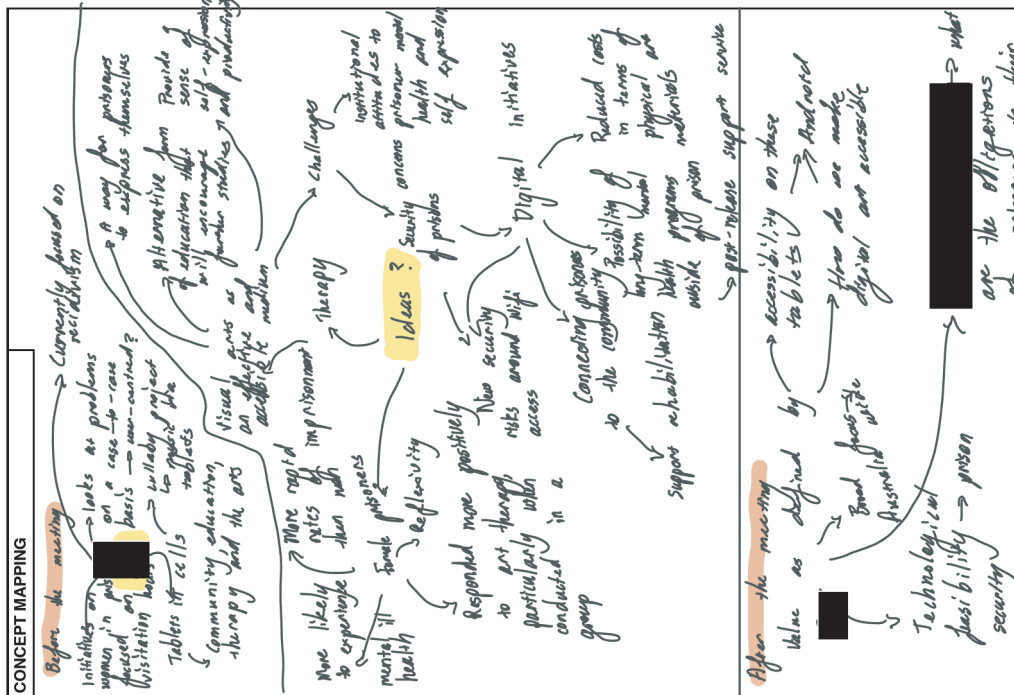
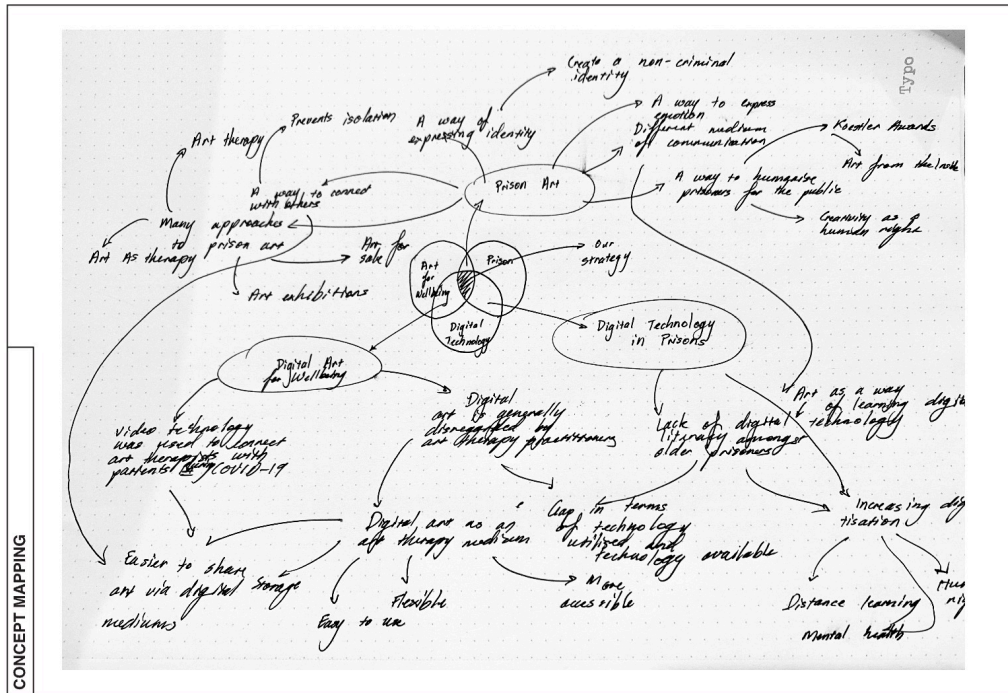
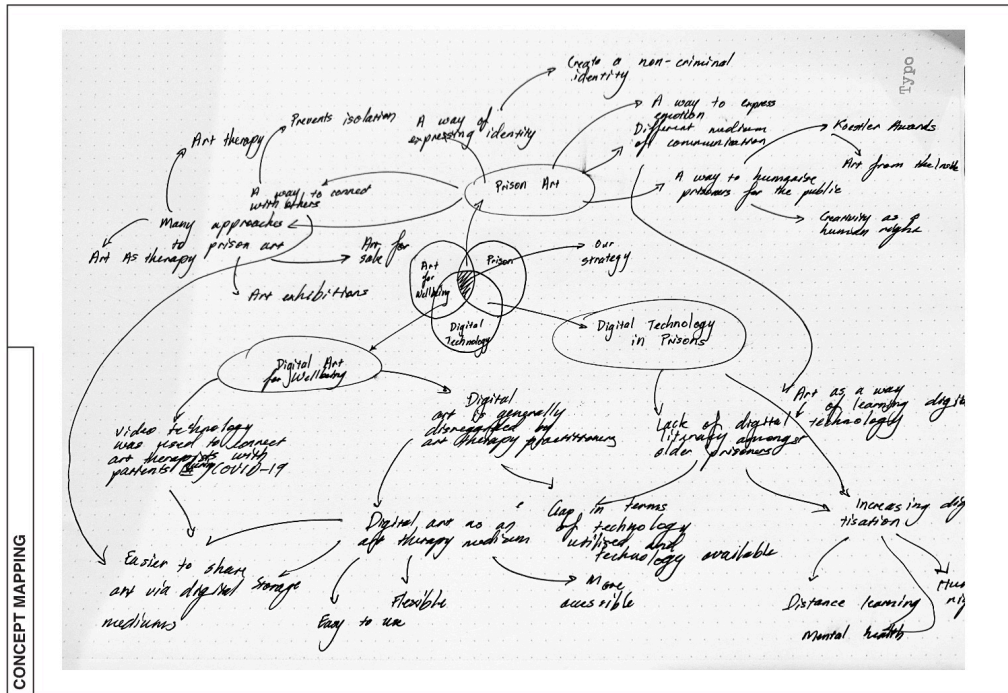


Figure C.3: Weekly Reflection #2, Emd 3



TEXTUAL VIGNETTES	PRACTITIONER TO ORGANISATION	ORGANISATION TO PRACTITIONER
<p>This week has been quite busy. We have spent a majority of our time interviewing academics frantically. All of the interviews have tended to be shorter unstructured interviews of around thirty minutes. I do most of the interviewing while [redacted] does the transcribing and helps guide me through the interview (she messages me certain prompts while I'm talking). The reason for the unstructured nature of the interviews is the interdisciplinary nature of the project. While I generally have a couple of directions that I know I want to take the interview in, our participants tend to come from diverse fields, and thus have different approaches to answering questions. I have thus had to focus on really listening to their responses and teasing out new directions to explore. For example, when we were interviewing [redacted] he was a little unresponsive to the questions about engaging with [redacted]. While it was clear that he new how to sustain an engagement, his approach to it was to take it year by year. However, once I took the interview in a different direction and focused on the lived experience of the prisoners, he became a lot more animated and talked excitedly about his passion for the topic. By maintaining a conversational tone and letting [redacted] guide the conversation, I was able to arrive at some unexpected insights (unexpected at the time). For example, he talked about how art, especially drama, could not only alleviate the monotony of prison life but sway public perception, of prisoners. This was a theme that came up in later interviews - the dual impact of art on the prisoners and the public. I am learning to let the participants guide the conversation more - this area is one bolstered by several passionate people is what I'm growing to realise.</p> <p>On another note, I also should say that I'm horribly anxious about this project. An inexplicable sense of failure hangs over my head. I'm not really sure if I'm meant to let this affect my design practice and discuss it too openly. Part of me loves it and the other part of me is afraid.</p>	<p>What value did your work generate for the NPO this week, and how did it do so?</p> <p>I finally feel that the work I am doing is generating some sort of value for my NPO. This might be because my NPO has changed. I am no longer working with [redacted] directly. Instead, [redacted] and I will be collaborating with [redacted] (most likely). Because we're using his previous research report [redacted] as a framework for our strategy, the current direction that our project is taking should hopefully assist him with his work. This week, we were able to gather insights from people working in art therapy, prison health and prison art. By bringing together practitioners from different disciplines, we're creating the connections needed to work in such an interdisciplinary problem space.</p>	<p>What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?</p> <p>Now that [redacted] is likely to be on board, we hope that he is excited about what we're initiating. I believe his research report is quite recent, meaning that he is still exploring the field. While I know he has had students explore art therapy in the past, he has stated that there was no research put into the actual implementation of a strategy. During our meeting, he seemed to settle on the idea of a strategy to create connections between different stakeholders. It will be interesting to see what he thinks of motley assemblage of practitioners.</p>

