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Design Across Borders: United in Creativity.

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# CRAFTING IMMIGRANT NARRATIVES OF BELONGING: ART AND DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION WITH THE LATINO, LATINA, AND LATINX COMMUNITY OF IOWA CITY.

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## ABSTRACT |

This paper is based on the fourth iteration of Shifting Ground (SG), an art and design initiative that engages immigrant communities. Established in 2019, the project has hosted workshops in the US and Portugal, using clay as a foundational material to connect with immigrant memories. SG engages in participatory ceramic sculpture workshops that articulate memories and aspirations tied to cultural heritage and unique immigrant skills, fostering dialogue and belonging within a new context. It aims to give local immigrants visibility and voice, valuing their contributions to the community. In 2023, the Ceramics Department at the University of Iowa hosted the SG's fourth iteration workshop on Latino, Latina, and Latinx immigrants, focusing on the evolving concepts of home and identity. The research explores cocreation methodologies, emphasising the relational concept's role as a network of relationships and interactions in engaging participants, ceramic sculptures, and communication for social and cultural integration. Relational thinking challenges the dualistic perspective and advocates for interconnected policies. It emphasises the constant relationships of interdependence between human and non-human. The paper discusses the US immigration process, SG's concept, objectives, and the relational concept. It analyses the project through opinions collected from participants via a survey. Positive feedback validates the initiative's role in supporting immigrants. The authors argue that embracing the commons and relational dynamics is crucial for a socially equitable and sustainable society, urging local organisations to adopt this approach systematically.

**KEYWORDS | SOCIAL INNOVATION, SERVICE DESIGN, DESIGNING RELATIONALLY, PARTICIPATION, IMMIGRATION**



## 1. Key factors on immigration and community art practice

At the core of the present paper is the project Shifting Ground, which we developed in 2019 and 2023 in collaboration with the American artist Jane Gilmor. The last iteration, in 2023, which is highlighted later in the text, was supported by local institutions in Iowa City (US), including the Ceramics Department of the School of Art and Art History at the University of Iowa, Public Space One, and involved the active participation of Hispanic immigrants.

In 2023, the period in which the fourth iteration of Shifting Ground was carried out in the United States, Joe Biden had already (since 2021) assumed the presidency with a mandate to reform the US immigration system in order to end, among other policies, the ban on mostly Muslim immigrants. Despite the presentation of more inclusive immigration policies, such as allowing citizenship to more than 11 million undocumented immigrants, their implementation has been complex (Boundless, 2024).

In 2019, when the Shifting Ground project was launched in the United States, the admission processes for refugees and immigrants faced severe threats. The legislative measures adopted were aimed at significantly reducing family-based immigration (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022). While the US diversity visa programme, created in 1995 to diversify the immigrant population, has been a benefit, Donald Trump has sought to end this programme, along with the Temporary Protected Status (Krogstad and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022). Authorisations granted to refugees in the US were also significantly reduced during this period, especially in 2019. This decline in refugee resettlement coincided with the highest number of refugees globally since World War II (Krogstad, 2019).

## 2. Shifting Ground

Shifting Ground is a social innovation art and design service that was launched in 2019 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (US). It has since had two iterations in Lisbon (Portugal), and another one in Iowa City (US). The project took place in Lisbon between the years 2021

and 2022 and in Iowa City again in 2023. In 2019, Shifting Ground received funding from the Iowa Arts Council and the Centre for Art History and Artistic Research at the University of Évora (CHAIA). Additionally, it has garnered support from several institutions, including the Iowa Ceramic Center and Glass Studio, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, and the Immaculate Conception Church. From 2021 to 2022, the project was funded by the Aga Khan Foundation Portugal, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Lisbon, and CHAIA. The fourth and last edition of Shifting Ground, held in 2023, received support from CHAIA and was hosted by the Ceramics Department of the School of Art and Art History at the University of Iowa. This edition of Shifting Ground specifically addressed the topic of Latino, Latina, and Latinx immigrants (figure 1).

The project's primary impetus stems from contemporary issues of intolerance and social injustice related to immigration policies. These issues are likely to escalate due to the ongoing human and environmental crises, including climate change and war, which compel individuals to migrate in search of a new home

with equitable living conditions and prospects for a brighter future. Faced with this situation, a collective of artists and designers, ourselves together with Jane Gilmor, have been exploring a community service aimed at immigrants and new arrivals by holding ceramics workshops, using sculpture as a means of social and cultural integration in their new home. By articulating experiences and goals linked to cultural heritage and distinctive immigrant talents, these participatory ceramic sculpture workshops promote dialogue and a sense of community (Gilmor et al. 2019).

