design and craft
22 verbs - 22 authors

Open
Announce
Activate
Actualize
Collaborate
Talk
Cultivate
Draw
Root
Teach
Make
Manage
Identify
Internationalize
Investigate
Bequeath
Place
Design
Qualify
Know
Signify
Transcreate

ID+ INSTITUTO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO EM DESIGN, MEDIA E CULTURA PORTUGAL

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Francisco Providência / Vasco Branco	Open
Carla Paoliello / Cláudia Albino	Announce
Henrique Ralheta	Activate
Raquel Pais	Actualize
Raquel Noronha	Collaborate
Adélia Borges	Talk
Rita Rainho	Cultivate
Bete Paes	Draw
Andrea Bandoni	Root
Francisco Providência	Teach
João Nunes	Make
Irlando Ferreira	Manage
Raul Cunca	Identify
Rita Filipe	Internationalize
Mônica Moura	Investigate
Fernanda Martins	Bequeath
Lia Krucken	Place
Inês Secca Ruivo	Design
Cristina Mendes / Luís Rocha	Qualify
Carla Paoliello	Know
Cláudia Albino	Signify
Maria Emilia Kubrusly	Transcreate

Inês Secca Ruivo

18 — Design

Design, craft, project & sustainability

In *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (1955/1994, p. 148), J.R.R. Tolkien paints a scenario that transcends time, evoking the consciousness of realms about the legacy of survival to be left for future generations:

"(...) it is not our task to master all the tides of the world, but to do what we can for the time that is given to us, to root out the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till."

In contrast, in *Furti ad Arte* (1980/2001, p. 1812), Italo Calvino reminds us of the alchemical sense of the idea of collective creation as a shared experience that brings together the notion of consciousness of our mark in time, as a prosthetic extension of the marks left by others before us.

Both concepts, in their essence, can be said to represent the core of the thought underlying the sustainable development concept, which includes proposals such as Design for Sustainability, Slow Design, or Circular Design, each closely linked to the evolution of critical, informed, and proactive thinking that is inherent to the design process in the 21st century.

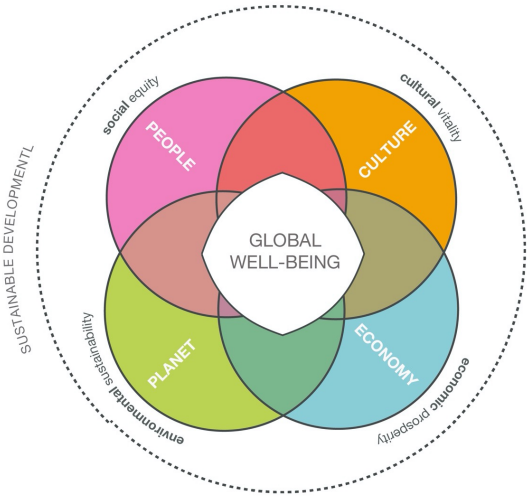
Memory is consciousness embedded in time.

Fernando Pessoa

In 2022, we find ourselves thirty-five years after the official acknowledgment of the environmental crisis of the 1980s, when the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development published the study *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, in which "Sustainable Development" is defined as the progress or development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Brundtland; Khalid, 1987). It is uniquely advocated that collaboration among government, industry, and universities is mandatory in this context to operationalize the concept.

Ten years later, John Elkington (1997) proposed the Triple Bottom Line method as a key to future business success, arguing that "sustainability" is a concept that can only be achieved through a balanced relationship of three factors: Profit — in terms of economic prosperity, Planet — regarding environmental quality, and People — considering social equity. In 2001, this concept was pertinently updated by Jon Hawkes, who proposed Culture as the fourth pillar of Sustainable Development, arguing that it is fundamental and inseparable from any planning process for societies, both in the present and the future.

Figure 1
The Four Pillars of Sustainable Development
Adapted from: John Hawkes (2001).