Figure C.4: Weekly Reflection #5, EmD 3



TEXTUAL VIGNETTES	PRACTITIONER TO ORGANISATION	ORGANISATION TO PRACTITIONER
<p>This week has been quite busy. We have spent a majority of our time interviewing academics frantically. All of the interviews have tended to be shorter unstructured interviews of around thirty minutes. I do most of the interviewing while [redacted] does the transcribing and helps guide me through the interview (she messages me certain prompts while I'm talking). The reason for the unstructured nature of the interviews is the interdisciplinary nature of the project. While I generally have a couple of directions that I know I want to take the interview in, our participants tend to come from diverse fields, and thus have different approaches to answering questions. I have thus had to focus on really listening to their responses and teasing out new directions to explore. For example, when we were interviewing [redacted] he was a little unresponsive to the questions about engaging with [redacted] While it was clear that he new how to sustain an engagement, his approach to it was to take it year by year. However, once I took the interview in a different direction and focused on the lived experience of the prisoners, he became a lot more animated and talked excitedly about his passion for the topic. By maintaining a conversational tone and letting [redacted] guide the conversation, I was able to arrive at some unexpected insights (unexpected at the time). For example, he talked about how art, especially drama, could not only alleviate the monotony of prison life but sway public perception, of prisoners. This was a theme that came up in later interviews - the dual impact of art on the prisoners and the public. I am learning to let the participants guide the conversation more - this area is one bolstered by several passionate people is what I'm growing to realise.</p> <p>On another note, I also should say that I'm horribly anxious about this project. An inexplicable sense of failure hangs over my head. I'm not really sure if I'm meant to let this affect my design practice and discuss it too openly. Part of me loves it and the other part of me is afraid.</p>	<p>What value did your work generate for the NPO this week, and how did it do so?</p> <p>I finally feel that the work I am doing is generating some sort of value for my NPO. This might be because my NPO has changed. I am no longer working with [redacted] directly. Instead, [redacted] and I will be collaborating with [redacted] (most likely). Because we're using his previous research report [redacted] as a framework for our strategy, the current direction that our project is taking should hopefully assist him with his work. This week, we were able to gather insights from people working in art therapy, prison health and prison art. By bringing together practitioners from different disciplines, we're creating the connections needed to work in such an interdisciplinary problem space.</p>	<p>What value do you think your work was perceived to have generated for the NPO this week?</p> <p>Now that [redacted] is likely to be on board, we hope that he is excited about what we're initiating. I believe his research report is quite recent, meaning that he is still exploring the field. While I know he has had students explore art therapy in the past, he has stated that there was no research put into the actual implementation of a strategy. During our meeting, he seemed to settle on the idea of a strategy to create connections between different stakeholders. It will be interesting to see what he thinks of motley assemblage of practitioners.</p>

Figure C.5: Weekly Reflection #4, EmD 4

C.2.2. REFLECTIVE ESSAYS

Included here are excerpts of two final reflective essays submitted by the emergent designers. These essays provide extended reflections on their design process and the outcomes of their NPO engagement. As some essays contain sensitive information, complete records cannot be shared. This is to protect the identities of the participating emergent designers and the partner NPOs.

Reflective Essay: EmD 2

Introduction and Context

The [REDACTED] trauma recovery service for women, providing comprehensive and long-term support to those who have experienced domestic, sexual or family violence. Over the past 13 weeks, my colleague [REDACTED] and I have been working closely alongside the [REDACTED] to explore how we can design physical and emotional safety [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to ensure women and girls are respected, healthy and safe, and experience full participation and equality in their lives. The [REDACTED] provides free or low-cost health care, and offers health programs, groups and education to improve the physical, mental and social health and wellbeing of women and girls. In this engagement, we worked alongside [REDACTED]

Throughout the entirety of the project, we maintained close contact [REDACTED]. Our meetings were scheduled fortnightly with [REDACTED] which gave us the opportunity to regularly inform her of our progress, align ourselves to the [REDACTED] priorities, as well as present our findings, concepts and final solution for feedback. Value creation and relationship development are highly integrated (Ouden, 2012), and as a result of the consistent, positive interactions between ourselves and the [REDACTED] and I were fortunate enough to gain access to the [REDACTED] exclusive resources. One of the most pivotal points of our project was our on-site visit [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] provided a site tour of the [REDACTED] and enthusiastically connected us [REDACTED] staff, many of whom we interviewed, including [REDACTED] intake worker, Mental Health Care worker, and receptionist. [REDACTED] worked alongside us to distribute a pamphlet to domestic violence victim survivors to encourage user involvement in our project. As detailed in my reflection, "[REDACTED] has been very helpful and supportive with reaching out to her community to see if anyone is willing to be a part of the project." Evidently, our close partnership with the [REDACTED] created many opportunities for [REDACTED] deepen our understanding of the problem space.

Currently, in the domestic violence space, design is primarily focused around the physical experiences of safety; such as in refuges, or in policy and regulation. The government is working to bring in more prevention and early intervention measures, such as the NSW Government's Domestic and Family Violence Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy, which is a framework for how organisations should design and deliver prevention and early intervention activities. At the national level, the main overarching policy is the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. Existing programs and initiatives that have been developed under this plan include a 24-hour counselling service for victims, respectful relationships education, and specialist training for nurses and Aboriginal health workers in rural areas (Mulayim et al., 2017). However, although these solutions are effective in the areas they target, domestic violence interventions are predominantly reactive. One of our interview participants stated, "so much of what we do in this space is reactive...we're just trying to fix problems, and we come up with bandaid solutions." Instead, one must understand domestic violence as a 'wicked', complex,

Discussion

Design is a valuable tool that can empower a design practitioner to step into an unfamiliar problem space, uncover rich insights, clarify goals and solve wicked problems. By working alongside the [REDACTED] and developing rapport and aligning priorities, design has the capacity to drive targeted solutions and deliver sustainable value for non-profit organisations.

It is crucial for designers to develop good rapport with stakeholders to increase mutual engagement and maximise valuable output. A positive collaboration between stakeholders and designers can result in greater opportunities of engagement and deeper integration into the problem space, improving a designers' understanding and enriching the value delivered to end users. Towards the end of the project, I reflected, "since we showed active engagement and curiosity to their processes and routine, we strengthened the trust between ourselves and the NPO." In the context of our project, by expressing curiosity as designers, we demonstrate our commitment and care for the organisation and space we are working in, motivating stakeholders to reflect this interest with equal enthusiasm and engagement. Moreover, when groups develop rapport, they are more likely to trust each other and identify with each other, leading to high levels of cooperation and knowledge sharing (Tomasi et al., 2015). This was evident throughout our engagement with [REDACTED] was willing to connect [REDACTED] to real victim-survivors, "...because of her eagerness, we felt that we could leverage our positive relationship with [REDACTED] to contact victim-survivors." Consequently, our rapport with [REDACTED] established a solid foundation of mutual support that granted us access to real users, allowing us to collect richer personal insights, thereby increasing the quality of our research and the subsequent value of our output. Since user-identified problems result in the design of better solutions (Surma-aho et al., 2022), access to real users, and their thoughts, motivations and needs was integral to delivering targeted value and developing a solution that would be impactful to our end users. Hence, developing rapport with the IWHC contributes to the creation of value, as engaged stakeholders are more willing to invest their time, energy and effort into equipping designers with the relevant resources that aid in developing informed, tailored solutions that support the organisation's interests.

Furthermore, designers can deliver value as equal collaborators with stakeholders, by relying on the reciprocal relationship for feedback. Once the solid foundation between designers and stakeholders has been established, designers are no longer simple 'observers' on the fringe, or isolated by the exclusive responsibility of acting as design expert (Trischler, 2018). Rather, they are actively invited into the organisation's realm and immersed in the problem space. Reciprocal support is developed and sustained; designers are seen as equals and actively consulted for their insights, while stakeholders are approached for feedback as experts of the problem space. Following one of our consultations, "We iterated our prototypes based on Trish's feedback, removing the cartoon images which did not communicate much value to our users, and instead implemented real-life photos to help women better familiarise themselves with the space." Consequently, as equal collaborators, designers and stakeholders engage in a feedback loop, keeping each party informed of progress, and critically aware of gaps and areas of improvement. Individuals need feedback on their progress toward a shared goal, and constructive feedback enables them to adjust the level or direction of their effort for maximum value creation (Latham, 2004). In this sense, both designers and stakeholders can hold each other accountable, and improve the quality of the design solution through consistent feedback and guidance

towards the organisation's priorities and needs - in this context, developing referral pathways that feel physically and emotionally safe to women. Designers are therefore equipped as equal collaborators to continually iterate and deliver impactful and meaningful value through thoughtful solutions.

Aligning with stakeholder priorities ensures designers deliver tailored value to their organisations. In any stakeholder engagement, the organisation's stakeholders are responsible for outlining expectations and deliverables, providing necessary resources, and clarifying their aims and goals. Designers are tasked to understand these requirements and innovate with the organisation's mission, values and needs at the centre of their design process. In the beginning of our project, we set goals to "understand the priorities of the [REDACTED] and "keep whatever we created as close to the heart and culture of the [REDACTED] as possible." Goals are crucial to helping us know what we want to achieve and where to concentrate our efforts (Smith, 2013). In the initial research phase, my sentiment was that "It felt like we were vaguely treading through all this information with no clue what it would lead to, or where we were going with it." Without direction or guidance, [REDACTED] and I were unsure if our research "was on the right track", and most importantly; if it would provide genuine value to our stakeholders. By centering our goals in line with the [REDACTED] priorities, we gained greater clarity around what was impactful and useful to our stakeholders. Understanding their priorities empowered us to focus our design processes around what would deliver the most value; for our project, it was the [REDACTED] priority to create emotionally and physically safe referral pathways for women experiencing domestic violence. This knowledge helped me focus on ideating relevant, feasible and trauma-informed concepts, and made it easier to identify distractors that would detract us from our goals (Smith, 2013). Overall, by aligning with stakeholder [REDACTED] priorities, we were able to establish goal oriented and focused value for our NPO.

Moreover, centering user needs and opinions throughout the design process results in valuable design input and aligns with the [REDACTED] core mission. It is crucial for designers to understand what users value in order to make informed decisions about what to create. In my reflection, I state, "By having a service provider's perspective, we were better informed about which concepts were feasible, which concepts addressed the needs of survivors, and which concepts did not have much of an impact." Working with users is central to the human-centred design process and ensures the end product meets the needs and capabilities of the user (Harte et al., 2017). It also allows us to distinguish between what should be kept or discarded in the iteration stages, in order to move forth and develop a relevant, useful solution. Also, by keeping user needs at the heart of the design process and making sure our solution addresses their issues, our non-profit organization, the [REDACTED] innovates to create sustainable value for itself by providing targeted, added value for its clients (Ouden, 2012). Indeed, the more designers know what their users truly want, the more chance the product they design will have practical success and uptake by its users (Pols, 2017). Similarly, by orienting innovation towards the clients and individuals the organisation is attempting to design for, the organisation is better able to create new market opportunities and competitive advantage (Groeger and Schweitzer, 2014). In the context of this project, although the [REDACTED] is a non-for-profit organisation, there is still value in considering and developing the competitive advantages of the [REDACTED]. With innovative referral pathways that directly target end users' needs, there is the possibility of more women gravitating towards services provided by the WTRC, which ultimately aligns with their mission of providing comprehensive and long-term support for women experiencing domestic, family or sexual violence. Therefore, centering user needs is valuable

as it ensures the [REDACTED] can offer users targeted care, and increase their user base to reach more women in need. In this sense, design is valuable in ensuring solutions are created with users in mind, while simultaneously furthering the [REDACTED] mission.

Ultimately, the experiences from the student engagement and partnership with the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] have demonstrated how design is valuable in creating impactful, meaningful and tailored solutions for its end users. Due to its competitive advantage, targeted design also extends the IWHC's mission of providing accessible health and well-being services to more women, thereby contributing to their pursuit of value.

