Codifying Practices in an Emergent Space: Insights from the Leap Symposium on the New Professional Frontier in Design For Social Innovation

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Abstract: This article provides a critical overview of LEAP: The New Professional Frontier in Design for Social Innovation, a first-of-its-kind symposium, which took place at Art Center College of Design in September 2013. The symposium's main goal was to address one central issue—career pathways for designers in the social innovation context—through a pluralism of lenses that aspired to catalyze a national conversation about this professional frontier for design. Over three days, thought leaders addressed the tensions and ambiguities inherent in an emergent field and identified five topics of relevance on which to focus. A series of proposals for future pathways generated by symposium participants serve as the empirical grounding for the analysis and key ideas that are offered in this study—one that adopts a dialectical approach to make sense of the insights gained. Two principal strands of formulations emerge, which manifest from the various LEAP scenarios discussed. First, a repeated discourse about the "need to produce evidence" or "demonstrate value" from this form of design engagement appears as a central preoccupation for all. Second, there seems to be agreement that the process of articulation and validation underway will require new models of engagement and ongoing cultural change within organizational practice. The article argues that the insights we gain from the LEAP proposals also underscore a growing awareness within this community of practice of the necessity to embrace the complexity of navigating career pathways in the social realm with tools outside design as well. In this sense, the article suggests that we are prompted to embrace an articulation of the design discipline that has evolved from a linear, deterministic causality to one that lives within a complex system.

Keywords: Social Innovation, Professional Design Careers, Social Impact Design, Design Education, Cultural Emergence

Introduction

Social innovations—new ideas, artifacts, services and models that simultaneously meet social needs and create new collaborations that are both good for society *and* enhance its capacity to act (The Young Foundation, 2012)—are increasingly at the forefront of our consciousness. Designers are being called upon as translators and synthesizers to creatively address social and systemic issues in organizations of all kinds. Even as the economy generates new and meaningful career opportunities for designers, career pathways in this space, and the skills necessary to succeed in them, still lack clear articulation.

In the fall 2013, I had the opportunity—along with a national advisory group of colleagues from design education and industry[1]—to convene a first-of-its-kind symposium at Art Center College of Design: *LEAP: The New Professional Frontier in Design for Social Innovation*. (Figure 1) Organized by Designmatters, the college's award winning social impact department, and conceived as an invitation-only gathering over three consecutive days for participants based in the United States, the conference focused on the rising trends in social innovation careers for

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[1] The LEAP symposium national advisory group, or "brain trust" as it was referred to in symposium materials, included Allan Chochinov, Chair, Products of Design, School of Visual Arts and Partner, Core77; Lee Davis, Scholar-in-Residence, Maryland Institute College of Art; William Drenttel, Director, Winterhouse Institute and Editorial Director, Design Observer; Robert Fabricant, Vice President of Creative, frog design; and Jocelyn Wyatt, Co-Lead and Executive Director, IDEO.org. The author is grateful for their essential contributions.

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designers. The symposium assembled approximately 100 thought leaders, which included a mix of 40% non-designers (private sector, public sector and social enterprise) and 60% designers (educators, practitioners, recent graduates and students). (Figure 2) The event was structured as a sequence of facilitated working-group modules, each shaped by an iterative, design-thinking process, along with panel discussions, as well as breathing moments for re-gathering and synthesis presentations for the entire symposium group. The goal was to address one central issue—career pathways for designers in the social innovation context—through a pluralism of lenses that aspired to catalyze a national conversation about this professional frontier. Furthermore, a key aspiration of the symposium was to explore generative meanings, frame questions and test new possibilities that might advance our understanding not only of the opportunities, but also the limitations, that designers are encountering in these emergent roles.

Figure 1: LEAP Symposium Identity
Source: Flaherty 2013

Figure 2: *Not A Designer: Illustration of a LEAP Group
Source: MacNaughton 2013

This article aims to surface central insights that arose from the initial outputs of this participant-led conversation. Our analysis ties back to the key research questions behind the *raison d'être* of the symposium itself. First of all, how might we come to understand more closely the current underlying factors that are driving and/or impeding, professional pathways in the space? Second, what are the resulting implications for design educators who are confronted

with new organizational models and alternative forms of practice in terms of curricular shifts that may be necessary to better prepare students for success along these pathways? And finally, by gaining a better understanding of the conditions and nascent conventions that characterize this emergent space, what might we learn about the positioning of design overall as a knowledge-domain impacting organizational practice and culture today?