Since Hawkes' proposal, fourteen years have passed until the context of the definition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), approved by the United Nations in September 2015. The United Nations General Assembly unequivocally acknowledged Culture as one of the four pillars of sustainability, a fact widely acclaimed by UNESCO (2017) two years later:

"Culture is who we are, and what shapes our identity (...) From cultural heritage to cultural and creative industries, Culture is both an enabler and a driver of the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development."

Despite the years since the institutionalization of the SDGs, it's now critical to cultivate a growing and systemic global responsibility that pursues operationalization models, which must be based on culturally collaborative frameworks. Thus, in the context of studies specifically related to the sustainable development of a city or region, the Circles of Sustainability (2007) method is emphasized, developed through collaboration between Metropolis, the Global Science Program of the United Nations Compact, and other organizations. This proposal, which is part of a project titled Circles of Social Life, is aimed at municipal and regional governments that collaborate with the private sector and civil society, establishing a platform for joint action focused on addressing complex global challenges reflected at the local level by articulating key factors: Economy, Ecology, Politics, and Culture.

Thinking about Design and Projects consistently and positively over time always requires a broad, inclusive, critical, self-critical, collaborative, strategic, and sensitive vision. This vision is rooted in the four pillars of sustainable development: Economy, Ecology, Politics, and Culture. It is crucial that Craft and Design projects also follow this path. In this case, the specific realm of a place's cultural and ecological identity occupies the alchemical space of recognizing a shared memory of a past legacy and the responsibility to preserve, reposition, and/or reinterpret it, placing it into the future.

Design has been a collaborative mediator for other areas and a multifaceted creative engine that has driven innovation since its origin. It is also an area based on a holistic approach, attentive to society, culture, environment, economy, technology, and the specific needs of a particular group of individuals (Secca Ruivo, 2017).

Thus, the role of Design is increasingly fundamental in building the pathways of human production, bearing great responsibility in safeguarding the heritage passed on to future generations, whether natural, material, immaterial, or intangible.

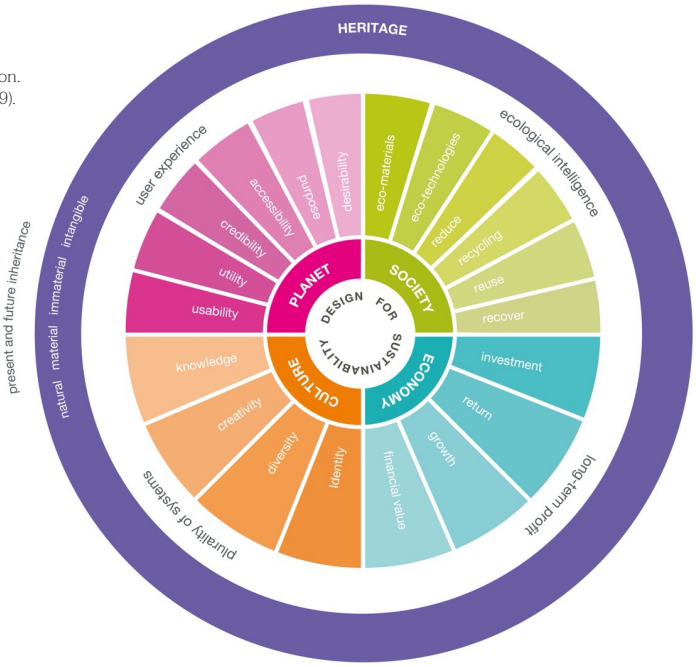


Figure 2
Design for Sustainability: Holistic and strategic vision. Source: Secca Ruivo (2019).

In the face of the complexity of the current context of the development of science, technology, business, and society, which includes the cause-effect notion, especially in terms of environment and behavior, a dimension of Design for Sustainability that has gained international prominence, especially since the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage, is the one focused on the relationship between Design and Craft. It might have seemed contradictory that a project-oriented field in mass-consumption culture, like Design, could positively contribute to protecting cultural traditions, particularly in preserving the intangible heritage of humanity, including traditional Craftsmanship. However, through various exploratory models, it has been internationally observed that Design can play a pivotal role in this mission, along with national governments, cultural organizations, and artisan communities.