Reflective Essay: EmD 4

1. Introduction:

Design and its various disciplines and approaches have been used as an effective strategic tool to generate value in organisations, including identifying and acting upon growth opportunities, addressing gaps and targeting internal functional challenges (Rose et al., 2017). Design is particularly useful for large organisations seeking to gain a competitive advantage in the market and generate profits for enterprises. Whether it is using design as a marketing solution, a visual or functional product, or a process of management, planning and decision-making (Cooper et al., 2017). Although the experiences of designing for non-profits are different from designing retail and commercial experiences since they are generally not designing a product or service, but rather, they are selling a cause and series of values (Kruger, 2014).

About this essay:

This essay focuses on a 13-week-long student engagement project with a non-profit organisation (NPO), [REDACTED], to develop a design solution in hopes to demonstrate:

- 1) *How design can generate value for non-profit organisations and,*
- 2) *How design can contribute to a non-profit's pursuit of value.*

The project was guided based on a provided brief by the NPO which outlined what they expected as a design outcome: a solution to *communicate their organisational strategy for sustainable community engagement* (see appendix for full design brief). The engagement was carried out by 2 design students, [REDACTED] who adopted a user-centred design approach to address the brief and were supervised by [REDACTED] in the School of Architecture, Design and Planning.

About the NPO:

[REDACTED] a socially inclusive creative arts charity that aims to use art as a creative medium to support the well-being of local communities [REDACTED] also aims to provide creatives with the opportunity to thrive and advance their skills with studios to rent, offering maker spaces, events and open leisure environments for the general public. [REDACTED]

2. Process:

Project and research objectives:

In order to understand how to effectively communicate the organisational strategy of [REDACTED] our research objective was to understand who [REDACTED] is, what they do, and why they do what they do. Guided by Simon Sinek's model of the golden circle, an explicit value proposition (i.e. finding the 'why') for an organisation is essential for generating loyal customer and employee bases and plays an integral role in an organisation's strategy (Straker & Nusem, 2019). Hence, project aims and research objectives have been framed accordingly:

Project objective: The purpose of this project is to effectively communicate the organisational strategy of [REDACTED] to elicit community engagement through a design-led approach to generate value.

3. Discussion:

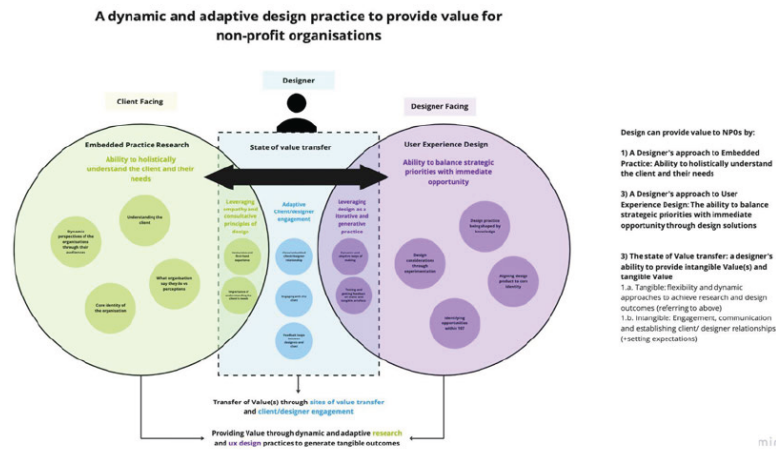


Figure 3. Providing value to NPOs diagram (Analysis of weekly reflections)

Design can provide value to NPOs by:

1) A Designer's approach to Embedded Practice: The ability to holistically understand the client and their needs

According to Salokanagas, embedded research described a mutually beneficial relationship between academics and the client's organisation, where the relationship generally provides the researcher with greater access to the organisation with benefits for collecting information and research support (McGinity & Salokangas, 2014). The designer's role as an embedded researcher combined with an ethnographic study of the organisation provided an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the [redacted] inner workings, perception of audiences, internal processes and their core identity ('why') in order to provide a valuable design solution. The purpose of this research process is to bridge the ambiguity of who the organisation is in order to best communicate their organisational strategy for a valuable solution. The 3 lens that create the [redacted] and identity guided our research [redacted] (refer to figure 1)

A similar study was conducted by Agboka, who looked into "participatory localisation" in a social justice non-profit organisation to improve localisation practices at international sites.

His article expands on this concept which expands from a traditional stance on user-centred design from an individual to a community focus, stating: *"This means that we need an ethnographic, participant-observer approach to the localization process that requires careful, humble, and thorough outsider involvement with local users and in which users and designers co-construct knowledge [21, p. 43]"* (Rose et al., 2017).

An 'outsider' and 'insider' perspective has been utilised by the designers when approaching embedded practice research.

'Outsider perspective':

By utilising an outsider perspective, we were also able to draw from design business innovation frameworks to conduct a **market analysis of competitors of** [REDACTED]. We were able to map and differentiate competitors by their target segment, value proposition, core values, offerings and channels and identify opportunities to market [REDACTED] that best represents who they are and how they can be distinguishable compared to other organisations (Tomitsch et al., 2020). This process also cautioned us on how we can move forward with communicating what [REDACTED] is by becoming aware of who they are not (see appendix, 'Links' document: 'Miro: discovery stage' for more information). For instance, [REDACTED] expressed that [REDACTED] is more of a 'socially inclusive community space' rather than an arts organisation, in which is also a factor that sets them apart from other organisations.

Content analysis was also conducted on how they currently communicate their organisational strategy and what core values they intend to communicate. For example, maintaining a sense of gratitude, accountability and identity expression were major themes in their annual reports (see appendix 'Discovery Presentation').

'Insider perspective':

Knowing who the non-profit organisation really is, their essence and core are essential when developing solutions that fit their mission and goals and align with what they intend to do and how they intend to grow (add reference). Through workshops and interviews with the CEO, we understood how [REDACTED] came about to be, their future mission and goals, their selection process with partners and residents and the type of offerings they aim to have (see appendix, 'Links' document: 'Notion (discovery phase)').

Core touch points of the organisation such as their two main locations ([REDACTED] [REDACTED]) were also visited and observed to understand how audiences interacted with the space. Through this process, identified potential issues such as the lack of engagement in the [REDACTED], which was further verified by [REDACTED] who expressed the struggled to get people into the space. However, we also found opportunities such as how the space was utilised at its fullest potential during events as observed when we went to the comedy festival. Multiple perspectives of [REDACTED] audiences also gave an alternate view of their relationship and if their experience aligns with what [REDACTED] intends to offer (see appendix, 'Discovery presentation').

Through embedded practice research, designers can contribute to an organisation's pursuit of value by taking the time to fully understand the organisation to its core. Having access to resources such as resident spaces, events, makerspaces, and being in constant

communication with employees and residents allowed us to fully understand what the organisation has to offer for different audiences. Through further reflection, we realised that there are pathways for specific offerings within [REDACTED] and this has the opportunity to be further clarified through their channels, in-person spaces and through word of mouth. We also found strong value propositions within [REDACTED] are not well communicated through their current channels, particular on the [REDACTED] website. For instance, residents searching for a place to rent is one pathway and one distinguishing factor [REDACTED] offers is its affordability, flexibility and accommodation and having a physical space for maintaining stability and legitimacy as an organisation (see appendix, 'Discovery Presentation'). This provided us with possibilities moving forward for potential solutions. Hence, through an immersive embedded experience to gain a holistic understanding of the non-profit organisation and their needs, designers can have a clearer understanding of target audiences, work with the organisation's growth pathways and come up with a solution that best represents the NPO's core identity while leveraging their strategic advantages.

2) A Designer's approach to User Experience Design: The ability to balance strategic priorities with immediate opportunity through design solutions

Through our research process, we came about opportunities to communicate [REDACTED] organisational strategy that both addresses the specific solution expectations and fits in with the organisation's mission. Our approach to developing a solution was shaped by iteration through back and forth feedback with the client and various audiences at [REDACTED] including residents and wider audiences who have not heard of [REDACTED] but may be potential customers. Although we had several opportunities for potential solutions, we were able to narrow down the most useful, desirable and feasible outcomes based on specific client feedback on what would generate the most value. This process also gave us the opportunity to demonstrate the direct result of our research through a tangible solution that aligns with the issues the client was aiming to tackle.

Design considerations through knowledge and experimentation:

It is important that the solution aligns with the core identity of the organisation and the solution is not detached from what the organisation currently offers to increase its feasibility. Elements that align with the [REDACTED] identity include:

- Engaging and fun
- Inclusiveness
- Freedom of creative expression
- Keeping the grassroots integrity of the organisation
- Rebel spirit and breaking traditional norms in the artistic space

Elements that would provide value to the organisation through researched opportunities and expressed needs:

- Clarifying the offerings of [REDACTED]
- Facilitating community collaboration through mark-making
- Leveraging word of mouth
- Bringing people into the space
- Personalisation to create their own [REDACTED] story and share their journey at [REDACTED]

3) The state of Value transfer: a designer's ability to provide intangible Value(s) and tangible Value

3.a. Intangible Value(s): Engagement, communication and establishing client/designer relationships (+setting expectations)

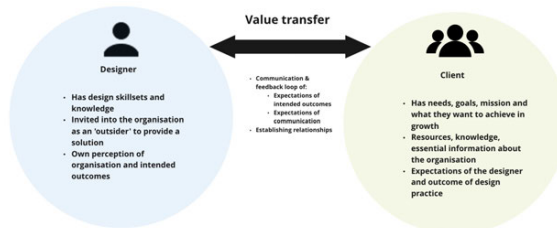


Figure 4. Value transfer in client engagement

When it comes to value transfer, there are different types of values contributed by designers and clients. Where the designer brings values relayed professional expertise, knowledge of the design space and personal values that make up their own characters, clients bring notions on how the solution will be used and fit into their organisation and insider information valuable to the designer to create the solution (Le Dantec & Do, 2009) (see Figure. 4). Through continuous feedback loops, cycles of critique and communication with the client, we were able to validate and refine a solution based on the client's needs and close the gap between the designer's and the client's expectations of the final solution. There are also other factors that are important to keep in mind:

Communication and establishing role expectations:

There is an importance of maintaining and establishing role expectations and understanding how to communicate with clients, particularly in the non-profit space when dealing with sensitive topics and audiences. Designers must balance between having the power to develop and pitch a solution, but also being cautious in their approach to communicating and approaching the design practice. In our research, we had to be wary that we were not dictating what needs to be done or insinuating that we know more than the client. This is because Jessica expressed how she wants to protect the organisation from 'dictators' that 'steal the chip from the seagull' and 'tell people what to do'. We also had to be careful using phrases while communicating such as saying we are 'helping them' and using the correct terminology to describe the organisation such as 'socially inclusive community space' rather than an 'arts organisation'.

