



Empathy or Inclusion: A Dialogical Approach to Socially Responsible Design

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This article focuses on the designer's responsibility towards his own context of life. It develops an approach in which being a socially responsible designer also means acting "where you are" to transform your own situation by establishing dialogical relations with those who live in the same context. To define and explore this approach, the article is organized into three main sections: it presents an overview of key definitions in socially responsible design (SRD); it clarifies what is meant by dialogical relations; and it presents the methodological framework and results of an exploration into the use of a dialogical approach to SRD carried out on the campus of the authors' university. It not only exemplifies the application of this approach in a specific local context, but also illustrates how an understanding of dialogical relations might contribute to education in SRD.

Keywords – Socially Responsible Design, Co-design, Design Education, Design for Social Innovation, Participatory Design, Philosophy of Dialogue, Social Design.

Relevance to Design Practice – SRD stresses the value of empathy between designers and users to gain insights into users' needs. This contribution focuses on the concept of inclusion, rather than empathy. The inclusion of designers in their local contexts promotes a process by which they relate dialogically with others in order to improve their own everyday lives and those of all concerned.

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Introduction

There are many definitions and practices that could come under the umbrella term of socially responsible design (SRD). This article presents a dialogical approach to socially responsible designing, an approach that goes beyond supporting "others" with whom designers are involved empathically. Nothing is stated against these important initiatives; our contribution intends only to highlight the practice of SRD that focuses on the designer's responsibility towards his/her own local context. It means designers using their skills to develop solutions to improve both their own conditions and the conditions of those who live in the same context. This perspective may enrich the practice and theory of SRD, specifically considering the difference between *empathy* and *inclusion* as defined by Martin Buber.

Designers are called upon to be socially responsible by answering others' needs (Papanek, 1985; Margolin & Margolin, 2002). The focus is placed on design processes to improve other people's life circumstances and hence, for example, their health (obesity, diabetes), or their living conditions (marginalized or underserved populations). Design for social innovation and sustainability (Manzini, 2007), which is considered here as an example of SRD, stresses design activity that is able to recognize and support solutions developed autonomously by groups of people to solve their own problems in their local contexts, but does not focus on the designer's capability to do the same. Other approaches, gathered here under the definition of transformation design (Burns, Cottam, Vanstone, & Winhall, 2006), focus on the practice of design thinking for societal transformation in local contexts, which includes procedures to gain empathy and insight

into patients' or communities' experiences to identify their unmet needs. However, despite the well recognized value of an empathic approach to SRD practices, able to bring designers closer to others' needs, this does not correspond to the dialogical approach, which aims to explore a practice of SRD in which designers seek to be "fully present" in the reality where they are designing. Considering the Buberian interpretative framework, this means *inclusiveness*, i.e., the other is not an "It"—that I can also describe and manifest empathy with—but emerges as a "Thou" with whom I dialogue. Through the presentness and concreteness of the meeting with the "other" in dialogue, it is possible to see things, people and places "in their uniqueness and for their own selves, and not as already filtered through our mental categories for purposes of knowledge or use" (Friedman, 1955/2002, p. 199).

This is not to say that designers have never used their skills to face their own local problems. Design against crime (Davey, Wootton, Cooper, & Press, 2005) offers an example of an SRD research activity and practice focused on a design challenge (crime) that is a problem shared by all those concerned, including the designer himself. Neither do we assert that the

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value of designers' personal involvement in a design challenge has not been considered before. The Design Council's RED unit called designers with type 2 diabetes to work on the unit's health project: "How do you explain your condition to others? Have you developed any innovative approaches to managing it yourself? Do you have ideas for new services?" (Vanstone, 2004). What is proposed here is the consolidation of a specific approach, targeted to support the dissemination of SRD in local contexts (SRD as a rooted practice) specifically by fostering presentness (SRD as an inclusive practice) in designers. This approach is based on two theoretical references. Together these express what has been defined as a dialogical approach to SRD, which incorporates the concept of *rootedness* (Weil, 1949/2002) along with the concept of *inclusion* (Buber, 1947/2006).

To define and explore this approach, the article is organized into three main sections: first, we present an overview of key definitions in SRD; next, we clarify what is meant by dialogical relations; and finally we present the methodological framework and results of a design exploration into the use of a dialogical approach to SRD carried out on the campus of the authors' university. The work described not only exemplifies the application of this approach in a specific local context, but also illustrates how an understanding of dialogical relations might contribute to education in SRD.

Socially Responsible Design: An overview

This article outlines the development trajectory of SRD over time. Any attempt to provide an accurate description of this field is bound to suffer from incompleteness, especially given the broad range of practices that could be classified under this definition. The practices presented here were selected as representative of some of the most widespread approaches to SRD and, together, comprise the definition of SRD adopted in this study.

An Approach Based on Needs

"There are professions more harmful than industrial design, but only very few of them" (Papanek, 1985, p. ix) This is the opening statement by Victor Papanek in the book *Design for the Real World*, which was first published at the beginning of the 1970s. The author makes a strong call for responsible design, including its social, moral and ecological dimensions, accurately anticipating many of the issues that would be on the design agenda for the following decades. In practical terms, responsible design means designing for people's needs rather than their wants (Papanek, 1985).

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This call for action includes design education. Firstly, Papanek indicates how design schools fail to provide students with practice in autonomously locating, isolating and identifying problems, because in most learning situations students are asked only to solve problems. This means that a "special-case" situation emerges, i.e., after a certain amount of time the student "is expected to regurgitate a 'special-case' answer to the teacher. He may be asked to make a ceramic teapot for six cups of tea, and this (embellished in his own particular way) is precisely what [the student] will return to the teacher" (Papanek, 1985, p. 305). Secondly, in opposition to this "special case," Papanek proposes an example of how a "general-case statement" might be formulated: "Design something to help in developing countries!" (p. 306).

Much of the education for SRD has been influenced by Papanek's book. He also asks, "In what real world situations can students learn best?" (Papanek, 1985, p. 316). The answer comes from situations such as when students address children with cerebral palsy or the problems of paraplegic, quadriplegic, spastic and palsied children. There are other passages in which he connects design education to two of the unexplored design fields he lists: design for the "third world" and the design of devices for the disabled. Papanek states that after such learning experiences, a student "will forever feel a little ashamed when he designs a pretty, sexy toaster..." (p. 321).

A discussion of Papanek's concept of SRD and its consequences for and relevance to design practices can be found in Whiteley (1993), for whom "*Design for the Real World* is a very moral book in tone and expression, and the author's fundamental tenet that 'it is wrong to make money from the needs of others' does underlie the text" (p. 104).