However, the contribution of Design to the sustainable development of Craft involves, on the one hand, the balancing of responsibilities and opportunities inherent in preserving and repositioning traditional artisanal techniques and products without the need for Design intervention and, on the other hand, through direct Design intervention, the development of new products that can help sustain business models suitable for boosting the Craft market, thus enhancing the preservation and even growth of the associated know-how. Some phenomena that collectively can be favorable to this investment are emerging. Despite the national decline in manufactured production, we now see a global growth trend in the craft market, which presents an opportunity, including for Portugal.

According to the latest report from IMARC Group, titled "Handicrafts Market: Global Industry Trends, Share, Size, Growth, Opportunity and Forecast 2018-2023," the global Craftsmanship market reached 526.5 billion US dollars in 2017. (Trading Economics, 2019)

On the other hand, besides symbolic cultural issues and ancestral techniques, the ecological dimension of traditional craft stands out as it uses local raw materials and low-consumption technologies, resulting in a reduced impact on the production cycle. Additionally, the materials are predominantly natural, which supports a generally ecological lifecycle, mainly due to their circularity potential.

Equally noteworthy and directly related to the previous factor is the record of a movement toward the evolution of the ecological consumer market. According to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development: "Consumers in rapidly developing markets - particularly China, Australia, Sweden, and the USA - report a tendency to favor buying products from companies with a reputation for environmental and social responsibility.

On the other hand, according to a study conducted by the European Union in 2008, 75% of the surveyed population confirmed they would pay more for environmentally friendly products." (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2008). If adequately leveraged in the marketing of craft products, this phenomenon could be a valuable asset in delineating the strategies defining their market positioning.

Also, enhancing the functional dimension of craft products represents a potential opportunity to be explored. Still, it should be accompanied by adequately framing its cultural and symbolic value. In 2018, Xy Zhan and Stewart Walker published a study titled "Value Direction: Moving Crafts toward Sustainability in the Yangtze River Delta, China," in which they identify and correlate four categories of Craftsmanship: Traditional-decorative, Cultural-functional, Utilitarian, and Artistic while recognizing their respective values at environmental, economic, social, cultural, and spiritual levels. Although the study's context is specific, the survey results reflect the perception of an international audience, showing that the product typology classified under the Cultural-functional category is the one with the highest and most balanced overall evaluation in terms of preference and valuation of the surveyed factors, followed by the Traditional-decorative category (which, having the highest spiritual value, has the lowest economic value) and the Utilitarian Craft category, with an inverse relationship between those two values.

Since the late 20th century, mainly since the early 21st century, several projects have been developed, including in Portugal, that, in their relationship with Craft, precisely align with the intervention at the level of products in the Cultural-functional category.

However, for their impact to be positive on the sustainable development of regions in the long term, the implementation process for these projects must be based not only on Design but also on appropriate business models, collaboratively defined with other fields and with local and regional government entities, and with the associations to which the artisans of a particular place belong (Secca Ruivo, 2004, p. 23).

"The lack of a comprehensive perspective on craftsmanship by the artisan often poses challenges in the competitive market. However, design management offers a potential solution. It can contribute to the strategic and systemic vision of the designer. By conducting an initial diagnosis, it becomes possible to identify internal and external strengths and weaknesses in the artisan's operating context. This panoramic view enables the planning of specific strategies tailored to each reality." (Aguiar, 2015, p.7)

In Figure 3, based on the "Process Value Design" proposal by Micelli and Orquestra Group (2019), the model is complemented by illustrating the holistic dimension of Design in a systemic relationship of value generation across different process stages. Applied to the context of a Design and Craf Project, besides the strategic vision that articulates the variables related to the product (technology, materials, market, ecology) and the user experience, the sensitive dimension of identity, the history of the place, the people, and the objects that inhabit are prioritized, amplifying the exploration of the symbolic and cultural values associated with it (Secca Ruivo, 2011).