Designers should mitigate between their personal values, the organisational values and the client's values during meetings to ensure they are providing value on the non-tangible plane. This clarification process also ensures that designers validate their assumptions about their role, expectations from the client and overall understanding of the organisation while developing a good client-designer relationship. This is particularly more important in the

non-profit space since they are 'selling' a cause and generally do not want to go against the values that are the foundation of the organisation (Le Dantec & Do, 2009).

Trust and transparency:

Through client engagement, establishing and maintaining trust is also important. We were lucky enough to have access to a lot of inside information about future plans such as communication and marketing plan, representatives to talk to, locations in the places and invitations to events such as an internal team strategy day. Being transparent on how we use this information, asking for permission when needed, presenting the value of having this access by creating a valuable solution and expressing gratitude is essential in developing the client/ designer relationship to continue working with the NPO.

3. b. Tangible Value: flexibility and dynamic approaches to achieve research and design outcomes

To provide a valuable solution, the sites that provide a tangible medium for value transfer include designers leveraging empathy and consultative principles of design during the research stage to understand the importance of client needs and having an immersive first-hand experience within the organisation to fully understand what type of solutions can provide value and identify opportunities within the space. In the design phase, testing and getting feedback on static artefacts meant that clients are able to see the outcome of the research conducted and how it can be applied in the organisation. This is in addition to having flexibility in the type of design solutions that can emerge such as low-budget alternatives, options on how certain design elements can be presented (such as icons and images) and novelty to portray the uniqueness of the organisation.

C.2.3. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: DESIGN PRACTITIONERS

This section outlines the interview guide used for conversations with design practitioners, focused on their experiences, methods, and relationships with their partner NPOs.



ETHICS APPLICATION

A design-led approach to generating value in non-profit organisations

REFLECTIVE INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interview protocol for Design Practitioner

Section 1: Introduction

1. Can you please introduce yourself and briefly describe [DESIGN PROJECT].
2. Please describe your primary role and responsibilities related to this project.
3. Could you briefly describe what this project entailed?
 - a. What was the aim of the project?
 - b. How did you go about achieving this goal?
 - c. Why did your organisation choose to pursue that goal specifically?

Section 2: Generating Value

In the next section I'd like to develop a better understanding of how your design practice created value for [RELATED NPO].

1. In your perspective, what skills, activities or behaviours relevant to design practice were most impactful on this project?
2. What kind of impact did these skills, activities or behaviours create?
3. Were there any specific design artefacts related to this moment? What impact did they have?

Section 3: Perceiving Value

In the next section I'd like to explore how you believe your design practice was perceived by the NPO you worked with.

1. What value do you think your work was perceived to have created for the NPO over the course of your engagement?
2. Were there any specific moments in which you think the value of your work was particularly evident?
 - a. What occurred in this moment?
 - b. Were there any specific design artefacts related to this moment? What impact did they have?

Those are all the questions I have planned, thank you so much for your time and insights today.

C.2.4. TRANSCRIPT: EMERGENT DESIGNER INTERVIEW

The following transcript presents an interview with an emergent designer (EmD 2), offering firsthand insight into their design practices and reflections.

Speaker 1 (00:00): Running perfect. And I just want to give you a little preface to say that there are three different things that we're going to be talking about today. The first set of questions that I have for you are mainly general knowledge, contextual introduction stuff, where I'm going to ask you to introduce yourself and the project. We are then going to move into a conversation around generating value specifically. And then the third section of the interview is around perceiving value. So perceiving and generating value are ideas that we already talked a lot about in class time. And so hopefully that's where the meat of the interview will come from. But just to start us off and again, to kind of get through some of that contextual information, could you just introduce yourself and briefly describe the design project that you were involved in this semester?

Speaker 2 (00:09): Yeah, so, hi, my name is [REDACTED]. I was part of a 13 week student engagement with my partner, and we were working alongside the [REDACTED] to see how we could design emotional and physical safety for women in the [REDACTED]. Sorry, Yeah. And this was also for the upcoming [REDACTED].

Speaker 1 (01:27): Fantastic. Could you describe what your primary role was in this project and any responsibilities that you had in relation to the project?

Speaker 2 (01:37): Yeah, so Sue and I were involved in the whole design process from the whole end-to-end design process from start to finish. Responsibilities included. So going from, sorry, I'm just going to refer to my essay.

Speaker 1 (02:04): Totally fine. I know that particularly with these types of projects, and particularly when we talk about end-to-end design, there's quite a lot that is involved in that process. So take your time and just take me through it.

Speaker 2 (02:16): So we went through the double diamond, basically. So discover, define, develop, and deliver all those phases. So in the discover phase we use, we developed a research plan, a research objective. We used research triangulation to understand the problem. And so we used online ethnography, contextual observations, and we conducted interviews with a lot of service workers to gain a better understanding of the problem area. And in terms of online ethnography, we looked at Reddit posts as well as women forums to see what women were saying about their experiences with domestic violence. And in terms of contextual observation, we actually visited two women's shelters. So firstly, the first one was [REDACTED] and I think that's [REDACTED]. And the second one was actually the [REDACTED] to the staff in the center, and it was a really good experience to just see what emotional and physical safety felt like and how they would provide that to their clients. And in the define phase, so discover in the define phase, we use thematic analysis as the method of analyzing.

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Speaker 1 (00:00): And yeah, so thematic analysis we came up with, I think it was, do you want to know the themes as well?

Speaker 1 (04:31): If you want to take me through them, I'd be happy to hear them again. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (04:35): Sure. I'll have to pull them up. Lemme just see. Yeah, we lemme find. So from the thematic analysis, we extracted one, two around 11 key themes. So these are cultural history of DV, respectful and sensitive engagement. Walking alongside women is an actively engaged process, knowledge and access to information responding appropriately. Cultural inclusion and feeling welcome services should adopt a holistic approach, perception of a lot of effort, little outcome, trusting other organizations as a team, compassion as a double-edged sword and obstacles to service provisions. And we also, I feel like I should screen share to show this, but

Speaker 1 (05:44): If that's going to make it easier. Yeah, absolutely.

Speaker 2 (05:47): And we also synthesized our findings to create this visual diagram, and we sorted out our themes into three different levels, I guess. So we have one existing at, I think it was at the bottom. It was so at the top, it was at an ideological level, very ingrained in our culture and what people already knew about DV. And this were things that were very hard to change. And then we have a systems level where it's a bit more manageable and we could probably target a bit more, but it wasn't as easy to change. And then we have the services level, which we thought it would be easiest to target this area. So that really helped us understand how everything worked together.

Speaker 2 (07:13): I still sharing. Fantastic. And I'll just quickly run over the other phases as well. Yeah. So using that, we went through ideation use, crazy AIDS Force association and brain writing, which really helped us move beyond traditional ideas because we could innovate new concepts. And then in the developed phase, we transitioned from concept to prototype by bringing our ideas into the physical world. And we also tested our low fidelity and mid fidelity prototypes with service workers as well as our stakeholders from [REDACTED]. And based on their feedback, we continually iterated our prototype and strengthened it so it would be targeting our users. And yeah, that's the main process. I think other responsibilities also included stakeholder management and being able to continue that partnership and grow that partnership because I think in this engagement, it really flourished and it really helped our project just because, yeah, they were willing to provide a lot of feedback, a lot of resources, and there was just a lot of positive optimism support from both parties. So yeah, that was awesome.

Speaker 1 (08:58): Fantastic. That's so great to hear. I'd love to know a little bit more around that stakeholder management notion that you brought up there. But one other thing that I want to touch on is, so I know that for everyone that I'm speaking to, everybody was working with a partner, but some of those partnership dynamics were quite different, and some people were working very closely with their partners and they did everything together. Other times it was a great situation of one person really balancing the other

person out and kind of playing to each other's strengths. What was the dynamic like for you and your partner, and did that have any impact on the different roles and responsibilities that each of you kind of took on?

Speaker 2 (09:43):

Right. Are you talking about [REDACTED] as my partner? Yeah.

Speaker 1 (09:47):

Sorry, with [REDACTED]. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 2 (09:51):

Yeah, I think [REDACTED] and I feel like we split the work very evenly. We went through everything together. It wasn't like she was on the first stage of the project and I was on the second stage. We consulted each other and we crosschecked everything with each other throughout the whole project. So with the research plan and research objectives, we would split up the work, for example, searching for interview participants, maybe she would go onto LinkedIn and then I would go find people online, send emails and stuff like that. So the work was very evenly split, I would say. And in terms of playing to strengths, [REDACTED] is better at working at Figma and she has more experience with prototyping and all of that. But throughout the project, I really wanted to learn that skill as well and learn from [REDACTED]. So she let me, and I asked her if I could do some of the Figma work to practice my design skills as well, and we split it.

Speaker 2 (11:17):

So [REDACTED] was sort of in charge of automate you and I was in charge [REDACTED] but that's more so in the sense that we would just do a bigger part when designing it on Figma, but we would help each other across both of them. So I would still say it's quite an even split. And luckily we got, I mean, we got two prototypes to work on, so we could assign one to each person, but that definitely helped make everything a lot easier. And I was learning a lot from [REDACTED] and she kept me grounded when sometimes I would get stressed about, is this actually targeting users is, yeah, sometimes I would doubt our concept and she would just ground me and bring it back to the insights we found and talk me through them so I could feel a bit more confident in our concept.

Speaker 1 (12:29):

Fantastic. Amazing. I just really love hearing about student partnerships where you get an opportunity to champion your own little part of it, but to know that you are being supportive of each other and that you've always got each other's back is just really lovely to hear.

Speaker 2 (12:47):

Yeah, for sure. I think [REDACTED] and I became really close because of this project, and it was just really enjoyable working with her and I learned a lot as well. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (13:02):

Fantastic. Which is exactly the whole purpose of the unit, so that's always nice to hear. Going back a little bit again, I want to try to hone in on the stakeholder management a little bit more because I think there's such an interesting dynamic for us to unpack here. Given that I know that I was involved in stakeholder management from a bit more of an administrative perspective, what does stakeholder

management mean to you on the ground engaging with, so to keep it clear, I'll say [REDACTED] is your partner, [REDACTED] is your client. So what was stakeholder management for you working on the ground with your client?