A Model from Social Workers

Margolin and Margolin (2002) recognize the value of Papanek's proposal for social action, but affirm that he "gives little guidance as to how this might be done" (p. 27). They propose discussing product design within a process of social service intervention based on a model used by social workers: "a practice whose principal objective is to meet the needs of underserved or marginalized populations" (p. 25). This model tackles problems in five stages: assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation and termination. Margolin and Margolin suggest that product designers might collaborate with social intervention teams during this process: "We believe that many professionals share the goals of designers who want to do socially responsible work, and therefore we propose that both designers and helping professionals find ways to work together" (p. 27). They agree with Papanek on the value of design research for social design, saying that "one reason why there is not more support for social design services is the lack of research to demonstrate what a designer can contribute to human welfare" (p. 28), and they propose a research agenda to redress the situation. In terms of design education, they pay particular attention to problem setting and the design brief, in the same way as Papanek did before them: "Skills in relating to vulnerable or marginalized populations, rather than to a brief from

a manufacturer, need to be developed by future social designers” (p. 29). They clearly state that they chose to adopt the model used by social workers despite the existence of other approaches that could be equally capable of guiding socially responsible design, such as sustainable design.

Sustainability: Social Innovations and Local Contexts

Many changes took place after Papanek’s provocative book and after Margolin and Margolin’s proposals. Design became increasingly related to the design of experiences and transformations (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Sangiorgi, 2011), particularly through the activities of service designers (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011). Manzini (2002) warns of the inherent unsustainability of an *access-based wellbeing* model when the “quality of life is related to the quantity and quality of services and experiences which it is possible to have access to” (p. 143).

Still unfurling the flag for sustainability in design, what emerges from Manzini’s (2002, 2007, 2008) contributions is a view of SRD in which designers use their skills to empower people’s own capabilities, as well as the solutions they develop autonomously to face their local challenges. This is expressed in Manzini’s work on creative communities, which he describes as groups of innovative citizens organizing themselves to solve a problem or to open a new possibility, and doing so as a positive step in the social learning process towards social and environmental sustainability (Manzini, 2007). Manzini connects creative communities with the “old debate” about active minorities (Moscovici, 1979) and defines them as “people and communities who act outside dominant thought and behaviour” (Manzini, 2007, p. 236). Solutions developed by creative communities include:

Groups of people who re-organize the way they live their home (as in the co-housing movement) and their neighbourhood (bringing it to life, creating the conditions for children to go to school on foot; fostering mobility on foot or by bicycle). Communities that set up new participatory social services for elderly people and for parents (the young and the elderly living together, or micro-nurseries set up and managed by enterprising mothers), or that set up new food networks supporting producers of organic items, and the quality and typical characteristics of their products (as in the solidarity purchasing and fair trade organisations). The list could continue. (Manzini, 2007, p. 237)

These solutions are defined as *social innovations*, i.e., “new ideas that meet pressing unmet needs and improve people’s lives” (Mulgan, Tucker, Rushanara, & Sanders, 2007, p. 7). Designers are called upon to recognize the value of social innovations organized by creative communities and to empower them. They are called upon to support these “heroes” (Meroni, 2007, p. 128) in their efforts, specifically through the design of *enabling solutions*: “Systems that provide cognitive, technical and organizational instruments so as to enable individuals and/or communities to achieve a result, using their skills and abilities while regenerating the quality of the living contexts in which they happen to live” (Manzini, 2007, p. 240).

Manzini’s view of education focuses on the “wide-reaching social learning process” (2007, p. 237) that has to take place in the transition towards sustainability, and on the *design side* of this learning process, i.e., the possibility of taking some steps towards the design of new artifacts to reduce consumption by “regenerating the contexts of life” (2002, p. 147). The focus here is placed firmly on design action at a local scale.

Open Welfare, Transformation Design

Manzini’s proposals are complemented by the work of Hillary Cottam et al. in the Design Council’s RED unit. RED was set up by the Design Council to tackle social and economic issues through design-led innovation (*About RED*, 2006). This approach led to the definitions of *open welfare* (Cottam & Leadbeater, 2004) and *transformation design* (Burns, Cottam et al., 2006).

Open welfare mainly applies to the public sector and it is described as a non-traditional service delivery model: “It relies on mass participation in the creation of the service. The boundary is blurred between the users and producers of a service. It is effectively often impossible to differentiate between those who are creating the service and those who are the consumers or users of the output” (Cottam & Leadbeater, 2004, p. 3). The designer’s role is to enable and support this design process.

Transformation design “can be applied to radically change public and community services, working for socially progressive ends, or can, alternatively, trigger change in a private company introducing a human-centred design culture” (Sangiorgi, 2010, p. 29). It is considered to be “unique in the complex problem-solving space” (Burns, Cottam et al., 2006, p. 22). Methodologically it means “experiencing things from the user’s viewpoint, making things visible, managing risk through prototyping, trying things out and iterating ideas rapidly” (p. 23). It includes practices that seek “transformation” by reframing the notion of problem solving, i.e., problems are considered not as “complicated,” but “complex,” calling for a broader approach in which designers “immerse themselves” in people’s everyday lives to discover what people need and innovative ways to provide for it. An example of what is meant by a transformation project was provided by the Design Council (RED) when it set the following challenge: “What could MPs do differently in their constituency to rebuild our democracy and public faith in it?” (Burns, Brand et al., 2006, p. 3). This also exemplifies how the focus of SRD has widened from what was proposed by Papanek (1985).

This approach also relates to the view of Brown and Wyatt (2010) regarding the practice of design for social innovation: “Designers have traditionally focused on enhancing the look and functionality of products. Recently, they have begun using design tools to tackle more complex problems, such as finding ways to provide low-cost healthcare throughout the world” (p. 31). Examples of design challenges to be faced using this approach range from water provision problems in India to malnutrition among children in Vietnam.

The approach described by Brown and Wyatt (2010) and by IDEO is convergent with the definition of transformation design. The convergence is still more evident when considering IDEO’s

(2009) Human-Centered Design (HCD) Toolkit. The use of video ethnography and contextual interviews to gain empathy and insight into patients' or communities' experiences and identify their unmet needs are examples of these practices. All three approaches presented above (Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Burns, Cottam et al., 2006; Cottam & Leadbeater, 2004) recall the social work model: "the entire process is conducted in a collaborative manner with the client system" (Margolin & Margolin, 2002, p. 25).