In general terms, the concept of *emergence* refers to the process of coming into being and prominence. The Welsh cultural critic Raymond Williams (1977)[2] offers an interesting perspective of the phenomenon as it applies to relational dynamics and variations in cultural processes that can only be fully understood vis-à-vis what he argues are the "dominant" (trends and elements that are fully accepted as current and mainstream) and the "residual" (practices formed in the past that are still effective elements of the present).

In this article, we make an argument that this articulation of the emergent can be a useful theoretical lens to help us situate the incipient nature of these professional pathways in design for social innovation within the larger framework of established design practices. We provide a critical analysis of the empirical data generated by the LEAP symposium participants by adopting a dialectical strategy of inquiry in our methodological approach in order to make sense of, and reflect upon, the insights gained. Key outcomes from the symposium in turn serve to convey the picture of a field that, in no uncertain terms, is in a state of momentous development and flux.

A Conversation Defined by Honesty: Opening Arguments

Structurally, the LEAP symposium's driving characteristic resided in the participant-led nature of the conversation, which was envisioned as a true exchange of ideas and reframing of collective insights. In practical terms, this aspiration translated in a programmatic format and flow for the symposium that clustered participants in small-group working sessions that evolved in focus and makeup over the three days of the conference. (Figure 3).

Figure 3: LEAP Symposium Participants Engage in a Working Session on Day 2
Source: Aristei 2013

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[2] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*. 1977. Oxford University Press. See the chapter "Dominant, Residual and Emergent," (pp.121-127).

On day one, participants were pre-assigned to multidisciplinary knowledge-content groups to collaborate on discussions that were seeded with three main questions as points of departure: 1/ *What is design for social innovation?* This question pointed to an interrogation about key forms of practices and drivers for designers doing this work, and mapped desired future opportunities. 2/ *How does it manifest? Vital hypotheses.* This question meant to surface central values, principles and tools that nurture or stifle new modes of professional engagement. 3/ *Why it matters: implications.* The underlying tenet of this question was about how we might define the value of design and better articulate the "return on design" (ROD) and its relationship to the social innovation context.

Participants' unique perspectives via their "opening arguments" in turn augmented these key themes. The opening arguments phrase was used loosely as an invitation to participants, pre-symposium, to share a principle that may guide their practice, a critical question, or a particular call to action. The opening arguments submitted ranged in nature from provocative ("While designers are typically well-intentioned, many lack the ethical framework to guide their practice," Jon Kolko, Austin Center for Design) to matter-of-fact ("Real constraints always make for the most creative kinds of design," Sarah Lidgus, IDEO); inspiring ("Small, informed design changes can change behavior," Andrew Shea, Design Observer) to inspired ("Design is forgetting, what and how you choose to forget is a design strategy," Richard Tyson, Makerbot Foundation); tongue-in-cheek ("Design Thinking = Strategic Naiveté," Phil Clevenger, Adobe) to serious ("Designers play a special role in the attention economy; with their power to reflect and remake the world comes a tremendous social responsibility," Johanna Blakley, Norman Lear Center, USC).

The issues they touched upon embraced the systemic ("We desperately need to bring design thinking into organizations. We also need to bring organizational thinking to design," Rodrigo Canales, Yale School of Management), and the personal ("I am a tool, we are all tools, so what are we doing?" Tom de Blasis, Nike Foundation). They spoke of the institutional mission statements of participants' backgrounds ("Improving communities by providing the network and knowledge necessary to leverage the design of the built environment as a tool for social gain," John Peterson, Public Architecture). They shed light on the challenges of the practice ("Design is easy, implementation is tough," Panathea Lee, Reboot) and celebrated its promise ("Create. Impact," Casey Caplowe, Good).