Speaker 2 (13:46):

Yeah, I think at Baseline it's making sure we deliver to their expectations and that we're fulfilling their expectations and what they require. So aligning with the brief, making sure we're aligning with their priorities, which is designing physical and emotional safety for the [REDACTED]. And also making sure we really respect their feedback and their decisions and their input, because they're more likely to provide that if they know that we respect it and we're taking it on board with whatever we're designing as well.

Speaker 1 (14:37):

Yeah, fantastic. Talking about making sure that you're delivering to their expectations, were those expectations clear to you? Did you feel like you knew what you were working towards? Or was that a much hazier type of, I'm going to try to put something out there and we'll see if it works. Kind of process?

Speaker 2 (15:01):

I feel like, because yeah, I feel like it might have been the second one, just because there wasn't a set list where it had all of the functional requirements or what they exactly wanted to see because we were designing something that was new and innovative, and it wasn't like they were asking us to create something specific, which is why it was a bit hazy in that sense that we were all sort of just exploring this space and we were just curious and everyone was just curious to see what would come out of it. So it was a little ambiguous in the sense of what they exactly wanted or expected, but baseline, I think we all wanted to create something for the user. So that was always at the heart of the project, and their expectations would also come in when we iterated and when we tested with them and asked for feedback. So that sort of guided us along the way as well.

Speaker 1 (16:25):

Fantastic. And that does make a lot of sense. I think often in the design process, your inevitably juggling that ambiguity, and so you are always figuring out exactly what everybody wants and helping them uncover what they want as you are going. So that does make a lot of sense. Talking about expectations or on the same thread as expectations, could you just describe to me what the aim of this project was overall?

Speaker 2 (16:55):

Yeah. Do you mean for the client or for ourselves?

Speaker 1 (17:05):

Are they different things?

Speaker 2 (17:08):

Yeah, I would say they're different things.

Speaker 1 (17:10):
Perfect. I'd love to hear both of them.

Speaker 2 (17:13):
So expectations for the client, making sure that we delivered something of value, something that would really be impactful, something that aligned with the brief, designing physical and emotional safety, something that was necessary and that they wanted, so the client shared that they would prefer, if we looked into referral pathways, which is what we did. So there was an expectation to create something around that as well. And just making sure that we actually produced a mid to high fidelity prototype and that there was a deliverable at the end. And also to show them our continual progress.

Speaker 2 (18:14):
So that was done through all the presentations and keeping them in the loop and showing them the design process as well, and that we were putting in the work to really investigate and understand the problem space and cater to our user's needs. And in terms of expectations for ourself, for [redacted] and I this project was a very, it was something we jumped on board because we really wanted to develop our skills and ourselves and our design process. And I think we really got the opportunity to do so through the engagement with [redacted]. Also learning from a, and just going through the whole design process, but doing it very thoroughly. I felt like we were supported every step of the way, and in every phase we really honed in and unpacked it and tried to do it in the best way we could. We didn't breeze past anything. I felt like we were quite meticulous about it as well. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (19:35):
Fantastic. Amazing. So I think that's everything that we need for that introduction and kind of contextual element. So I do want to move us on to the next section of questions that I've got, and these are all specifically related to developing a better understanding of how your design practice created value for the [redacted]. So this is a bit of a big question, but the first thing I want to ask you is, in your perspective, what skills, activities, or behaviors that are relevant to design practice, so what design skills, activities, or behaviors were most impactful in this project?

Speaker 2 (20:19):
Do you mind if I have a little think about that?

Speaker 1 (20:22):
Go for it. Okay.

Speaker 2 (20:26):
So skills, activities, and

Speaker 1 (20:30):
Or behaviors

Speaker 2 (20:31):
Or behaviors. I'm just thinking of all of the traits of good designers. I think I've read an article on this before.

Speaker 1 (21:08):
Is there anything that's immediately coming to mind?

Speaker 2 (21:12):
Yeah, well, I just remember this thing could kill your baby.

Speaker 1 (21:19):
Which is Yeah, kill your darlings. Yeah,

Speaker 2 (21:23):
Kill your darling. Kill your baby. Which is, oh my God, open-mindedness to change and not being too fixated on a certain idea or concept because another one could come along that's better, or the original one might not be as effective. But yeah,

Speaker 1 (21:46):
Fantastic. I mean, that's a really interesting one. I'd love for us to start there and then we can maybe dip into some other skills, activities, or behaviors that come to mind. But what do you think the impact of that kill your darlings mentality has? Or what kind of impact does that mentality create for you in the context of this project.

Speaker 2 (22:09):
In the context of this project? I'm just going to have a think about it because my darling was safe space and it went through. But I think definitely my favorite concept would change depending on how impactful it was, how our clients received it, and also how it tested with service workers. That sort of changed how I viewed each concept and how valuable I thought each concept was. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (23:05):
What do you think would've happened if you didn't have maybe the flexibility or open-mindedness that a Kill Your Darling mentality offered?

Speaker 2 (23:14):
Yeah, if we didn't have that, we would've been very fixated on a single individual concept. For example, refer. Me, that was one of our initial design concepts that [redacted] and I really liked, we thought, to be honest, we thought that was the one that was going to pass through because it was similar to Choice Connect. It already had an existing a predecessor, so we thought it would be easier to implement, and it also seemed to be effective based on how popular Choice Connect was. So we thought that would be really effective and impactful as well for clients and our users. But it turned out that, it turned out that [redacted] mentioned it would be very difficult to run behind the scenes because it would require a lot of service staff constantly updating it in the backend, which wasn't really feasible. So if we didn't have the flexibility to change, we would've been very stuck at that stage. I think. But because of our ideation and because we came up with a lot of different concepts and we were very receptive to feedback, we decided to go along with two other concepts that also seemed to be effective. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (24:56):

Fantastic. I mean, my next question there was around is around whether or not there are any artifacts that are related to that moment of kill your darlings, of being flexible and of being open-minded. And I know you mentioned the ideation process there, so I'm starting to just think a lot about, is there a design artifact that you can recall that was connected to ideation or that was connected to that kill your Darlings mentality?

Speaker 2 (2:57:28):

Yeah. Let me bring up a Figma, my fig. I think it is loading.

Speaker 1 (2:6:00):

Oh, yep. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (2:6:02):

This would probably be where we created, where we did most of our ideation. Do you want me to go through it?

Speaker 1 (2:6:15):

I was going to say I remember, I do remember this one. I don't know if we necessarily need to go through each section, but what I am more interested in is what I think this is actually a really good opportunity for us to talk about this in a lot more detail. So I think I maybe want to start with your perspective and what you think this offered for you and [REDACTED]. Could you just speak a little bit to what the value of this method or maybe this approach was? What was the impact of this artifact for you and for your partner in your design process?

Speaker 2 (2:6:57):

Yeah. I think this ideation method of brain writing and force association that we were doing, we were able to really, I guess, think innovatively, think outside the box instead of just designing something that is already out there. And I guess it also let us really unpack the concepts that were key at the heart. Oh, sorry. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (2:7:40):

Sorry. Could you take me through that? Maybe with just one example where you talk about unpacking a concept and getting to the heart of it. What does that mean, or what did that mean in your process?

Speaker 2 (2:7:56):

Yeah, I guess because when we were creating all of these concepts and we were coming up with ideas, we wanted to see what was the underlying insight or the underlying impact it would have that really spoke to us. So Sue and I, we picked our favorite concepts, and then we would sort of talk about why we liked them. So for example, here, reduced prejudice through cooperative activities. We liked it because it would develop connection between people and camaraderie. Another example is, lemme see, Yeah, for example, a DV escape room or something. It was the key missing thing is empathy. And we thought empathy was very important in making sure people could connect to women's experiences and then putting them in the shoes. So that was what we were getting at when we were trying to explore what was at the heart of our concept.

Speaker 1 (2:9:22):

Fantastic. And another thing that I'm really interested in is the breadth of thinking that is visible here. There are so many different concepts and so many different ideas that are present in this entire big jam, and I think that is really evident to you and your partner. And I know that we talked about it quite a lot, but it is very different from what your client ends up seeing at the end of the day. What do you think did this, sorry, I assume, because [REDACTED] never saw this big jam, did

Speaker 2 (2:9:00):

She? No.

Speaker 1 (2:9:02):

So could you just take me through, what did [REDACTED] end up seeing?

Speaker 2 (2:9:07):

Yeah. Oh, lemme find the other. We presented a summary of our ideation, our initial concepts to [REDACTED]. I'll pull that up as well. So [REDACTED] ended up seeing four concepts because we narrowed down all of these different ideas by consulting unit, and you cut them down for us by just telling us what was feasible and viable. Yeah. So we cut all of them down. So we had around 11 or 12, and then we cut them all down to four, and then we presented the four to [REDACTED]. And, oh, let see. Sorry. We have so many presentations. So you find, okay. Sorry, just a, so lemme share screen. Okay. So we presented this to [REDACTED] and it was basically going through each concept, the key features and any precedents there were. Nice. That was what she got to see instead of the whole ideation. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (2:9:21):

And can I ask you again, what do you think motivated you to select for rather than a hundred?

Speaker 2 (2:9:31):

Yeah. Well, we had to continue narrowing down our concepts so we could create something in the time span that we had. And it was quite hard narrowing down because there were a lot of concepts that we thought had potential or might have been impactful for the client, but we decided on these four because we thought they were unique, they would be impactful, and I think, and that they address user needs. So I think a really big one was just that we wanted to create something that was innovative as well, because in that sense, we would be delivering value to the [REDACTED] because they wouldn't be able to get those solutions anywhere else. So we wanted to be creative and have something that I guess exceeded the expectations and would surprise and delight them too.

Speaker 1 (2:4:48):

Fantastic. Great. I mean, I feel like we've really, we've had a great. I mean, you said you didn't prepare anything earlier, but that has been a really great conversation around specific artifacts and that kind of kill your darling mentality that we've really talked through. I do want to ask, I'm a bit conscious of time, and I know that we've got another section of questions to go through, and I don't want to take up too much of your weekend, but are there any other design skills, activities, or behaviors that come to mind that you think were particularly impactful in the project that you want to discuss?

Speaker 2 (2:5:27):

I was just going to say, I have one moment.

Speaker 1 (3:5:39):

Go for it. Take your time.

Speaker 2 (3:5:52):

I think how we discussed, but in the sense of, and also curiosity, so constantly seeking feedback, seeking, seeking information and insights from the people we interview. Yeah, I think curiosity is a really big part of being a designer.

Speaker 1 (3:6:24):

I really love that sentiment around curiosity, and it makes me think about where curiosity comes up or how it gets played out. Do you think that these ideas of being curious were really fundamental to your practice? Do you think [redacted] was feeling curious as well, and it was in between? Take me through this curiosity element a little bit more. Where did it take place? How did it play out?

