

# Enabling Platform for Social Innovation in the State of Santa Catarina, Brazil

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## Developing Local Content, ICT, Social Innovation

Design, as an area of knowledge, is subject to changes that affect it through different approaches, both theoretical and practical; its include matters related with responsibility, environment, social worries, and things alike. Such proposal for a systemic approach of design is seen as a way to involve the stakeholders in the processes of investigation and of social innovation. Regarding this integration and following a suggestion of Professor Manzini, an enabling platform was created. This platform is shaped as a virtual tool, as an internet site, aiming to connect people concerned with the project through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). As a theoretical basis for the research, this paper outlines some especial features of design and social innovation, in their particular and in their complementary aspects, as well as in the way they relate with each other through the management of ICT through the World Wide Web.

## 1 Introduction

The societies, in which design appeared, became available and well-developed, faced diverse transformations. In the old days, one would project with the belief that the world natural resources had no limits, context in which designers used to contribute with products that used to feed the system. Nowadays, however, it is actually possible to think about new well-being forms which are not only linked to the product's physical question but to its whole environment. This involves the process of production, of communication and so forth. Designing, in these conditions, while an active element within this changing process, must also be inserted into a phase of modification [1].

One can observe two situations which demand changing. On the one hand there is the cause and effect reaction between the global economy production methods and its effects upon the world natural resources, and, on the other hand, the long-term damages these effects might cause to economy. Having said that, it is possible to have a panorama of how intense and depth future crises might be and of the urgency to manage them [2]. From this evidence, one can infer that we are passing through a directional phase in which company leaders, consumers, community members, academics, students and public are putting effort into the way to sustainability [3].

Furthermore, the discussion about designing is also profoundly changing and directing towards a more holistic and systemic view, in which the process, the competence and the people are elements whose actions must be deeply considered. Therefore, the regional territories might benefit from the Design's strategic proximity, which is able to link people and places with a different developmental view, where local resources and the people's creativity are determined to the challenging task of dealing with human relationships [4].

Taking into consideration the fact that we live in a society in which we are all invited to be designers, that is, in a society in which one has to be the designer of his own life, interfering with a greater system which involves collectivism [5], designers are able to practice the task of finding ideas, solutions, initiatives and so forth among people, in a way that they can be configured as social innovations [6]. In this matter, the Design's systemic approach can contribute to the developing of this kind of innovation.

## 2 The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Manzini believes that the enabling platform can be a support for the development of social innovations. This platform is shaped as a virtual tool, as an internet site, aiming to connect people concerned with the project through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). That makes possible the interaction [18].

For the action of the design in creative communities, the quoted author proposes three forms of interaction [19]:

- Bottom-up: by the active participation of the persons interested;
- Top-down: by the intervention of external institutions;
- Peer-to-peer: by the exchange of information between similar organizations.

The creation of a virtual platform of interaction will be able to serve like tool for facilitate those three forms of interaction. An example of which the interaction was prosecuted us three levels, with the support of an Enabling Platform, occurred in the case of the traditional local community of Guarda do Embaú, which is located in the municipality of Palhoça, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil.

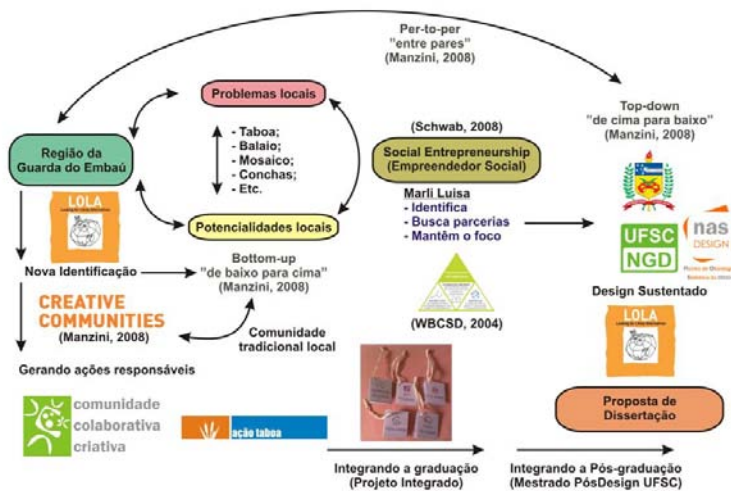
The project of the platform, a page in the internet, was developed by the Systemic Approach of Design Center (NasDesign) at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Brazil, with contribution of Design Management Center (NGD). The responsible team by the creation of the site is part of the sector of sustainability, which works with the equilibrium between the

environmental, social, and economic factors of the projects requested to the laboratory.

In that case, was utilized a strategy of design that could notice all the complex interactions that the community needed for develop economically, in I balance with the environmental and social aspects. Then, it opted by the "systemic approach of design", or is, an approach in which the design is utilized like a holistic trial. In that, the focus is transferred to the product for the system. Like this, they were analyzed the factors that exercised significant influence for the local development.

The figure it follow sample a visual representation of some resultant interactions of the "systemic approach of design" and stimulated by the support of the Enabling Platform:

Fig. 1. Systemic approach of design with support of the Enabling Platform. Source: elaborated by the authors (NasDesign UFSC collection)



The trial can be concise in a logical sequence, that will be described follow it, that sought to attend the needs of the region that requested the project. The region of the Guarda do Embaú it had local problems and also local needs, both related to the activities developed by the community in the neighborhood (creation of products with fiber of taboa, creation of linen baskets with sheets of plants, creation of mosaics with remainders of tiles, creation of devices with seashells, etc.).