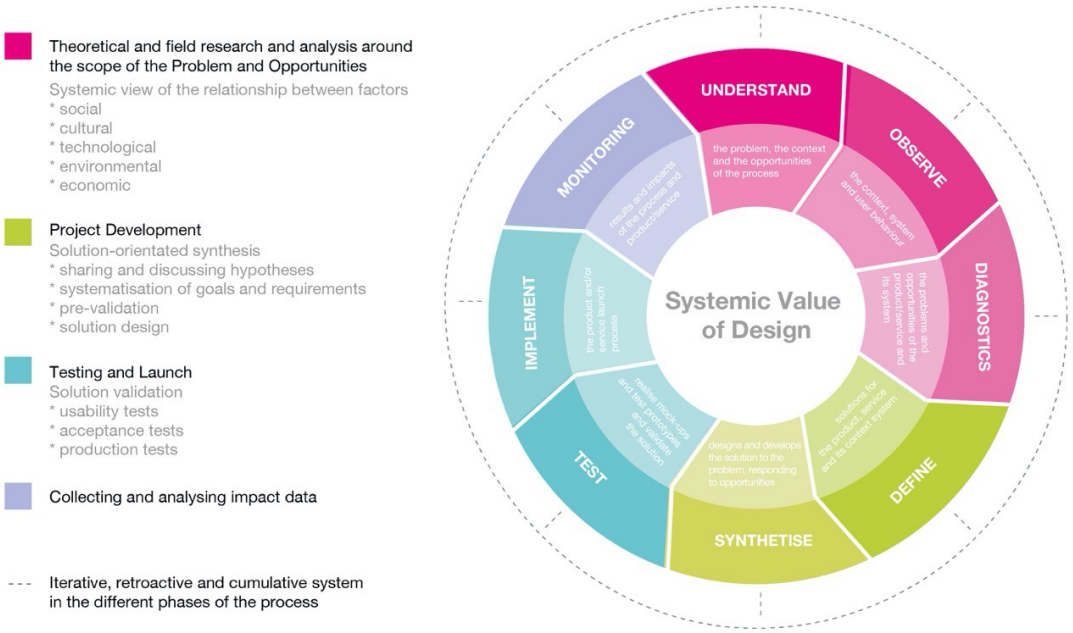


Figure 3
Design and Systemic Value Generation
Source: Secca Ruivo (2019). Adapted from Micelli & Orchestra Group.

Design, in the specific context of its relationship with science, technology, business, and public environment, is historically marked by its contribution as a development mediator occurring in various domains, as well as in identifying, applying, or overcoming the evolution or lack of evolution in the social, socioeconomic, and/or ecological environment with which it interacts (Secca Ruivo, 2008). In the 21st century, the sustainability of developing new products, systems, or services is increasingly considering the transition from multi-and/or interdisciplinary models to openly transdisciplinary work models. The underlying principle of this approach is that, through the sharing of the same problem/opportunity, transdisciplinary work focuses on seeking a solution that prioritizes the most effective outcome. Design plays a central role in all stages of the process, with the alchemical task of interpreting and synthesizing the knowledge gained individually and as a team, turning it into a solution and meaning usable by the end user. As James Hunt states:

> *"Increasingly, designers establish conditions, rule sets, and scripts that can inspire and catalyze new social outcomes. There is no longer a primary emphasis on giving form; instead the role of the designer is to devise executable instructions for operation or play."* (2012, p.8)

Design is research, knowledge, and informed strategic thinking, "with windows open to the world," based on a process of multiple variables oriented toward the problem/opportunity-solution relationship, consolidated by decision-making and the discovery of new visions, synthesized in the act of designing solutions (Secca Ruivo & Carlan, 2017).