All in all, this diversity of outlooks fed the quality and tone of the conversation, which was facilitated with three main attributes in mind that were explicitly articulated: exploration, dynamism and honesty. From the author's perspective as the host curator of the symposium, the aspiration for honesty was grounded in the philosophical hermeneutics of the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer and his defining of honesty as the quality "of being open to the new, to the different, to the true" (Gadamer, 1977).

The recognition that all understanding includes a reflective dimension from the very beginning, and that "through every dialogue something different comes to be" (Gadamer, 1977) also guided the participatory and iterative nature of the working sessions, which were facilitated and documented by professional design teams which were tasked to capture common agreements, but also statements of dissent and questioning that emerged.[3] Thus, one could argue that the sessions of day one, which aimed at establishing a baseline of topics of relevance and were labeled under the umbrella of "uncharted territory," were also in many ways designed to surface the inherent tensions and ambiguities brought about from the very emergent nature of the topics at hand. In this regard, there was an intentional effort placed at developing an environment for inquiry and exchange of lived experiences in the symposium that adhered to Richard McKeon's examination of philosophical semantics and his construal of the concepts of

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[3] A professional team of illustrators, photographers and filmmakers along with writers were part of the LEAP symposium documentation team. An archive of the best output is available in the outcomes section of the symposium website at http://leapsymposium.org/outcomes/.

discussion and inquiry as being dependent upon "productive ambiguity in the interpretation of common problems and suggestive inconsistency in the assumptions proposed to resolve them" (McKeon, 1966). Being at peace with the ambiguity and certain messiness of the discussions that were jump-started in the design charrettes also served to reinforce the pluralism of perspectives that the symposium was after—a sense of pluralism championed as a de facto feature of human circumstances (Buchanan, 1995).

Beyond a Basic Definitional Stance: New Topics of Relevance

As it could be expected, LEAP captured a transitional moment in time, one of new maturity, we could argue, in terms of how design scholars and practitioners alike are currently approaching design for social innovation and socially responsive design (Manzini, 2013). In this sense, the topoi of discussion at LEAP bypassed traditional debates about definitional stances regarding the nature and manifestation of design for social innovation initiatives. The emphasis, rather, was in assessing interdependencies that might further outcomes for research, teaching and practice. Much of the conversation also centered on what favorable conditions could possibly be created in order to amplify viability and sustainability for the field overall. Given the participation of a large percentage of leading design educators as well as recent design graduates at LEAP, several threads of debate touched upon the role and responsibility of design schools as laboratories for new curricula and effective modes of pedagogy in the space. Finally, questions probing what new design competencies may be needed to succeed in a professional landscape that involves cutting across organizational and disciplinary boundaries, making sense of hybrid modes of production and collaboration, and accessing different sources of financial support—be it in the social enterprise, private or public sectors—were also front and center, and were particularly enriched by the perspectives of the non-designers in attendance. The two panel discussions curated for the symposium also infused, with substantive examples and case studies, the discussion about skills and revenue sources.[4]

The generative process of the initial working sessions of the symposium was recorded in visual boards, then culled and reviewed at the end of the first day by the symposium organizing team,[5] with salient ideas aggregated and synthesized into five "new topics of relevance" that participants self-selected to pursue in newly assembled groups on day two.[6] Here, the synthesis that emerged amounted to the following five discussion themes:

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[4] The panel discussions from the LEAP symposium can be accessed at: http://leapsymposium.org/outcomes/lunchtime-talks/. Day one included a panel moderated by Robert Fabricant from frog design with Chris Fabian, Advisor on Innovation to Executive Director and Co-Lead, Innovation Unit, UNICEF, and Bryan Boyer, Former Strategic Lead at SITRA and Project Manager, Helsinki Design Lab; the session focused on design innovation practices at the intersection of the public and private sector. Day two included a panel moderated by Lee Davis from the Center for Social Design at the Maryland Institute College of Art with David Greco, Vice President, Western Region, Nonprofit Finance Fund; Kanyi Maqubela, Venture Partner, Collaborative Fund; Tara Roth McConaghy, President, Goldhirsh Foundation and Gabriel Wartofsky, Cofounder and CTO, Conscious Commuter Corporation; this session offered a number of diverse perspectives from practitioners "designing the social economy," i.e. social entrepreneurs, foundation leaders and social impact investors who are maximizing social good and social benefit through new market-based approaches.