Definition of Socially Responsible Design (SRD)

The previous paragraphs have traced a development trajectory of SRD on the basis of which we can consider the key guidelines of transformation design, summarized by Burns, Cottam et al. (2006), also to be the main characteristics of SRD. These have been presented by researchers and practitioners in the field as follows:

1. *Defining and redefining the brief* together with users and stakeholders. This recalls what was stated by Papanek (1985) and by Margolin and Margolin (2002) regarding the importance of using general-case statements in SRD, which requires designers with ability to autonomously locate, isolate and identify problems.
2. *Collaboration between disciplines*. Papanek (1985) considers design and SRD as "the act of planning and shaping carried on across various disciplines, an act continuously carried on at interfaces between them" (p. 322), as do Margolin and Margolin (2002).
3. *Employing participatory design techniques*, which includes the proposal of open welfare (Cottam & Leadbeater, 2004) and the importance of "collaboration with the client system" (Margolin & Margolin, 2002).
4. *Building capacity, not dependency*. Like Manzini (2008), this recognizes the potential of non-designers because "we live in a society where everybody designs" (p. 40), particularly in creative communities. It also includes the identification and support of positive deviances as stated by Brown and Wyatt (2010): The designer "looks for solutions among individuals and families in the community who are already doing well" (p. 32).
5. *Designing beyond traditional design solutions*, i.e., applying design skills beyond products to consider new fields, including services and transformations. The Design Council's RED unit offers good examples (*About RED*, 2006). From 2004 to 2006 they tested the application of design skills to issues as diverse as democracy (how to connect MPs to the public in the UK), energy (how to help householders reduce their CO₂ emissions), and citizenship (how to interact with the state in such a way as to increase engagement and a sense of citizenship).
6. *Creating fundamental change*, which means "transforming organizations by giving them the capability to design experiences from a human perspective" (Brown & Wyatt, 2010). Manzini (2002) suggests a direction for such change. He contributes to SRD by inviting designers to become active agents in the transition towards sustainable ways of

living. This requires designers "to conceive scenarios of wellbeing in which the overall quality of the context of life has to be considered," because for a scenario of wellbeing to be sustainable it must be one in which "the physical and social common goods are regenerated" (p. 146).

The last item is particularly important to our purpose. The design of *regenerative solutions*, i.e., "systems of products and services which act as positive agents in regenerating the contexts of life" (Manzini, 2002, p. 147), gives a direction to the desired change and indicates the local scale as the privileged context of design action. Therefore, in this article, socially responsible design (SRD) means adopting design practice—or more precisely, transformation design—to promote change in local contexts through the development of regenerative solutions.

This definition encompasses all those previously described and, for the purposes of this article, its adoption means that particular focus is given to SRD actions in local contexts.

The Philosophy of Dialogue

Empathy or Inclusion

Simone Weil (1949/2002) states that "to be rooted" is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul, although admittedly it is also one of the hardest to define:

A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future. This participation is a natural one, in the sense that it is automatically brought about by place, conditions of birth, profession and social surroundings. (p. 40)

Weil (1949/2002) also wrote that one of the factors making for *uprootedness* is education. The objective of an educational process oriented to overcome uprootedness is to enable students to problematize their own context and put into action their design skills to solve their own problems. This also links the didactic process to student self-reflection about his or her own design practices, and is thus near to the reflective approach as coined by Schön (1983). An educational practice aimed to promote rootedness in students is, by our definition, also linked to Martin Buber's thought. Buber's (1921/1996) intent in his magnum opus *I and Thou*, as in many of his later works, is to bring his reader closer to this twofold attitude (being "Thou" or being "It"). In the description of these two basic words, he makes it clear that "I-Thou" and "I-It" cover every possible kind of encounter. When I interact with "It," I always confront something I know, that I know is an "It" and about which I might wish to know more through my actions of knowledge. When I relate to a "Thou," I always have before me a person whom I do not know entirely and whom I will never know unless I listen to what his presence tells me and lets me know of him.

This interpretative framework leads Martin Buber (1947/2006) to define the difference between *empathy* and *inclusion*. Inclusion involves encounters in which the other is not an "It"—that I can also describe and manifest empathy with—but emerges as a "Thou" with whom I *dialogue*:

[Empathy is] the exclusion of one's own concreteness, the extinguishing of the actual situation in life, the absorption in the pure aestheticism of the reality in which one participates. Inclusion is the opposite of this. It is the extension of one's own concreteness, the fulfilment of the actual situation in life, the complete presence of the reality in which one participates. Its elements are, first, a relation, of no matter what kind, between two persons, second, an event experienced by them in common. . . . A relation between persons that is characterized in more or less degree by the element of inclusion may be termed as a dialogical relation. (p. 115)

To clarify further, Friedman (1955/2002) states:

To be fully real the I-Thou relation must be mutual. This mutuality does not mean simple unity or identity, nor is it any form of empathy. Though I-Thou is the word of relation and togetherness, each of the members of the relation really remains himself, and that means really different from the other. Though the Thou is not an It, it is also not 'another I.' He who treats a person as 'another I' does not really see that person but only a projected image of himself. Such a relation, despite the warmest 'personal' feeling, is really I-It. (p. 70)

The Dialogical Approach

"Dialogue" is defined as an "actual" encounter between persons. This is extended to define our entire life. "All actual life is encounter," said Buber (1921/1996, p. 62), an important affirmation that has found an imprecise translation in the phrase "all real living is meeting"—"*Alles wirkliche Leben ist Begegnung.*" "*Wirklich*" in German has the same root as the verb "*wirken*" ("to act"), and is better translated as "actual" than "real."

To be alive—actually, not potentially—is to be in dialogue:

The life of dialogue is not one in which you have much to do with men, but one in which you really have to do with those with whom you have to do. It is not the solitary man who lives the life of monologue, but he who is incapable of making real in the context of being the community in which, in the context of his destiny, he moves. . . . Being, lived in dialogue, receives even in extreme dereliction a harsh and strengthening sense of reciprocity; being, lived in monologue, will not, even in the tenderest intimacy, grope out over the outlines of the self. (Buber, 1947/2006, pp. 23–24)

Buber (1947/2006) warns that this must not be confused with the contrast between egoism and altruism: "I know people who are absorbed in 'social activity' and have never spoken from being to being with a fellow-man and I know others who have no personal relation except with their enemies" (p. 24).