Speaker 2 (3:6:53):

Yeah, so I think curiosity is so important in terms of keeping both parties engaged in the project and making sure we're excited to see what the other person is going to deliver or going to contribute. So we were really, because Sue and I were curious about the project, we felt more care about it as well. And that sort of showed through in the way we conducted ourselves and speaking to clients, speaking to service workers, and how we approach the project in general. I'm trying to think of a specific example.

Speaker 2 (3:7:57):

I think because we were really curious about the center as well, and we got that opportunity to explore, a lot of questions came to mind when we were going through the center itself. And an interesting point, for example, was how we could capture that sense of physical and emotional safety in our project. I think it's just being open to opportunities as well. One thing could lead to another. Going to the [redacted] opened up so many opportunities for us and so many. Just a lot of things to explore. And in terms of curiosity for the client, I think just speaking from experience of the first presentation we had with [redacted] she was very, very excited and engaged about the insights we delivered, and she was telling us how they were spot on, and she really resonated me, really resonated with them. And I think that was the first time I feel like we really saw her light up in the project, and I could definitely see the impacts of it because she was so willing to help connect us to DV victim survivors to tell us more about her experiences and getting other people on board for us, and also providing feedback.

Speaker 2 (3:9:52):

So she was very engaged and involved throughout the process because of that curiosity, I think.

Speaker 1 (4:0:00):

Fantastic. I think that's actually that mention there of the first presentation is perhaps the perfect segue that we can have into that next section around perceiving value, because the last couple of questions that I have for you in this interview are really oriented around those speculations on how we think our client perceive the value of our work. So again, coming back to a bit of a big broad and tricky question,

when you think about your entire engagement and the whole semester's worth of work that you had with your partner and with your client, what value do you think your work was perceived to have created for your client over the course of the entire semester?

Speaker 2 (4:0:49):

That's a really beefy question.

Speaker 2 (4:0:55):

Wow, I guess they can see. I feel like obviously we have the tangible deliverable, which is what they would see as value, because it's something they can understand and understand how it would be implemented and how it would affect potential users. So that's a more simple example of value, a clearer example. I think they would also have seen the value throughout the whole engagement. So us conducting that entire design process and keeping them in the loop and having those presentations with them, showing them what we did specifically to come to certain conclusions or certain concepts, I think they would've seen the value in that and that we were aligning with their priorities, with their goals and the mission of the center and user needs as well. So in that sense, it would have also, yeah, I think it would've have aligned with their mission, which is why there would be value there. Fantastic.

Speaker 1 (4:2:49):

Fantastic. That's alright. It's a big beefy question. And now that we've got a little bit of a looser framework established, I'd love us to hone in and I'd love to ask, were there any specific moments where you think the value of your work was particularly evident? And I know we kind of already talked about the presentations and I'm happy for us to chat about that more. Or are there any other moments where again, you felt like it was really, really the value of your work was super visible and really well perceived by your client?

Speaker 2 (4:3:14):

I think I can probably think of just two instances. So the first being those presentations where I think the ones where we were actively working with them and including them in the process, so asking them for feedback for concepts or feedback for user testing, they were really seeing how everything works. They could experience what we were doing. So I think that would be a clear example. Yeah, so sorry, it's alright. Coming back to totally

Speaker 1 (4:4:05):

Fine.

Speaker 2 (4:4:06):

Again,

Speaker 1 (4:4:07):

We're just thinking about specific moments where the value of our work was really evident.

Speaker 2 (4:4:12):

Yeah, yeah, I guess in terms of the testing and stuff, it was just like when they're part of that experience, they can see how, I guess, rigorous the design processes and how we're actually taking on insights and

implementing them. So I remember in one of the final presentations, we spoke about how [redacted] told us a particular line of feedback in that we actually showed her the change that we implemented, and I think she responded really positively to that. So yeah, just them seeing the continual iterations and how the design would continually get better and more tailored to users and their needs, that was very valuable. And also as going to the [redacted] I thought that was a very pivotal point because I felt like that's when we really met and connected, not only just because we were conversing over Zoom and we finally met in person, but because we could show each other how much we cared and were interested about the project. So

Speaker 1 (4:53:33):

I feel like there was that moment where you really showed up. I mean physically exactly, but also with the rest of that energy and care that you had invested in the project.

Speaker 2 (4:54:45):

Yeah, and I think it was just, I remember we were just moaning about how long the drive was, but I don't regret it at all because we learned so much going there. And I think showing up just showed that we were putting in the effort for the project. We were really trying to understand their experiences and trying to step into their shoes, which is making sure we keep their needs and also the center at the heart of the project. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (4:56:30):

Fantastic. Technically, I have one more question left, and this is about whether or not there were any specific design artifacts that were related to these moments of impact. And I think the reason that I'm hesitant to ask that is because it's so different from the physically showing up. I think that moment of connection was so deeply facilitated by your physical presence and you actually being there, but I don't know if there are any design artifacts that are kind of connected to that moment, but maybe less around that moment of connection and maybe with some of the other moments where you felt like your work was visible. Could you take me through any tangible artifacts that you had made that you think helped generate impact and helped you to really make your work visible?

Speaker 2 (4:57:32):

Yeah, I think I'll show you the final design presentation because that was sort of the conclusion of all of our work at the end of the project. And I'll also show the Figma prototype because I feel like that was the tangible, that was evidence of what we created as well. So this was our final design presentation where we went through an overview of back the four initial design solutions we had, and then how we cut it down by getting feedback from service providers. Our final two concepts we showed them. So we talked about the insight we were addressing, the user need we were addressing and the issues, and then the goal and the purpose of the prototype of the concept. And then we went through the fidelity, the low fidelity testing stages with them, what insights we got from that and how we used it to iterate and create the final high fidelity prototype. And then we talked about the key features and how these, and then when we were talking through the design presentation with them, we would link it back to how each key feature was related to a user need or insight. So that would really bring [redacted] and [redacted] back to what we were addressing and how it was impactful.

Speaker 2 (5:00:00):

So that would automate you. And then the user feedback we got, and also we talked about [redacted] in the same structure as well. So going through what we improved upon and how we got to the final concept. Fantastic. And we also took them through the prototype as well. They actually got to experience this one. We were testing with them, and they could just see the functionality of it. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (5:03:06):

Fantastic. I'd love to know why do you think these, or not why, but perhaps what do you think the significance or importance of these artifacts is in these moments of visibility and in these moments of the value of your work being really deeply perceived?

Speaker 2 (5:05:57):

Yeah, I guess it's definitely one thing to be like, we care about the project and we show interest and investment in it, but then it's another thing to actually show the work we produce, because then it's the product of all of that, all of those things. So yeah, I think for example, in this prototype, just showing that the quick exit, it actually goes to a Google Home screen. I remember when they saw that, they were very impressed because they could see that we actually considered the user situations and their experience as well. So in that sense, I think it just helped reinforce, it helped reinforce what we were doing and how, yeah, sure. I'm going with that much.

Speaker 1 (5:21:11):

No, no, no. I think I'm getting it because maybe I should apologize in advance for another Natalia saying, although hopefully this one's not as wacky as the usual, but it's almost like after talking the talk, you show that you can walk. Walk.

Speaker 2 (5:23:31):

Exactly. That's what I was getting

Speaker 1 (5:23:35):

At. Yeah. Well, just as you're describing, you have those moments where you say that you care, and it's one thing to say that you care and to talk about how much energy and effort you're investing in it. But these are almost the tangible realizations of those moments where you've got that function, you've got this feature, it's there, and it's an actual, yeah, I keep coming back to this idea of it's that realization of everything that you've been saying before.

Speaker 2 (5:30:05):

Yeah. Yeah. I remember when we were doing the reflection, it was very difficult to talk about what value we were creating in the initial stages just because there weren't any tangible products or offerings we could point to. So I think definitely having that tangible product at the end, or tangible design artifacts, they really communicate across what we've been doing. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (5:33:40):

Fantastic. I'm also curious, did you have the same types of struggles responding to how you thought your client perceived the value of your work in those early stages without the tangible products as well?

Speaker 2 (5:35:54):

Yeah. Yeah. I would say so because I felt like I could only talk about, oh, they could see value in the effort we were putting or all of that, but it felt like there wasn't much substance to it because there was no actual deliverable. So yeah.

Speaker 1 (54:18):

Fantastic. I mean, Lydia, that's my last question for you, and this has honestly been a real delight and such a rich conversation. I'm glad. No, you were worried about not being prepared. You knocked it out of the park. That was really fantastic. Before we wrap up, I do just want to give you the opportunity to open the floor. Are there any thoughts lingering in the back of your mind that you feel like you haven't had a chance to talk about that are worthwhile mentioning? I know that that's the vaguest and broadest question, and often when people ask me that, I'm like, I've got nothing, but I just want to check in and make sure there's nothing, no lingering thoughts or things that you feel like you haven't had a chance to talk about just from reflecting on your experience of the semester.

Speaker 2 (55:15):

Yeah, I think just one thing I was thinking about as I was writing the essay was that, actually, I might pull it up because it's in there somewhere. Just the idea of by tailoring to user needs and having such a thorough design process that really kept the center's mission at the heart of the solution, I feel like it would help set the [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] at a competitive advantage in the sense that they would be delivering sustained value to clients just because it's targeted towards them. And sorry, it's targeted women who need to go to the center. So it would hopefully, because it is targeting them directly and it's tailored towards them, it would hopefully increase uptake towards the center. That makes sense. So yeah, I think that was what I was trying to get at. Lemme see. Yeah, I sort of talk about how with innovative design solutions that target users and needs, there's the possibility of women gravitating towards the center, more women gravitating towards the services provided by the [REDACTED], and that would align with their mission of providing long-term support.

Speaker 1 (57:21):

And it allows them to do what they want to do exactly as much as possible.

Speaker 2 (57:26):

Yeah.

Speaker 1 (57:28):

Fantastic. Great.

Speaker 2 (57:30):

That's

Speaker 1 (57:31):

I think we're all good. That's all of the questions that I had planned for you. So again, I just want to thank you for your time. I'll just wrap up our.

C.2.5. TRANSCRIPT: EXPERT DESIGNER INTERVIEW

The following is a transcript of one expert designer interview (ExD 3), contributing to the comparative analysis across professional and emergent perspectives.

Speaker 1 (00:00):

Just to start us off, could you just introduce yourself and describe what your role is and maybe one specific design nonprofit collaboration that you've worked on? Could you just take me through what that work was about or what the project really involved? Yep.

Speaker 2 (00:20):

So I started off in the nonprofit space as a design researcher at Center for Inclusive Design. I say that because that was my role two, three years ago. And so I worked at the Center for Inclusive Design for two years doing design research and service design consulting for our clients. And then I moved away and now I've come back in a more product management type role. So I guess the lens that I'm bringing to this conversation draws from my time as a practitioner then rather than my work at this current point in time.