[5] The role of the leading facilitators at LEAP was critical in advancing the pace of the dialogue and ideation during the charrette process as well as this "live" recording; throughout, facilitators were also actively involved in helping capture the many divergent views and alternative scenarios proposed by participants in the initial working sessions. I am grateful to the leadership of my colleague Karen Hofmann, Chair, Product Design Department, whose design-centric innovation workshop methodology "Designstorm" she adapted for LEAP and implemented with the core programming team of the symposium.

[6] The morning of day two started with the announcement of these new topics of relevance, by Jocelyn Wyatt from IDEO.org, and an invitation for participants to reassemble into new working groups in order to delve deeper into topics of specific interest. Participants spent the remainder day and half of the symposium delving deep into these topics to produce proposals by the conclusion of the symposium.

- The Value of Design in Social Impact
- Partnerships & Collaborations
- Social Impact Design Networks
- Social Impact Design Educational Imperatives
- Broadening Access to Design for Social Impact Organizations.

These thematic clusters grounded the remainder of the conversations at the symposium, and became the focus of exploratory scenarios and narratives that converged into a total of 19 proposals that were visualized in large boards and shared with the entire symposium community in a "science fair" type of format at the wrap-up session on day three. The key foci and the spectrum of insights put forth by the teams in response to these five themes, as well as one exemplary proposal per category from the total pool of ideas are illustrated in Table 1 and discussed in more detail below, along with other examples.

Table 1: Matrix of Themes, Foci and Key Proposal Examples

	THEMES				
	Value of Design for Social Impact	**Partnerships and Collaborations**	**Networks**	**Educational Imperatives**	**Broaden Access**
Foci	Tools and Attributes	Multi/Cross-Disciplinary Engagement	Taxonomy and Mapping	Principles, Skills and Methods	Financial Support and Resources
Spectrum Range	Metrics from the qualitative to the quantitative	New models of engagement from inside to outside design	Visualizing and making actionable a new ecosystem	Education and training from the design-specific to the impact-specific	Defining access: from revenue streams to knowledge-base support
Proposals	*Business Model Canvas: Social Impact Design Edition*	*Social Design Pathways Matrix*	*The Social Innovation Landscape*	*Designs of Life*	*Skill Swingers*

Tools and Attributes: Value of Design for Social Impact

"As we struggle to make social impact design work viable in our organizations, we realize that there are no good tools to help us understand the business model for social impact design" (Asal

et al, 2013[7]). With this statement as premise, and basing their proposal on the popular business model canvas tool developed by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010), the team behind the *Business Model Canvas: Social Impact Design Edition*[8] identified a number of key design attributes and central questions inherent to the development of a sustainable business practice in social impact design. Imagining the tool simply as a platform for a "dynamic articulation of your business model," this proposal also captured a recurrent focal point of deliberation at LEAP—for example, in another scheme titled *How to Break the Design Glass Ceiling,* (Ewald et al, 2013[9]): How to measure value, effectiveness, and what I qualify as the "return on design" across a spectrum of qualitative and quantitative measures that are integrated into financially sustainable models so that organizations can both match funding with projects, and have tangible criteria to assess "what success looks like" in terms of social impact of design outputs.