Buber's (1921/1996, 1947/2006) approach, focusing on inclusion—reinforced by Weil's (1949/2002) concept of rootedness—constitutes what we have named here a dialogical approach in SRD. This has similarities with participatory design practices, but the dialogical approach to SRD presented here means more than having users as participants: "The people who are commonly known as the 'users' are active participants in the design process and hence the boundary between 'designer' and

'user' becomes blurred" (Luck, 2003). The boundary mentioned here could become more than blurred. Inclusion—according to the Buberian definition—presupposes the complete presence of designers in the reality in which they are participating. It implies that a "Thou" is always available as an offer, beyond the possibilities of objectification and conceptual descriptions. This rootedness requires designers to act not only as facilitators (Luck, 2007). SRD emerges also as a *situated* practice, i.e., it takes place in a situation or life context where the people involved in the design process are available to relate dialogically, and this includes the designers themselves. It may have some commonalities with *situated learning* as coined by Lave and Wenger (1991), but the situations promoted by the dialogical perspective considered here neither necessarily promote nor are intrinsically based on communities of practice. Conversely, participation in communities of practice does not imply a dialogical approach.

Empathy is a key word in SRD today. It is used in the HCD toolkit (IDEO, 2009), which declares that the aim of the ethnographic approach adopted is to gain empathy with those users involved in the design process. Empathy is identified in IDEO's document as a relevant approach in SRD, and has also recently been considered in terms of "It–Thou" relations to qualify an empathic act (Ho & Lee, 2012). However, as described before, empathic approaches do not correspond to our exploration of a *rooted* and *inclusive* SRD practice, as proposed here.

The Buberian interpretative framework is increasingly being considered in design, for example: (1) as the basis for a new design ethic (Margolin, 1984); (2) as an antidote to technology push (Thackara, 2005); (3) as a criterion to qualify interpersonal interactions in service design practices (Cipolla, 2004; Cipolla & Manzini, 2009); and (4) as a criterion to qualify the processes of interaction between designers and users in participatory design (Ho & Lee, 2012).

Education

Buber's works on education are literature for specialists. Many issues discussed about the relation between the teacher and student are among the core questions of Buberian philosophical anthropology, such as the doctrine of the situational *line of demarcation* "to be drawn anew daily between the absolute commandment and its temporarily relative fulfillability" (Simon, 1991, p. 572). Buber is aware of two pseudo-solutions that aim to avoid the necessity of facing this risky task of drawing a situational line of demarcation in our lives. The first is the relativization of that which is to be fulfilled. This pseudo-solution "deflates the ethical tension between the 'Is' and the 'Ought'" (Simon, 1991, p. 572). The second is to assume an unbridgeability between commandment and fulfillability. The commandment is taken as a heavenly rule "untouched and untouchable" and/or the fulfillability as a terrestrial cynical (personal or collective) opportunism. For Buber to draw a situational line of demarcation is to find a "middle way" between these extreme pseudo-solutions. He emphasizes that "there is no recipe for the adequacy of this line, because it presents itself differently every time" (1936, as cited in Simon, 1991, p. 573).

The situational line of demarcation is a key issue to be considered in a dialogical approach to design that seeks to be inclusive in Buberian terms. In terms of the design process it means that each designer needs to perform both roles: as a facilitator guiding the design process, and simultaneously as one who is *included*, who enters into *relations* with others to pursue a solution to a shared problem felt by all those concerned, including the designer himself. Here, the designer's role as facilitator generates an *asymmetry*, recognized by Buber (1953/2005) when he applied the dialogical approach to analyze the educational relationship between teachers and students. There is an intrinsic asymmetry between teacher and pupil, since:

The student may and should understand the teacher's words, he can never be expected to understand the teacher's being in its full dimensions. The true teacher will understand this not-being-understood by his pupil, and will never be offended or disappointed by this, but rather he will "embrace" the whole situation with its two poles; his own, and that of the pupil. The latter is concerned only with himself. (Simon, 1991, pp. 571–572)

Similarly to teachers, designers bring knowledge and competences to the process. However, this does not exclude designers from a dialogical relation with all involved and, consequently, does not impede inclusion. According to Buber (1936, as cited in Simon, 1991), what is required for designers (as for teachers) is to draw a situational line of demarcation, so that designers do not impose their certainties as absolute commandments, but are constantly able to find a "middle way" (p. 573). The same was valid for the design exploration described in this article, carried out with students. The teacher was involved as an educator and as a designer, but carefully sought to maintain the line of demarcation so as to remain in inclusive relations with all those involved.

Responsibility

If we wish to link SRD with the thoughts of Martin Buber, it is necessary to quote his definition of *responsibility*, which reflects the way we use the term *socially responsible* here. Responsibility, for the author, is manifest in dialogical relations. To him, no one can be responsible to an It, to an impersonal entity. "One can be responsible only to a Thou" (Vogel, 1970, p. 162). Friedman (1955/2002) explained clearly how it was considered by Buber:

One can only be "responsible" if one is responsible to someone. Since the human Thou must constantly become an It, one is ultimately responsible to the Eternal Thou who never becomes an It. But it is just in the concrete that we meet the Eternal Thou, and it is this which prevents dialogue from degenerating into "responsibility" to an abstract moral code or universal idea. (p. 243)

Therefore our definition of SRD, as stated previously in this article, embeds this dialogical notion of responsibility, which is fulfilled through the concreteness and presentness of the interpersonal relations that take place in local contexts.

Based on the assumptions set out above, the next section of this article describes a didactic experiment conducted using a *dialogical* approach.

Design Exploration

The design exploration was carried out with the participation of third-year undergraduate students in Production Engineering from the Polytechnic School at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Considering the definition of SRD as stated in this article, and to explore the dialogical approach in practice, the campus of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro was identified as the *context of life*. It was chosen as the context in which the students, the teacher (first author of this article) and other actors involved share their everyday life. This living together on campus is the *event* they experience in common that is a requirement for *inclusive* relations (Buber, 1947/2006).

Context of Life: *The University Campus*

The campus is located on an artificial island in Guanabara Bay called Ilha do Fundão, which was built on a swampy archipelago in the early 1950s. It is called a "university city," with approximately 60,000 people circulating daily, of whom one third are students. The campus has its own municipal administration and its various centers are situated in scattered buildings, connected by bus services (see Figure 1). This hinders both deliberate and chance meetings between people based in different centers, and "in effect the island is only partially populated. So much of what we see on the campus of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, such as the feeling of a cold, isolated, empty place, comes as a result of a process that completely abandoned what had been initially planned" (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro – Communication Office, 2004).

Complaints about everyday life on campus are common, but little is done autonomously by its community to solve the problems in areas as diverse as food, transportation and leisure. Therefore, the proposal was to design regenerative solutions to such challenges.



Figure 1. The campus of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.

Methodology

The exploration was made during the first semester of 2010. Students were divided into nine groups, each one composed of five participants. They were invited to develop solutions using IDEO's (2009) *Human-Centered Design Toolkit*. This was chosen as it is both an example of a methodological overview and a guide to how to conduct a *transformation design* process, which, as stated previously, is an intrinsic part of SRD definition. Considering that the toolkit promotes an *empathic* approach to the design process, its use in our design exploration allowed us to analyze the changes brought by the Buberian concept of inclusion.