Fig. 2. Straw with taboa's fiber. Source: NasDesign UFSC collection.



So much the as much as problems the local potentials were identified, initially by Marli Luisa, inhabitant of the region and holder of a commercial establishment in the localities. She can be

classified as a Social Entrepreneurship, since utilizes of her business and of her leadership to contribution for the local development [20].

It worried about the sustainability of the region Marli Luisa develops his trial of leadership following the principles of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), for the maintenance of undertakings with sustainable livelihoods (SL) business. That term it's express in the action of a company and in the development of its main capacities. In that, the traditional business beginnings should be maintained, by will be essential for the success of models of SL, however a new vision about those beginnings should be configured. Like this, the WBCSD suggests that business with SL are driven by the achievement of some actions (maintain the focus, establish partnerships and identify) [21]:

Fig. 3. The sound foundations of sustainable livelihoods business. Source: WBCSD, 2007, p.66.



The task of "identify" already to have been fulfilled, had been identified the problems and the local potentials; the task of "maintain the focus" also, with the approach in the question of the sustainability; it was remaining only the task "looking for partnerships". That was initiated with the contact with the Federal one University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), at the Systemic Approach of Design Center (NasDesign), sector of sustainability, carried out by Marli Luisa. In this way the first form of interaction appeared, "top-down", in which the NasDesign UFSC was the extern institution that intervened in the community.

Soon the NasDesign UFSC did a second interaction, "peer-to-peer", situation in which the team addressed the region of the Guarda do Embaú to know the situation in loco. In this degree of interaction, the community and the team of the NasDesign UFSC became in the same level. That made the exchange of information between the couples more straight and effective. Besides, there was a return to region that gave beginning to the process.

This return made possible two new identifications in the studied community. These new identifications were driven by the third degree of interaction, "bottom-up", in which the population of the region practiced influence on the extern entity (NasDesign UFSC) through his activities creators of the local income.

In these new investigations, firstly, it made use of the methodology Looking for Likely Alternatives (LOLA) . This methodology, which also is supported by a Enabling Platform, was projected to identify cases of social innovation on basis of the sustainability. So, in the end of the process, and on basis of the criteria established by Manzini [22] and Meroni [23], there was identified the population located in the region of the Guarda do Embaú like a creative community.

Other scenario begin to be looked at, in local community with strong traditions to be kept, and which use it as a tool to generate their income, or use it to launch new ideas, aiming to provide social benefits, classifying it a traditional local community. In this phase of the project, then, it already existed the necessary information to be able to contribute to the local development.

In this way, already there was background in order to realize actions to make the community are developing. Those were implemented by the participation of the community and following

the principles of the responsible design, what bases on the practice of responsible actions and on the consideration of all the factors (economical, social and environmental) what result from these actions.

So, was developed one logo as it could serve like visual identity for the handcrafters of the region. The concept of the mark integrated the principles of creative communities, for the suggestion of interaction between peoples, and the traditional local community, through the reference to the inscriptions engraved upon rocks existent in the region. For that, the name elected is “comunidade colaborativa criativa” (creative and collaborative community):

Fig. 3. Logo of creative and collaborative community da Guarda do Embaú, SC, Brasil. Source: NasDesign UFSC collection.



After the creation of a logo, what was approved and is being used by the community, they were developed tags for the products of the handcrafters. That was prosecuted through the collaboration of the students at the undergraduate course of Graphic Design of the UFSC. They projected tags what serve to identify the handcrafters, individually and as well integrant of “comunidade colaborativa criativa”.

There was, also, the participation of the graduate program of Design and Graphic Expression (PósDesign UFSC), which has a dissertation turned for the systemic practice of design in traditional local communities as a way of promoting social innovation.

Completely that was only possible through ICT - Information and Communication Technologies, what, through an Enabling Platform, connects the stakeholders. Now, because of this case of success, the NasDesign is developing a new platform that makes possible the identification, the interaction and the development of other cases of social innovation in the State of Santa Catarina, Brazil.

### 3 Final Considerations

Design as an activity in constant evolution. Its new approaches include matters related with responsibility, environment, social worries, and things alike. Commensurately, such contemporary aspects open room for social initiatives, which are conducted by people who look for solutions regarding these new challenges and which can be interpreted as actual social innovations. This scenario begins to be looked at, especially in local communities with strong traditions to be kept, and which use it as a tool to generate their income, or use it to launch new ideas, aiming to provide social benefits; these are the so called creative communities.

Under such a perspective, the link between design and social innovation is of utmost relevance, especially in the contexts of local traditional communities and of creative communities. Such proposal for a systemic approach of design is seen as a way to involve the stakeholders (interested persons) in the processes of investigation and of social innovation, which can decisively contribute for the development of traditional local communities. Through the research-action method, the case of the traditional local community of Guarda do Embaú, which is located in the municipality of Palhoça, State of Santa Catarina, it will be able to support

the creation of Santa Catarina's Enabling Platform for Social Innovation.

Initially, it was found that a creative community and social innovations cannot be planned, and that design can stand as a link to identify and promote their development; through a web platform. This platform is shaped as a virtual tool, as an internet site, aiming to connect people concerned with the project through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). That establishes the link between design and social innovation, in their particular and in their complementary aspects, as well as in the way they relate with each other through the management of ICT through the World Wide Web.

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