Multi/Cross-Disciplinary Engagement: Partnerships and Collaborations

How to qualify and situate meaningful engagements at different scales of action for designers pursuing social innovation career pathways was an issue of paramount interest for symposium participants. Several proposals wrestled with questions pertaining to redefinitions of collaboration both inside and outside the domain of design and across sectors. Pursuing this track of inquiry, *The Collaborators* team (Brink et al, 2013[10]) brought up discussion about resources, relational dynamics between funders/clients and designers, as well as issues of accountability within situational rules and norms. Perhaps one of the most comprehensive proposals in which the implications of how and where a design intervention or design process may be situated and carried out within various forms of collaboration and partnership was *The Social Design Pathways Matrix* (Cannon et al, 2013[11]), a tool that a few of the LEAP participants had started articulating previously at the Winterhouse Symposium for Design Education and Social Change (August 2013), and one that is already being tested by several of the educators and practitioners engaged in its development.[12] (Figure 4) The vertical axis of the matrix includes a "scale of engagement," that captures three potential distinct modes of engagement: 1/ the stand-alone intervention (that may be represented by the design of a discreet product or service), 2/ the system innovation (that may require the design of an alternative scenario that may disrupt an existing system), and finally 3/ the cultural transformation (where the design may be tied to change of behavior). The horizontal axis of the matrix encapsulates "the range of expertise," depicting design scenarios where design output may be the result of 1/ design alone (individual level), 2/ design as part of a multidisciplinary effort (team level), and 3/ design as an element of a cross-sector initiative (cross-disciplinary/organizational level). As a creative commons and open source tool, the matrix is envisioned as a flexible navigational device that has the potential to bring clarity during a process of inquiry or engagement to a variety of users, whether they are design educators, students, practitioners or social innovation design partners.[13]

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[7] Business Model Canvas Proposal: Social Impact Design Edition Team: Elaine Asal, Nathalie Destandau, Zach Hendershot, Matt Manos, Bob McKinnon, Jocelyn Wyatt.

[8] See The Young Foundation's *Social Business Model Canvas,* Thomas and Kimbell, 2012, for a similar, but fully developed toolkit.

[9] How to Break the Design Glass Ceiling Team: David Ewald, Tom de Blasis, Lorna Ross.

[10] The Collaborators Team: Gaby Brink, Jason Brush, Elizabeth Collins, Jenny Liang, Amber Reed.

[11] The Social Design Pathways Matrix Team: Charlie Cannon, Allan Chochinov, Gala Narezo.

[12] For a review of the fourth Winterhouse Symposium on Design and Social Change, which includes mention of the impetus behind the matrix, see http://changeobserver.designobserver.com/feature/winterhouse-fourth-symposium-on-design-education-and-social-change-final-report/38157/. The Leap Symposium website includes a video testimonial from Charlie Cannon that walks viewers through scenarios on how to use the matrix: video can be accessed at http://leapsymposium.org/outcomes/testimonials/videos/#mg_ld_1772. With plans to operationalize the tool with a dedicated online presence by 2014, it will be interesting to assess its future use and integration within the wider plethora of toolkits that are part of social design contemporary practice.

[13] For a recent review of some provocative questions about the use and impact of these toolkits, see Lucy Kimbell, "Mapping Social Design Practice: Beyond the Toolkit," (November 2013) a blog post that is part of an ongoing

Taxonomy and Mapping: Networks

A key challenge for social innovation and design for social impact projects continues to reside in a certain level of fragmentation and/or duplication that can characterize the field—where projects may be conducted in a vacuum of sorts, in relative isolation from, or knowledge about, contextual capabilities and adjacencies that could amplify them. The team behind *The Social Innovation Landscape* proposal (Curry et al, 2013[14]) envisioned a project and program visualization and analysis tool that tackles this gap by mapping the ecosystem of existing activity and networks, by harnessing the opportunity to provide an inventory that can cluster and align multiple projects across a given geographic region, and ideally lead to better negotiation of resources and effective multi-sector outcomes. [15]