Speaker 2 (00:53):

And then if we're talking about a particular client, so the other bit of context, which I mentioned to you in email as well, is that Center for Inclusive Design is a not-for-profit design agency. So that's sort of nonprofit in a twofold way where we're trying to generate more inclusion in society through our work, providing design and accessibility services to our clients. And at the same time, some of our clients are for-profit, and some of our clients are nonprofit and some of them are government. And so I think about a particular example of a client, this is the first job that comes to mind, but it wasn't fully my gig, but I had some contribution to it. We worked with [REDACTED]

Speaker 1 (01:57):

Oh, I think that, is it a mental health service? Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (02:03):

It's a mental health service and it's also, there are multiple branches of its service offering. Part of it is around seeking support and seeking help from a mental health perspective. But another one is also for getting help for family and domestic violence or abuse. And from memory, that piece of work was really around general user experience of their app and website. It's interesting because what I've found with nonprofit clients is that there's more explaining that needs to be done on what's the consequences of our recommendations or where the recommendations come from, and then what are the actions that need to follow to remediate some of the issues that we've identified. Because we've seen a lot of apps or websites that have served the purpose of being a page that provides information, but when you're talking about usability and experience navigating through it and actually finding the right information that a person would need to, then they're all not really there yet.

Speaker 1 (03:29):

Interesting.

Speaker 2 (03:31):

And so yeah, what we did was, I think it was a general heuristic evaluation of what was already there, and then some usability testing with people who use assistive technology. So screen reader users, any screen magnifier users, and in general, most of the web, it doesn't work very well for assisted tech users. And so it's not surprising that there are many findings around accessibility. Center for Inclusive Design

also offers accessibility auditing services. So a lot of the time we pair that hand in hand where we're doing an accessibility audit, and then we're also looking at general user experience. I'm not sure if I actually answered your question.

Speaker 1 (04:22):

Perfect. No, you did. You did. And honestly, I, I'm really excited for this conversation because I think there are going to be interesting things that are coming up where we can reflect on this [REDACTED] project, but I've got so many questions popping to mind around the idea of the Center for Inclusive Design, also being a nonprofit as well, and that twofold partnership. And so one thing that I'm a little curious about is you mentioned that working with nonprofits, you often find that there needs to be more explanation for outcomes and for consequence. And I am interested in comparing that to whether or not you feel like those conversations also happen within the Center for Inclusive Design. Team as well, or do you feel like the vision for the center, those conversations already happen and there's a lot of clarity around consequence within your workspace?

Speaker 2 (05:20):

I think that within us as an organization, because we're centered on inclusive design, then the conversations that we have are really more about, well, how are we actually practicing? Do clients understand our work? And also as our practice evolves, we also changed the way that we work and how we approach it and update it based on our learning. And so working with a client that we used to work with, then it's also about bringing them on this journey with, oh yeah, so you may have worked with us before and this is how we did it last time. But since then, we've learned people don't want to be described in this way, or we've learned that a different participatory design method is more effective for this type of problem, and so we're going to be doing it this way. So I would say that the nature of the conversation is a bit different when it's to client compared to internal, because while we're a nonprofit, we still operate as if we're a for-profit design agency when it comes to client work. I think that's just the mission of it, is that part of our profits go back into disability advocacy work, and we go for grants and we look for ways to promote social inclusion. And so the money goes around that way, and I think that's what makes us a nonprofit.

Speaker 1 (06:44):

Yeah. Yeah, because I think that's also having worked in the space a little bit with the technicalities of what qualifies as a nonprofit opposed to not is often where the surplus of funding and profit actually goes. So yeah, circulating it back in certain makes a lot of sense. Okay. That's really, again, so interesting to hear about those conversations being different. And I'm wondering as well, when you talk about conversations within the team opposed to with clients, I'm wondering if you could expand on that from the perspective of working with nonprofits opposed to working with for-profits. Do you feel like the knowledge sharing process is different with different clients that you work with in that for-profit or nonprofit sector? Or is it just different with every client no matter who they're,

Speaker 2 (07:38):

I think it's different with every client, but I guess anecdotally, based on what I've observed with say, clients like [REDACTED] with [REDACTED] with a B, C is sort of in between because a government corporation, but it's the more corporate and they are, the more of an existing understanding they have of the commercial consequences

Yeah, so [REDACTED] was the first project that came to mind as a nonprofit, but my involvement of it was pretty light from, I think it was just a heuristic review that I did. But what happened as part of it was an accessibility review, a heuristic review by the designers, some participatory design workshops as well as user research done through interviews.

Speaker 1 (12:18):
Okay, cool.

Speaker 2 (12:23):
And it's interesting because the client is an aside, but the client folder, it's in info exchange, so I wonder if it was actually with another consultancy that we worked with too. But in terms of tools, when we do those more workshop type activities, then some of the tools, like you're quite familiar with yourself, things like writing a love letter or a breakup letter to the service, that always works really well for us in these types of sessions. With interviews, we use more of an indirect rather than a direct way of communicating. So leaning on storytelling rather than direct questions about experience.

Speaker 1 (13:25):
Sorry, can I just ask there, do you have any reflections on the benefits of that indirect storytelling approach opposed to the direct, let me ask you a direct question about your experience in a really clear cut interview. What do you see as the differences or, well, I'm curious about why you kind of lean more into the storytelling angle.

Speaker 2 (13:49):
Oh, it's because what we found with indirect modes of communication is you get richer stories and then from there you can draw richer insights on more of that underlying need and underlying meaning behind why people do what they do. And I think it's also the benefits, are you get more description around what actually happened, what people were thinking and feeling without them really trying to think about what they were thinking and feeling and telling you about that. But also, it makes a participant more comfortable and the more comfortable they are, then the more details they share and the more details they share, then the more insight you can draw from the things that they've spoken about. It does mean that as a researcher, you have more to filter through to find your insights. It's not as straightforward a question A gives you answer A, it's more like question A gives you response, B, C, DE, FG.

Speaker 1 (14:56):
And somewhere in there.

Speaker 2 (15:00):
So it is a little bit more work when it comes to synth.

Speaker 1 (15:04):
But

Speaker 2 (15:04):

Speaker 1 (08:09):
As
Speaker 2 (08:09):
Well as the processes that are involved with design and technology delivery.

Speaker 2 (08:15):
And so I think the gap in knowledge is really around, well, how do digital projects work? What does digital mean? What's the difference between a user experience designer and a user interface designer? What is service design? And I think that these sorts of topics, they're not really unique to nonprofit, but I'd say that in the nonprofit world, community engagement is a big thing. And so a lot of the time we might be talking about the spectrum of public participation, but there's always a conversation to connect that back with design work. And once you start that conversation, people then who have worked in community engagement for Asia, they're like, oh, that's pretty much what we do, but just reapply it in a different context. But without having that conversation, there's this not really fear, not really resistance, but a bit of uncertainty. I think it's mainly uncertainty around the ambiguity of design and what that actually means. Because when we say design, a lot of people still automatically just think about graphic design or these people make our website look pretty. And it's those conversations around, well, it's not just about what it looks like, it's also about the functionality and whether or not we are helping our members achieve their goals and you as an organization achieve your goals.

Speaker 2 (09:57):
I'd say for-profit clients also have this type of situation, but if we're comparing, then I'd say nonprofit has a bit less familiar with design and digital delivery.

Speaker 1 (10:14):
Fantastic. I think it's so interesting to talk about that knowledge gap, particularly I think in the context of your work also being a bit service oriented or being service oriented and design research oriented from a couple of years ago where you really are stepping into that conversation and sitting down at that table representing a very different type of design than what your nonprofit clients are probably familiar with. I'd love to bring this conversation back to the [REDACTED] project a little bit. Could you take me through your role in that project in a little bit more detail? We've kind of talked about the knowledge gap. What kinds of design methods were you using? What was the process like working with the [REDACTED] team? Yeah,

Speaker 2 (11:03):
I was just going to bring it up because my memory is quite hazy for this one. I think that I was involved in really just the heuristics part of it. Let me just have a look at what went on. I'm not sure if you've ever met Eloise from our team, but she was a person who was looking after the project. And

Speaker 1 (11:37):
I don't think I have, actually. I think I've circled around the Center for Inclusive Design a fair bit, I think particularly with [REDACTED]. But no, I've not had many conversations with the team.

Speaker 2 (11:49):

It means that you get a stickier insight that you wouldn't otherwise get if you hadn't gone around storytelling about, let's say we're working with [REDACTED] and instead of just asking about, oh yeah, your shopping experience with someone like [REDACTED] it's like, oh, how's your washing machine going? And then you get this random story about the time that their washing machine broke down and they desperately needed a new one, and then they had actually gone to the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and then felt like they got ripped off. It brings those types of examples in where you can really draw

Speaker 1 (1:55:31):

Absolutely more interesting

Speaker 2 (1:55:42):

Nuggets.

Speaker 1 (1:55:53):

Yeah, I really understand that. And I think I am a huge fan of storytelling techniques, and I always think it's that really opportune moment for sentiment to come through and as you say in the story about the washing machine, having someone tell you about feeling ripped off and all of those moments where it's like they need it and then they have negative experience. I think you are so right in the sense of it's so much more rich and so much more interesting than if you just ask someone how was your shopping experience? But one other thing that's really sparking in my mind is, again, with the indirect storytelling approach, even if there's more to synthesize, I think the sentiment is so important. And I'm thinking a lot around the idea of value itself and talking to different design practitioners, talking to different nonprofit organizations, and even just reading the literature, I've focused a lot on creating non-financial forms of value.

Speaker 1 (1:56:54):

And that opens us up to looking at how people create social value, public value, environmental, artistic, associational value. There are so many different, it's such an ambiguous kind of term, and I've found that I've had a lot of very hazy conversations with people when it comes to trying to identify or really define the value that their organization or they as an individual are trying to create for their organization. And I think there's something interesting around the storytelling approach, helping to capture some of those more satellite experiences that help to give shape to what that value might be. And one thing that I'd kind of love to ask you about as well is you mentioned right at the beginning of our conversation that the mission of the Center for Inclusive Design is to generate inclusivity and to make products and services accessible. But I'm curious about how you as a participant or you as an employee of the Center for Inclusive Design have found those conversations of inclusiveness. How do you even talk about that idea of inclusive design? How do you settle on a stable understanding of what that even means?