The HCD process is organized into three phases: H (Hear), C (Create) and D (Deliver). It considers human-centered design through three lenses: (a) What do people desire? (b) What is technically and organizationally feasible? and (c) What can be financially viable? The solutions that emerge at the end "should hit the overlap of these three lenses" (IDEO, 2009 p. 6). This process was adapted in our exploration. Consequently the first question, (a), was changed. It became "What do we desire?" One reason why the term "we" was used was to reinforce the togetherness required for inclusive relations to develop. In addition, "we" was used to *root* (Weil, 1949/2002) the process in the local context: "What do we desire for our everyday life on campus?"

This change affected the first phase, H (Hear). The HCD toolkit indicates that this phase is targeted to "collect stories and inspiration from people" (IDEO, 2009, p. 7). In this design exploration, students were invited to develop a rooted and inclusive attitude by meeting other colleagues, teachers and workers in the university, not only to collect stories, but also to dialogue about their shared context of life.

The dialogical approach also affects other HCD phases. IDEO (2009) states that phase C (Create) invites participants to "work together in a workshop format to translate what you heard from people into frameworks, opportunities, solutions and prototypes" (p. 7). The quality of the workshop and its results rely on how empathic the participant's engagement was with the community during the H (Hear) phase: "Although solutions are generated by the design team, the goal is always to have the people you are designing for in mind" (p. 60). Instead the dialogical approach invited each student not only to have those for whom they were designing "in mind," but to carry out this phase together with others in the same context of life and facing the same problems. The solutions would change not only "the lives of others," but also their own lives.

The phase D (Deliver) is less affected by the dialogical approach. It is said to be the phase in which "[you] will begin to realize your solutions through rapid revenue and cost modelling, capability assessment, and implementation planning" (IDEO, 2009, p. 7).

Students were stimulated to follow a non-linear process when carrying out the HCD phases. For recording and interpretation purposes, a report of results was required for each phase accomplished by students in this study, as well as a project management report (PMR), which described how each phase

was undertaken. In addition, the groups of students discussed the process with their teacher in weekly meetings where key insights were recorded.

Application

The HCD phases (IDEO, 2009) were carried out by students following the characteristics of the transformation design approach, as presented below.

Defining and Redefining the Brief

Proposition: A "general-case statement" was proposed to students. It was: "Design something to improve everyday life in the campus," inspired by Papanek's "design something to help in developing countries" (1985). The *design challenge* (or brief) was to be defined in the first phase—H (Hear) (IDEO, 2009)—not only through interviews, but mainly by ethnographically inspired and observational techniques. In addition, students were encouraged to talk to people on campus, focusing not only on identifying problems, but also on listening and sharing stories (p. 62). As we describe below, these stories were also important in the development of the C (Create) phase. So groups of students carried out the H (Hear) phase with the specific aim of defining their own design challenge, based on what they had heard and on their own personal experience.

Process description: Initially, it was hard to sustain the proposal of the "general-case statement" (Papanek, 1985). Students found it difficult and resisted, demanding from the teacher a clear problem statement and procedures. This was minimized when the teacher allocated specific areas to each group of students, such as food provision and consumption; the university's history and identity; library or other didactic resources; health promotion; transportation; housing; entertainment or leisure; social networking. Focusing on such areas they felt more comfortable and it also allowed them to start up a cross-disciplinary approach, looking for specialists in the various areas right from the start. The concept of a regenerative solution, which gave them a *direction* for the design process, was also important to students. All groups set their respective design challenges successfully.

Collaboration between Disciplines

Proposition: As recommended in the HCD toolkit (IDEO, 2009) students were invited to seek the collaboration of people with whom they share everyday life on campus. Students were steered towards developing the H (Hear) phase by observing and interacting not only with the overall community, but also specifically with teachers, researchers and other students specializing in the disciplinary areas related to their design challenges. The objective for students was not to involve their interlocutors merely as information sources, but to engage them in a collaborative process seeking to deal with common challenges in everyday life. This cross-disciplinary process was to start with visits and conversations in the H (Hear) phase, and continue throughout C (Create) and D (Deliver). The C (Create) phase

was to be performed through at least one workshop involving participants from other disciplinary areas, particularly those contacted in the H (Hear) phase. Students were free to choose how to involve them in phase D (Deliver).

Process description: This participatory approach required students to start up the necessary cross-disciplinary collaborations using “strategic leadership to enable cross-disciplinary work and synergy for the best outcome” (Adams, Daly, Mann, & Dall’Alba, 2011, p. 600). This process was not a novelty for the students as they were already learning in a cross-disciplinary way in their undergraduate studies in Production Engineering, during which they attended courses in economics, administration, sociology and psychology. The process undertaken in this design exploration acknowledged and reinforced this existing multidisciplinary approach, but at the same time gave students the opportunity for interaction with specialists from disciplines and areas that were unfamiliar to them: nutrition, physical education, librarianship, transportation, engineering, museum management and distance learning. For example, one group of students, aiming to find a solution to improve food provision and consumption on campus, discussed this design challenge with a nutritionist (who was working and following PhD studies in the same university). Another group, focusing on the way students relate with libraries and new ways of managing didactic resources, benefited from the participation of two librarians (directors of two different libraries on the campus). Some students were received also by members of the university administration. All involved experts worked on campus, which favored communication around common problems. This process was carried out successfully in the H (Hear) and D (Deliver) phases. However, these meetings took place mainly in the H phase, while the D phase was developed by students using their own cross-disciplinary education in Production Engineering. It was not possible to get specialists involved in the workshops planned for phase C (Create), mainly due to their limited time availability. In spite of this, the meetings held in phases H, C and D led to unexpected and unlikely interpersonal encounters, fostering opportunities for dialogue among all those involved.

Employing Participatory Design Techniques

Proposition: Students were steered towards adopting a participatory co-design approach as proposed in the HCD toolkit (IDEO, 2009, p. 57). The design activity was based on a shared local context, i.e., participants worked together to find solutions to problems equally felt by all those concerned. Phase C (Create) was to be conducted by each group of students through one or more workshops involving invited guests, particularly those heard in the H (Hear) phase. The starting point was to “share stories” (p. 62), both their own and those of other people heard in the H (Hear) phase. Stories about everyday life on campus, relating to the design challenges set previously, were to be recorded in short sentences (key insights) and grouped, looking to identify patterns (p. 64) and opportunities. An opportunity is a “re-articulation of problems and needs in a generative, future facing way” and should be expressed in a “How might we?” sentence (pp. 71-

72), based on which groups should brainstorm new solutions (p. 73) and then “make them real,” i.e., make “their chosen solution tangible” (p. 75) through models, role-play, etc. (to be freely chosen). Students were free to choose how to develop the D (Deliver) phase.