Principles, Skills and Methods: Educational Imperatives

Hosted by an educational institution, Art Center College of Design, and with an important composition of educators among participants, the LEAP symposium generated several proposals that were grounded in considerations about education, mentorship, and ultimately an interrogation about the principles and skills that should drive the formation of the designer determined to influence our contemporary world with socially beneficial outcomes. *Masters of Public Design* was, for example, a proposal that identified a number of design principles and skills paramount to social impact (Canales et al, 2013[16]). It imagined the profile of an individual equally adept at system-thinking, collaboration, making, problem-solving, and visual communication (all characteristics the team identified as design principles), as well as entrepreneurship, partnership building, empathy, and evidence-based thinking, as well as oral and written communication (skills for social impact). Although we might argue that one could situate the dimensions identified less in a dichotomous spectrum, but more so in a continuum, the proposal surfaces important questions about the pertinent skills and domains of knowledge that design educators may be imparting to the next generation of designers through their curricula. In this sense, the proposal *D.Signs of Life* (Burdick et al, 2013[17]) proposes to view the acquisition of skills for design and impact as a lifelong journey and a holistic "constellation" of aptitudes (Figure 4). This team took a reflective stance on present educational models, and their conclusion to one of the central questions of the symposium, "How can designers find careers in social impact work?"—far from reductive—points to a complex set of answers, both real and theoretical: "There is no single trajectory. It is a constellation of skills, relationships and opportunities that individuals navigate to create a meaningful life practice"[18] (Nerenberg, 2013).

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independent study project for the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council; accessed at http://mappingsocialdesign.org/2013/11/19/mapping-social-design-practice-beyond-the-toolkit/.

[14] The Social Innovation Landscape Team: Ian Curry, Debera Johnson, Richard Tyson.

[15] Not unlike *The Social Innovation Pathways Matrix,* this proposal also gained considerable traction with a committed team of LEAP participants who are taking it forward in 2014.

[16] Masters of Public Design Team: Kate Canales, Jennifer Keller Jackson, Kipum Lee, Sarah Lidgus, John Peterson, Suzi Sosa, Amy Whitaker.

[17] D.Signs of Life Team: Anne Burdick, Alex Cabunoc, Maggie Hendrie, Marina Kim, Sami Nerenberg.

[18] For a reflection about this proposal from one of the team members, see Sami Narenberg's September 2013 blog post in GOOD: Desi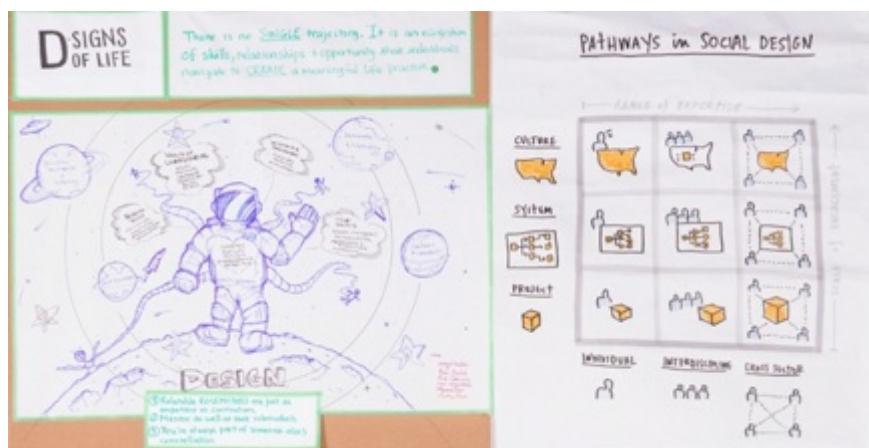gn Alone is Not Enough to Create Social Impact: http://www.good.is/posts/design-alone-is-not-enough-to-create-social-impact.

Figure 4: Signs of Life and Social Design Pathways Matrix Team Proposal Boards
Source: Aristei 2013

Financial Support and Resources: Broadening Access

Within the "wicked" landscape of design for social innovation, the question of financial sustainability is undoubtedly one of the thorniest. At LEAP, it permeated almost every proposal deliberation and was particularly omnipresent in this thematic cluster. Non-designers, which were represented by social impact investors, social entrepreneurs, industry managers, foundation leaders, scientists, and NGO and city government officials, helped ground this conversation considerably. For example, the *Skill Swingers* proposal (Alexander et al, 2013[19]), takes the principles of a Kickstarter-type of crowd-funding web platform to help match design talent with expertise outside design with the mission of creating both new streams of revenue to support partnerships mid- to long-term as well as a network for knowledge sharing via case studies and best practices. Other proposals, such as *Staying the Course* (Mina et al, 2013[20]) emphasized ideas for a combination of web-based platforms with capability-training workshops and network development to expand opportunities to promote the distinct value of design attributes as well as mechanisms to build trust between design and non-design actors in order to strengthen partnerships.