Speaker 2 (1:58:13):

Yeah, it's like a constant debate because there are so many nuances to inclusion, it's also really hard to measure. And then the other thing with inclusion is that with any type of inclusion, it sort of always comes with exclusion. So at the end of the day, what we agree on is well be upfront, right? Because no one's going to be perfect in terms of inclusion, but are you excluding people on purpose or are you excluding people just because there are unconscious biases? Or are you doing it because you actually think that this customer segment just doesn't matter to your organization? And if that's the case, or is it

because you don't have enough resources to make sure that your products and services work for everyone?

Speaker 2 (1:59:10):

We have, what's it called, an agreement on the definition of inclusive design, and we use the Inclusive Design Research Center in Ontario. Canada's definition, which is inclusive design is design that considers the full spectrum of human diversity, and that's with respect to age, ability, gender, race, or any other type of human difference. And because that's the definition, no one's perfect because can you really consider the full spectrum of human diversity in what you're creating? Even us as a service provider, there are some people that we work with really, really well, and then there are other people who, some of our clients, it might be that it just doesn't work that well, and it's like, well, we'll kind of be exclusionary if we decide we will or we won't work with you. So it's quite interesting the way that it inclusion manifests in both the impact of the work as well as how we talk about it, and then also how we practice it as individuals. And then sometimes my friends joke and they're like, oh, you're off work. You don't have to be inclusive anymore.

Speaker 1 (2:00:42):

And you're like, oh, taking a break.

Speaker 2 (2:00:49):

So yeah, things like that, I find you were talking about the non-financial impact of nonprofit work. And I think at the end of the day, a byproduct of inclusion is trust. And for an organization, especially for a nonprofit organization, trust is the currency government as well. But the social impact of inclusion is a sense of belonging and dignity. And so the people benefit is that anyone who interacts with your product or service, they feel like they matter and they feel like they're valued. But that is so hard to measure, right, because it's also contextual.

Speaker 1 (2:13:6):

Yeah,

Speaker 1 (2:13:38):

Absolutely. And again, I think that's one thing that really I think attracted me to this specific work as well, is that I became really curious about looking at the types of value that are ambiguous, hard to pin down, hard to measure, but in my opinion, are often so important as well. It's hard to measure, as you say, trust or dignity, but that doesn't mean that we should be living in a world that doesn't have trust or dignity. And so I always get so much of my research is really looking at, well, how do we design for trust or dignity? Then if it's this vague idea that a lot of people might have a different perspective on how do we come together and find a stable definition that we can work towards, how can we create it? How can we pursue it and practice it as well?

Speaker 1 (2:22:7):

I want to take a moment to shift from thinking about the conversations of inclusivity within the organization to thinking back to again, collaborations with nonprofits as well. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I would suspect that most of your engagements with nonprofits obviously have the inclusion element there. I would assume that that's why clients are coming to the Center for Inclusive Design, but I'm wondering if there are any moments in that collaboration where you again are sharing that

knowledge of what inclusivity means, upskilling nonprofits as well, sharing knowledge in that way. How do you actually go about building that knowledge with a partner or with a client?

Speaker 2 (2:31:3):

So that's also been a topic of discussion for us because we do training as well. So we do inclusive design 101 training, as well as working with edge training. When we say working with edge training, it's how can we help our clients understand who their edge users are, so who's experiencing the most mismatch or exclusion, and then working with these people who experienced that mismatch. And a lot of the time edge coincides with our underserved and underrepresented community groups just because their needs be never considered in the conceptualization research of the thing that we're looking at. So we do those types of sessions, but what I found in working with clients is actually that if you bring them along the journey, if you bring them into a user research session or if you bring them into a usability test session, it's so much more effective than running a two hour workshop where you are talking about inclusive design and doing activities. It's much more powerful seeing a real person interact and seeing the responses from someone who's impacted by the exclusion. And so some of the deliverables that we come up with are also stories that are based off individual real experiences and not necessarily personas.

Speaker 1 (2:44:46):

Yeah, I like that a lot. Even just talking about as design art stories coming forward and being represented as well. That was one thing that I wanted to ask you about whether or not there are any specific design artifacts that you can think of that really help bolster that process as well, or that you feel are particularly important in that process of bringing a client along and having them be part of that process as well. Are we talking about just documentation? Are we talking about slide presentations, prototypes? What kind of artifacts do you find yourself usually working with?

Speaker 2 (2:52:29):

It's all the same similar artifacts, regardless of if they're nonprofit for-profit or government. So there'd be reports there'd be in our work, less so prototypes because we're more involved in the research and test and less in the design. So it's not often that we'll be providing prototypes, presentations. I sometimes it's stuff like infographics because the outcome of our work might not actually be related to a particular product, but it might actually be about process or it might actually be about culture. So at the end of the day, we might be coming up with a couple of guiding principles, and so that can come in the form of an infographic. But yeah, generally research reports and presentations and other artifacts attached to that, whether it be customer stories, personas, we're a bit iffy about personas, so we try to nudge our clients away from using it per se.

Speaker 1 (2:56:45):

I love there are always those moments in design practices where somebody's heard of something and you're like, no, no, that's not how we do this. Just nudge over a little bit. Amazing. Another thing that I'd love to prod you on a little bit further is if we think about these presentations, if we think about these infographics and these design artifacts that are being produced, I'm wondering if you could maybe reflect on the impact of these artifacts within the relationship. Do you have any thoughts on their function or the impact that they create for the internal team and for the client and the relationship between the two?

Speaker 2 (2:27:29):

I think that a common experience as a consultant is you always wonder whether or not your report is just lying in a file gathering dust.

Speaker 1 (2:27:27):

Yeah,

Speaker 2 (2:27:39):

So I'd say the journey maps as well is something that we produce. I'd say that the most impact is made on presentation of the findings from the report, and in our work is about, it's also about it, the mind shifts. If client has perceived, say people with disability in a particular way, and then we've been able to support them to check their biases and break some of the assumptions that have been made in the past about particular cohorts of people, then that is long lasting impact because it changes the way that they would then approach future scenarios in all these different contexts. The best example that I have where I can visibly see the impact of one of our reports is actually with a government. It's with A, B, C, so where they're a government entity. So then account nonprofit. The more we talk, the more I'm like, it's interesting thinking to all of our clients. And actually we have mostly government clients and nonprofits in some ways, like our partners.

Speaker 1 (2:29:07):

So as an

Speaker 2 (2:29:08):

Example, people with [REDACTED] is one of our partners, and so we flick each other work, but we're also going for work together. Interesting. Yeah, I've worked really closely with them, but not necessarily providing services to them.

Speaker 1 (2:29:23):

Exactly. Not necessarily working for them, much more working with them on projects.

Speaker 2 (2:29:30):

Yeah,

Speaker 1 (2:29:32):

That's fascinating. I'm really curious about, do you think that's a product of being a nonprofit organization itself, like the CFID, or do you think that's just the nature of the organization and the relationships that it has built and the space it's carved out in the sector?

Speaker 2 (2:29:33):

I think that it's okay, so I think it's a combination of factors. The first being the nature of our work is a consultancy. Nonprofits don't necessarily have as much budget to seek an external design agency for their work compared to say having an individual contractor or someone in-house to be doing the work. And so I think we've found with budgeting constraints that nonprofit work, there's a mismatch in the budget that they have and what we charge. And so partnering with nonprofits means that we're both

moving forward with our respective missions that are actually quite aligned and we're getting paid by someone else who has the big bucks.

Speaker 1 (3:0:53):

Yeah, I love that. But I think that's such an honest perspective on trying to make that relationship work and trying to achieve the mission that the organization has. I mean, CFID has employees, it has people that it needs to pay. You still want to work with nonprofits, and you have to find the right way to go about that. And if that's through partnership, that's what works. So that's interesting. Okay, I want to put a pin in that conversation a little bit because there's another thing that I want to come back to, and that was from our earlier conversation where we were talking about artifacts and you mentioned journey maps, and also we've talked about participatory workshops a little bit as well. Michelle, I'm curious to, in your perspective, are there any kind of skills or behaviors or even mindsets that you think are particularly, that you might describe as particularly designy that have a really interesting impact within these relationships? Are there any perspectives or behaviors that you can recall where you go that's a distinctly designed type of behavior, and we know that that's something that really works in our relationship with our clients and with our nonprofits?

Speaker 2 (3:2:10):

I think it's a mindset as well as maybe it's a combination of mindset and attitude, but humility, knowing that we don't know it all, but I think it's a designy attitude, but it's also a not designy attitude because there's the design only attitude of wanting to come up with solutions to fix a problem, but then there's also a designy research early attitude. Let's uncover what's going on in this space, and maybe there's already an existing solution, and we're open to that and we're learning from what's already there. And I think in the nonprofit space, a lot of the problems or challenges that we're looking at, they're really systemic, and so there's no one solution that can fix everything, and every solution has its ongoing impact consequences. So I think that, I'm not sure if it's a designy skill that's being taught, but having systems thinking I think is really powerful, especially if you are guiding a client to think about, well, look, here's this tiny interaction that we're looking at, but this is how it impacts your bigger picture and being able to zoom in and zoom out. That's really helpful because I think that some people are able to zoom in and other people just look at out, but being able to flip between the two, it helps that dialogue.

Speaker 1 (3:3:54):

Yeah, fantastic. It reminds me a lot of a quote that I came across when I was reading about design practice where it talks about how, or somebody has kind of suggested that it's a uniquely designed trait to be able to juggle both abstract and tangible outcomes. And I think mean whether or not I want to say that that is a uniquely designed thing, I think there are other professions that can achieve that as well, but I really resonate with what you're saying of being able to move between those two spaces from that high level big picture thinking all the way down to the nitty gritty of what's happening on the ground as well. Yes. Amazing, Michelle, that's all of my questions that I have for you, so thank you so, so much for your time. Yeah, it's been such so lovely to chat with you about this and to also hear your perspective from Vice Center for Inclusive Design. I think it's a really unique position that you're occupying. So yeah, thank you so much for all your reflections. I've really loved it.

Speaker 2 (3:4:57):

Always happy to chat and sorry, because I realized the more we talk, the more I was like, hang on, I'm going through the list of clients. I'm like, okay, they're not really a, not-for-profit. Asking you might be the only one that I sort of was involved in but wasn't even fully leading yet. So sorry if the insights that you needed

Speaker 1 (3:5:18):

Couldn't be No, no. It's totally okay because again, as I said, even hearing about your insights and reflections on the center itself has been really, really helpful. And I think it's also nice to not just look at nonprofit partners, but to compare with government and for-profit relationships as well. So don't stress. You've nailed it. You did a great job. Honestly, it's been such a helpful and interesting conversation, and I'm glad that I'm starting the year with you as my research participant because I feel like you've really switched my brain back on. So thank you. No.