Process description: Although the participatory co-design approach permeated all aspects of the process, it was particularly intensive in phase C (Create). Sharing stories with other participants in the C (Create) workshop (see Figure 2) was a watershed moment for the entire process because it allowed students to turn what they had heard in phase H (Hear), including their own personal stories, into a design process which led to effective solution development. From all the ideas emerging in the brainstorming section, students were invited to work on the solution, or solutions, that they were “most passionate about” (IDEO, 2009, p. 75). This opened up the possibility for them to be personally involved in the solution development, although, as in any design process, they had to face the limitations of what might be technically, financially and organizationally viable. The use of collaborative and visualization tools, ranging from service design ones, like service *blueprints*, *personas* and *storyboards* (Miettinen & Koivisto, 2009), to *business model canvasses* (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010) provided common ground for collaboration and co-creation (Sanders & Stappers, 2008) between participants.



Figure 2. Students share “stories” in the C (Create) workshop.

Building Capacity, Not Dependency

Proposition: The design exploration invited students to use their skills to solve their everyday problems on campus, nudging them from their usual passive behavior. This was a key issue, given the definition of SRD proposed in this article. Students were also invited to find creative communities (Meroni, 2007) and their solutions on campus, as examples of autonomous initiatives undertaken by university members.

Process description: Implicitly, they were expected to define an active role for their colleagues and other members of the university community, as well as to develop solutions that do not rely solely

on the university administration. In fact, their immersion in their own living context and their encounters and interactions with experts and colleagues stimulated the development of solutions based on partnerships in which colleagues have an active role and the central administration of the university is defined as a partner, not as an exclusive provider. Other partners included were specific institutes in the university (Nutrition, Transport, Sports and Health) and the private sector.

Designing beyond Traditional Design Solutions

Proposition: Students were invited to explore the concept of a *solution* as the output of a design process where the focus is shifted from “things” to “results” (Morelli, 2006). This meant that the design challenges—which students had set themselves in phase H (Hear)—were defined in terms of the final results to be achieved.

Process description: The dialogical approach led students to design collaborative services (Jegou & Manzini, 2007), i.e., a service model in which people co-produce commonly recognized benefits. The solutions were designed to be collaborative, involving not only departments and institutes (as partners and stakeholders), but also pensioners, older employees, teachers, veteran students and newcomers.

Results

Some of the concepts developed by the students are briefly related below. They correspond respectively to the following areas allocated to students for exploration when *defining and redefining the brief*: food provision and consumption; the university’s history and identity; library or other didactic resources; health promotion. The description of each concept includes the design challenges that were defined by students for each of these areas, described in the form of questions (How might we?). Since an in-depth description would be too long for this text we have chosen to describe them as regenerative solutions, indicating how they could contribute to improving the quality of life on campus, which is an essential component in the definition of SRD, as mentioned previously. The

definition of SRD highlights this orientation towards regeneration by centering the focus and direction of its transformation design characteristics on *creating fundamental change*.

It was not the objective of this study to implement the solutions developed and to assess their regenerative effect, but it was possible to verify the interest aroused in the university community by this design exploration, opening up the possibility of the solutions’ effective implementation to change everyday life on campus. Nevertheless, the design exploration itself did produce regenerative results. For example, the non-routine meetings between members of the university community, proposed by this design exploration, to prompt them to discuss and solve their own everyday problems, have produced per se a regenerative effect in the local social fabric. Besides that, it was observed that all the solutions together constitute a vision of a *possible future* for the campus (Manzini, 2002).

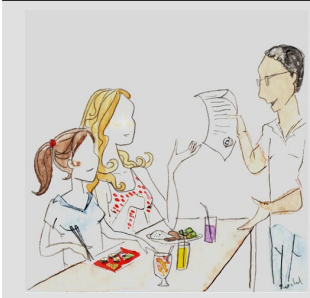



Our Choice: How Might We Improve the Quality of the Food Provided on Campus?

Since the main complaints were about the questionable quality of food, the solution is targeted to solve this problem by proposing a qualitative evaluation process. *Our Choice* is a “quality label” to be assigned to the best restaurants on the campus. This is done by: (a) promoting regular events in which consumers are invited to rate the best restaurants; (b) sanitary inspections, to be carried out by researchers from the Institute of Nutrition; and (c) a website targeted to provide information regarding food provision on campus, which includes complaints from consumers. User interactions in the *Our Choice* service are shown in Table 1.

Memories of Minerva: How Might We Preserve Our Memories and Stories?

Over time, the personal stories of people living on campus constitute university memories. These include pensioners, older employees, teachers, veteran students and newcomers. *Memories of Minerva* (the Roman goddess’s image is the key element in the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro’s visual ID) is a

Table 1. User interactions in the *Our Choice* service. (Illustrations: Roched Seba)

			
<p>During lunch, Julia is informed about the <i>Our Choice</i> service designed to evaluate the food establishments on campus.</p>	<p>On “Voluntary Inspection” day, Julia is invited to inspect the food establishment herself. Nutritionists also promote health and hygiene inspections.</p>	<p>Julia fills in the assessment form and deposits it in the ballot box on the spot, or sends it later using the website.</p>	<p>The results of voluntary and expert inspections are analyzed by the Institute of Nutrition and, where assessment is positive, an <i>Our Choice</i> seal of quality is issued.</p>

solution that continuously collects and shows these stories, using multimedia resources. Stories are collected at events to be held twice a year, particularly when new students arrive. In addition, a *Tent* (a small “collector unit,” like a booth, equipped with video cameras, microphones and a computer) is prepared to be placed at events held on campus throughout the year. User interactions in the Memories of Minerva service are shown in Table 2.

Recicloteca (Recycling Library): How Might We Manage Textbooks and Hand Notes When Courses End?

Conventional libraries are considered outdated and no longer relevant. Textbooks are expensive and students do not want to keep them. Handwritten notes are often considered useless after courses and could be passed on to newcomers, instead of being thrown away. *Recicloteca* (a combination of the Portuguese words *biblioteca*, “library,” and *reciclar*, “recycle”) is a solution that works on the basis of a website, a *recicloteca card* that can be loaded with credits, and a room. This solution enables students to communicate, to share or exchange used textbooks and other didactic resources, or to buy new ones (enabling the organization

of collective purchases). The room works both as a meeting point and a repository. User interactions in the Recicloteca service are shown in Table 3.