Emergence, Speculations and Collaboration

The conversations at LEAP about professional design pathways in the social innovation context can be situated in an emergent space for the field of design (Figure 5). As the terrain of design for social innovation expands and new roles, pathways and forms of practice take off, some of the complexity and tensions that characterize these new modalities of action for designers appeared as omnipresent within the five topics of relevance that drove forward many of the symposium ideas and proposals that we discussed above. In fact, this is not a surprising insight, especially if we go back to the theoretical lens of Williams to qualify the emergent nature of this phenomena: a locus where new meanings, values, practices and new relationships are continually being crafted amidst a dominant culture (Williams, 1977). Again to follow Williams' perspective, we could argue that while there is an exciting "coming to consciousness" of a new field with social design or design for social innovation and the career pathways emerging, the

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[19] Skill Swingers Team: Danny Alexander, Barb Alvarado, Renna Al-Yasini, Elizabeth Gin, Kanyi Maquebela.
[20] Staying the Course Team: An Xiao Mina, Linda Pulik, Peter Stubb, Denis Weil.

pluralism and un-codified nature of these practices—which are not fully recognized or integrated in the mainstream, dominant culture—inherently provoke unease, since by definition they are substantially alternative and sometimes oppositional to the dominant forms of design careers that we may typically associate with traditional and post-industrial era designer's roles. In the social innovation context, many of the scenarios and forms of practice LEAP focused on, especially ones that touch upon social and public sector initiatives, open up deliberative situations (Buchanan, 1995) where design is fundamentally repositioned as a strategic decision making and reframing tool for organizational practice (Boyer et al, 2013).

With regard to the emergent dimension of social innovation design pathways that can only be fully comprehended in contrast to the dominant career forms, there are two notable strands of formulations that manifest from the various LEAP scenarios discussed. First, a repeated discourse about the "need to produce evidence" or "demonstrate value" from this form of design engagement appears as a central preoccupation for all. Second, there seems to be agreement that the process of articulation and validation underway will require new models of engagement and ongoing cultural change within organizational practice. If we consider organizational culture as a whole as "the activity of ordering, disordering, and reordering in the search for understanding and for values which guide action" (Buchanan, 1995; Buchanan, Doordan, & Margolin (Eds.), 2010), the significance of the highly dynamic actions that designers are responsible for as they align decisions with impact, and work together and with others to innovate, cannot be overstated. The insights we gain from the LEAP proposals also underscore a growing awareness for this community of practice of the necessity to embrace the complexity of navigating career pathways in the social realm with tools outside design as well. In this sense, we are prompted to embrace an articulation of the design discipline that has evolved from a linear, deterministic causality to one that lives within a complex system, and where there is value in pushing back on "the boundaries of our system in order to include other aspects of the world in which design is practiced." (Fideli, 2001)[21]

Figure 5: Emergence: Illustration of a Group Discussion
Source: MacNaughton 2013

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[21] Alain Fideli, (2001) "Rethinking Design Education for the 21st Century: Theoretical, Methodological, and Ethical Discussion." Design Issues, Vol. 17, No.1 (Winter) pp. 5-17.

Conclusion

To leap is not to move timidly, but to advance with great determination. The participants of the LEAP symposium embodied that sense of meaningful determination. They drove home an important argument: the fundamental necessity to celebrate constraints dictated by context and community—where many of the effective initiatives that meet social needs start. LEAP symposium participants also represent a community of practice that demonstrated a real appreciation for the opportunity to wrestle with these emergent models in social innovation careers for designers and the distributed models of agency called for in a global context of increased interconnectedness and complexity.

The generative outputs of the symposium encompass a pluralism of perspectives and lived experiences from educators and practitioners who are not only embracing traditional market constraints, but who are also redirecting design to take on fundamental human needs with an outstanding commitment and confidence to support innovation driven by social goals. Their collective work undoubtedly amounts to a leap into action, and one bound to propel the field forward.

Acknowledgement

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