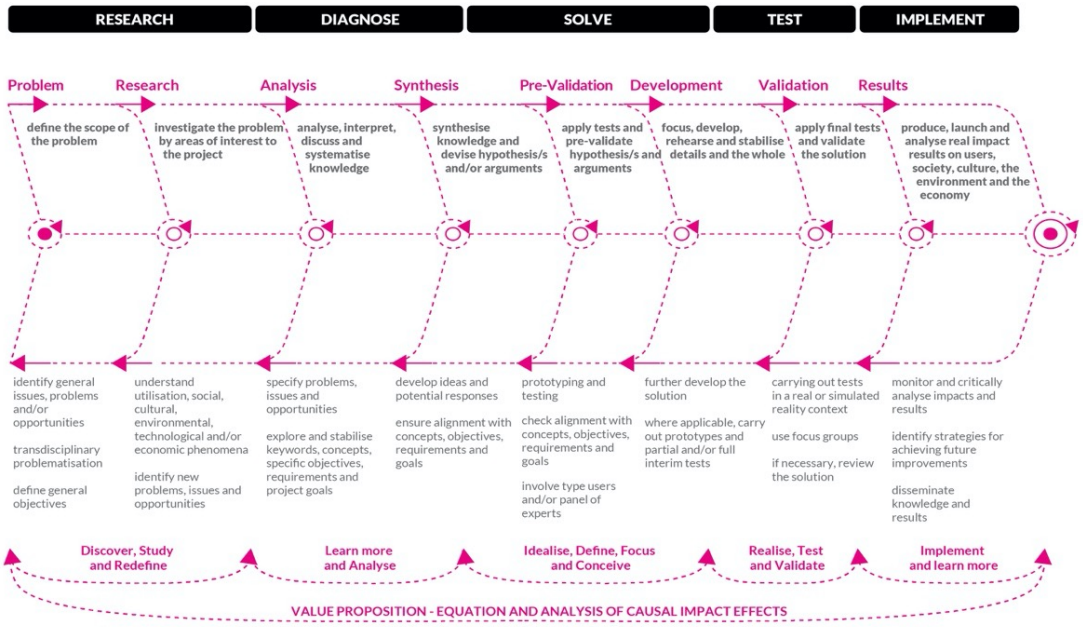


Figure 4
Model for Transdisciplinary Innovation (collaborative, iterative, cumulative)
Adapted from: Secca Ruivo (2017).

Design in service of Craft projects can mean very different things, depending on the underlying premises, the defined goals, whether or not there are genuinely collaborative and transdisciplinary processes, and the consideration of factors related to the four pillars of sustainable development, which are tied to circularity, humanity, sensitivity, curiosity, humility, respect, and time.

There is one time to teach and one to learn from others, whether they are artisans, managers, or policymakers. There is also a time to contemplate, explore, experiment, share, test, redefine, and, if necessary, return to the roots while always remaining aware of its fundamental role as a mediator, one that should be empathetic: between the material, the soul, culture, society, economy, technology, the planet, and the memory we are building for the future through our steps in the present.

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22 verbs - 22 authors

Coordinators/Editors
Carla Paoliello
Cláudia Albino

Institutional Text
Former Director of ID+, Vasco Branco
Coordinator of the MADE.PT Group, Francisco Providência
(until February 2024)

Presentation Text
Carla Paoliello
Cláudia Albino

Critical Essays
Adélia Borges, Andrea Bandoni, Bete Paes,
Carla Paoliello, Cláudia Albino, Cristina Mendes,
Fernanda Martins, Francisco Providência,
Henrique Ralheta, Inês Secca Ruivo,
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Luís Rocha, Maria Emilia Kubrusly, Mónica Moura,
Raquel Noronha, Raquel Pais, Raul Cunca,
Rita Filipe and Rita Rainho

Translation
Carla Paoliello

Design
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