Distributed Health Club: How Might We Increase the Practice of Sport on Campus?

The term “distributed” is used in analogy to “distributed energy generators” whereby energy (electricity or heat) is supplied by a system of multiple small-scale generators. In our case, the distributed resources are all the areas like volleyball courts, soccer fields, swimming pools, weight rooms, etc. scattered over the campus that remain unused. They also include an extensive area for cyclists and runners. The *Distributed Health Club* is targeted to organize sport activities on campus, particularly by integrating all these dispersed resources into a large health club. The solution consists of: (a) a website, on which one can find information and schedule the available resources; (b) periodic health evaluation for all members; (c) motivational events; and (d) meeting points on campus, mainly for runners and cyclists. User interactions in the Distributed Health Club service are shown in Table 4.

Table 2. User interactions in the Memories of Minerva service. (Illustrations: Roched Seba)



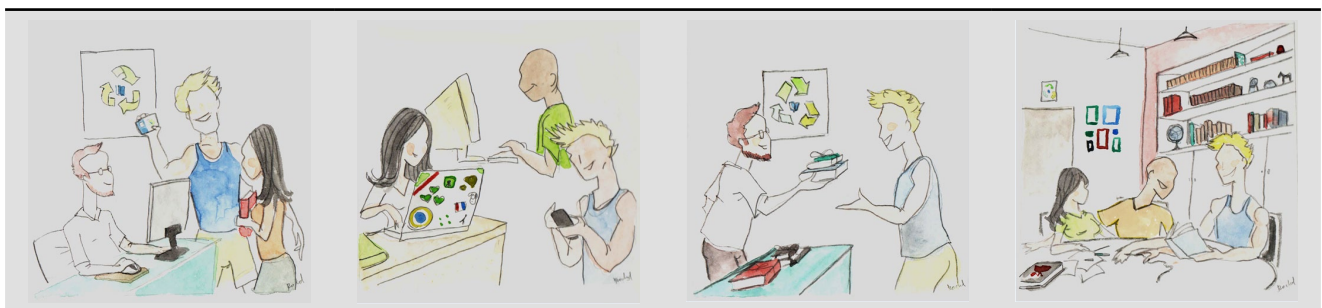
Freshman Bruno arrives at his faculty for the event called Memories of Minerva, where he can meet current and retired staff, teachers, veteran students and other newcomers.

Bruno goes to the “Tent” to register his expectations about his future in the university. There are older colleagues registering their stories. They help each other with technical issues, promoting intergenerational exchanges.

Throughout the year, the Tent can be found at many events in the university. Passersby can find out about Memories of Minerva by using it.

Videos and texts made in the Tent can be accessed at the online platform Memories of Minerva, where users can also upload videos and texts produced in other ways.

Table 3. User interactions in the Recicloteca service. (Illustrations: Roched Seba)



Gabriel begins graduate studies in Engineering and receives the Recicloteca card. He loads his first credits in cash.

Using his cash credits, Gabriel can participate in the collective purchasing organized by Recicloteca and get books at a lower price.

At the start of each semester, Gabriel can exchange books he no longer uses for credits, with which he can buy more books.

The Recicloteca room is also a meeting place. Members can exchange materials (handwritten notes and used books) while working and studying together.

Table 4. User interactions in the Distributed Health Club service. (Illustrations: Roched Seba)

Maria, who works as a secretary in the Faculty of Engineering, is tired of wasting hours in traffic jams when returning home.

Using the Distributed Health Club site, Maria schedules an exercise class at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, staying on campus until the end of the rush hour.

Maria finds the location of the gym, guided by signposts showing the Distributed Health Club logo and maps, which are scattered all over the campus.

Maria attends the dance class. She gets to know students and staff of other faculties and builds new friendships on campus.

Methodological Framework Under the Dialogical Approach to SRD

The methodological framework followed in the design exploration is shown in Table 5. It summarizes the procedures that fostered the dialogical approach to SRD in this study. The methodological framework adopted was built on the intersection of the SRD (specifically through its transformation design characteristics) and HCD phases performed (IDEO, 2009).

Discussion: The Dialogical Approach to SRD

The HCD toolkit (IDEO, 2009)—reframed under the dialogical approach—was used in the design exploration to exemplify the proposed dialogical approach to SRD. The set of methods and techniques presented in the toolkit is originally focused on designers gaining empathy with “constituents’ reality” (p. 20). In dialogical terms, empathy fosters distance between the designer and other participants because it does not promote inclusion. For designers, empathy means treating other participants as “another I” and whoever “treats a person as ‘another I’ does not really see that person but only a projected image of himself. Such a relation, despite the warmest ‘personal’ feeling, is really I-It”. (Friedman, 1955/2002, p. 70).

The HCD toolkit (IDEO, 2009), focusing on empathy, was applied to understand the differences between an empathetic and a dialogical and inclusive approach to SRD. When reshaped to the theoretical framework adopted in this study, the toolkit was successful in fostering inclusion between participants, when applied to a design process rooted in a local context. In this context, identifying everyday life as a design issue gave the participants an opportunity to stand in a shared situation that fostered inclusive relations between participants. Below we develop further what we consider to be particularly useful to the dialogical approach to SRD as proposed here.

Dialogue and its Evaluation in Design Research (and Practice)

First of all, it is necessary to stress that under the Buberian interpretative framework, it is not possible, and even not desirable, to evaluate and measure the level of dialogicity reached by those involved. The concept of inclusion (Buber, 1947/2006) stresses a distinction between being a witness and being an appraiser. Evaluations are done by external actors, who assess whether there was (or was not) correspondence between means and ends, according to the “rules” they have in hand. In contrast, evaluations of dialogical processes are self-evaluations based on provisory agreements among the practitioners to formulate ad hoc guidelines. As the dialogical process goes on, such guidelines may be reviewed. With this in mind, all the evaluations presented in this section describe only what was testified to by the teacher and first author of this article concerning the design exploration, particularly regarding the way in which the dialogical approach was embedded in the process. This point of view is considered privileged as it might correspond to any designer taking part in a dialogical process. As described before, according to Buber (1953/2005), the asymmetry between teachers and students—or between designers and their local communities when they are designing together—does not hinder inclusion as long as the line of demarcation (Simon, 1991, p. 572) is maintained.

Setting up the Design Challenge

Particularly useful in the HCD toolkit was the way it guides the common definition of a “design challenge.” The use of a “general case statement” (Papanek, 1985) as a starting point for the design process had a pivotal role in promoting the dialogical process proposed. It allowed participants to define and redefine the brief, which facilitated dialogical relations (*inclusive*) between them.

The statement was general, but situated—or rooted (Weil, 1949/2002)—in a precise local context, shared by both students and teacher. It enabled the teacher to be included in the process,

Table 5. Analysis of the HCD phases in the dialogical approach to SRD.

	HCD phases under the dialogical approach			
	H (Hear) phase	C (Create) phase	D (Deliver) phase	
Definition of Socially Responsible Design (SRD)	Defining and redefining the brief	Initial statement shifted from “what do people desire?” to “what do we desire?” Participants followed a “rooted” process, focusing on their own locality and its problems.	Focus was shifted from developing empathy towards others’ reality to an inclusive process in which the group aimed to design for its own problems (inclusiveness).	The design challenges were defined in terms of “How might we?” questions and the solution concepts developed in answer to such interrogatives.
	Collaboration between disciplines	Experts (from different areas and disciplines) were considered not as external consultants, but as participants involved in defining a common design challenge.	Experts were expected to take part in the C phase, but unfortunately this did not happen.	Experts were expected to take part in the D phase, but unfortunately this did not happen.
	Employing participatory design techniques	Listening to “stories” about everyday life on campus from other people, and discovering one’s own stories, favored inclusiveness.	Focus on sharing “stories” in the C phase favored inclusiveness between participants. The importance of storytelling in the dialogical approach was evidenced. The use of visualization and representation tools supported communication between participants.	The invitation to develop further the solution that participants were “most passionate about” opened up the possibility for them to be personally involved in the solution development, in a rooted way.
	Building capacity, not dependency	Being invited to solve their own problems helped students to change their passive behavior towards their own local problems. It was helpful to look for “creative communities,” i.e., people (like the participants themselves) behaving outside the mainstream.	Participants’ immersion in their own living context and their encounters and interactions with experts and colleagues stimulated the development of solutions based on partnerships.	The teacher/designer presence did not hinder the dialogical process, because its focus was kept on solving commonly shared problems and the Buberian line of demarcation was maintained (more about this in the section “Discussion”).
	Designing beyond traditional design solutions	Shift from things to results. A design approach was defined which shifted its focus from the development of “things” to define—through a dialogical process—how to achieve the desired “results.”	Stories were recorded in short sentences (key insights) and grouped, looking to identify patterns and opportunities, which were defined in terms of the final results to be achieved.	Focus was placed on developing solutions in which all local actors co-produce commonly recognized benefits (it excluded a top-down approach).
	Creating fundamental change (results)	In accordance with the brief, focus was placed on the development of regenerative solutions, which gave students a direction for the design process.	The regenerative potential of the ideas was also considered when choosing the most promising idea to be developed in the D phase.	The regenerative effect is manifested in the concepts developed, which traced a scenario of wellbeing for everyday life (see the section “Results”).

together with students (as would be possible for designers working with their own local communities). The problems identified on the campus were commonly felt by both. This helped the teacher to maintain the situational line of demarcation (Simon, 1991, p. 572), i.e., it was not possible for the teacher to impose personal convictions: instead, focus was placed on learning and looking for solutions together with all involved. Some issues apparently seemed to be felt only by students, such as “how might we manage textbooks and handwritten notes when courses end?” But the inclusive and rooted character of the dialogical approach led the teacher to be personally involved in this issue, as a shared problem to be solved. Again, the situational line of demarcation was maintained, but this also required the teacher to decide to sustain a dialogical attitude, which requires inclusion, not empathy (Buber, 1947/2006). However, the rootedness (Weil, 1949/2002) of the SRD approach proposed here also played a pivotal role in sustaining an inclusive attitude in the teacher. Both teacher and students were working together on a problem identified in the same context of life. This means that the teacher, like the students, is included, taking part in the didactic processes that may or may not require the use of books and handwritten notes.

Dialogical Mediations in the Design Process

Two issues were raised in the design exploration as important elements to enable a dialogical process. Firstly, the proposal presented in the H (Hear) and C (Create) phases about sharing stories (IDEO, 2009, p. 62) allowed students to shift the exclusive focus from the usual complaints about everyday life on campus, or from interviews on a quantitative research basis, to promote the sharing of personal experiences, observed as a key element in favoring inclusiveness. This observation is in line with the dialogical approach, as Buber recognized clearly and deeply the importance of storytelling in the life of dialogue. He did not talk “about,” he talked “with”; i.e., rather than just theorizing, he talked “with” the more expressive stories of his own identity. This resulted in a much-celebrated work, the compilation of tales from Hasidic teaching tradition (originally an oral tradition) that he organized for the first time in written form (Buber, 1906). Secondly, it was observed that the use of visualization and collaboration tools—from service to business design—played a key role in facilitating communication between participants towards the development of a common solution. Clearly this

characteristic is not exclusive to a dialogical approach to design processes; however, its importance in fostering inclusiveness was observed. In relation to this, Friedman (1955/2002), in accordance with Buber, reminds us:

Although this dialogical knowing is direct, it is not entirely unmediated. The directness of the relationship is established not only through the mediation of the senses, e.g. the concrete meeting of real living persons, but also through the mediation of the “word,” i.e. the mediation of those technical means and those fields of symbolic communication, such as language, music, art, and ritual, which enable men ever again to enter into relation with that which is over against them. (p. 195).

Conclusion

The design exploration indicated promising lines of research to consolidate a dialogical approach to SRD. Firstly, further investigation is required into means and tools able to mediate communication between participants in an inclusive perspective. Commonly recognized tools were used in this design exploration, but others need to be tested or specially developed, in view of the importance of such communication to empowering dialogical relations.

Secondly, it was observed that a dialogical approach to SRD does not aim to co-create solutions with communities for problems already identified and formulated, which is often a goal in charity and social-sector work. It deals with themes and problems not structured beforehand, and here additional exploration is required on processes to support participants in the dialogical definition of their own design challenges.

Buber (1921/1996) bases the possibility of genuine dialogue on personal intention, which cannot be controlled or forced. This highlights the essential character of the dialogical approach to SRD. It can only be seen as a possibility. The designer and local community may allow it to happen and if so it is the result of a choice, which brings with it a specific proposition for SRD: It is through being totally present in meeting with the “other” in a concrete situation that a living mutual responsibility, beyond the possibilities of objectification and conceptual descriptions, is likely to emerge. What we intended to do here was to outline some methodological characteristics of a design process able to support participants in making such a choice. For designers, it does not mean controlling its development. Like the educator in the Buberian perspective, designers in dialogical processes are faced with priorities that may set limits to their technical arguments and professional skills. Here, the Buberian notion of a situational line of demarcation sheds light on the role designers may assume.

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