In addition to promoting the emancipation of the participants through creative thinking, the project aims to cultivate a greater understanding among the general public about the power of social art and design, specifically, and culture in a broader context, as crucial tools for embracing diversity. Over its various editions, the Shifting Ground community service has engaged immigrants from Mexico, Colombia, Honduras, Indonesia, Angola, Mozambique, and Sao Tome and Principe. It has also included migrants and refugees from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Figure 1. Shifting Ground workshop in 2023 at the Ceramics Department of the School of Art and Art History at the University of Iowa. On the left side, Amaris Hurtado (foreground) and Patricia Rodriguez (background); on the right side, Nahid Rivera and Javier Espinosa.

The project incorporates a game named MOT, which stands for memory, object, and talent, with the aim of fostering empathy and facilitating a flexible, customised approach to participant engagement. This game encourages spontaneous participation and supports selfrepresentation by cultivating a creative dialogue between new arrivals and the host community. Throughout the Shifting Ground iterations, the MOT game has evolved. During the initial workshops, we asked participants to share a personal narrative, a significant object, and a key skill, ensuring that these elements are interconnected. In the final Lisbon Shifting Ground, participants'

life stories centred on food-related memories and knowledge, acknowledging that food experiences, whether positive or negative, elicit strong feelings and emotions, which they further explored through ceramic sculptures. In the last Iowa City Shifting Ground, the workshop explored how concepts of home and identity shift with repeated moves. To this end, a game – MEMO – was played with the participants, which was made up of the relationship between memories related to food and each person's home. Through MEMO, the personal experiences that each participant explored served as inspiration for the creation of clay sculptures (figure 2).



Figure 2. Alejandra Alvarez's MEMO on the left side, and the sculptures developed from it during Shifting Ground's 2023 workshop.

To play the game, each participant was given a sheet with four ordered topics: a memory related to their food culture, a place associated with that memory, a sound that recalled the place and, finally, a significant object linked to the memory and the place. We inquired about the sound because the final ceramic sculptures would be displayed with mixed sounds. For this, they began writing about their own concepts, which they presented to one another. The process involved dialogue about each participant's MEMO, allowing them to share their individual experiences. This established a unified method across all iterations of the service that is based on an empathic methodology of dialogue with the participants. By engaging in collaborative art practices, their know-how transforms elements typically seen as discriminatory and culturally different into opportunities for integration. This process turns differences into a celebration of diversity.



Furthermore, we used photography and video to record the immigrant artists' engagement with the project activities and establish an image repository for the project, in addition to the ceramic sculptures created using the MEMO ludic method. This functions as a fundamental platform in our approach, enabling organised communication with diverse audiences. In addition, the use of installations and happenings creates a substantial and significant space for community self-expression and public involvement. Participants, their friends, and project supporters came together to celebrate the occasion and promote greater inclusiveness and democratic engagement (figure 3).



Figure 3. Shifting Ground's show at Public Space One, Iowa City, 2023. On the left site, Nahid Rivera's sculptures (foreground), and the sculptures of Isaac López Torres, Miriam Alarcón Avila, and Amaris Hurtado (background). On the right side, Janet Marcelino's sculpture.

### 3. Relational services and the commons

The desired outcome of an art and design service for social innovation like Shifting Ground is to generate and build settings that occur as situations for social innovation. These services can effectively adapt to a specific context in which they are provided by establishing strong connections with all social actors in the community and incorporating local culture and experience (Joly & Cipolla, 2013). It is a social activity that revolves around human-centric, relational, and societal components (Penin, 2018).

Interactions with services tend to be cyclical and difficult to predict as they evolve over time, influenced by numerous variables, random factors, inherent uncertainty, and spontaneity, which make accurate planning challenging. A common denominator of service interaction occurs whenever a user engages with a touchpoint, which functions as a tangible instance of a service and includes the components that provide the interactions. Touchpoints are crucial in improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and significance of

interactions. They are concrete connections or support associated with a particular object. Like other services, a service for social innovation can be delivered through face-to-face contacts, various types of relationships, digital interfaces, or a combination of multiple methods (Penin, 2018). Shifting Ground's MOT and MEMO games serve as crucial touchpoints, encouraging participants to reflect on their sociocultural backgrounds, which ultimately influences the creative process of their ceramic sculptures.

The sphere of art and design services for social innovation is driven by the concept of the commons, offering a profound societal framework for understanding humanity's shared experiences and representing a fundamental sociopolitical perspective. It recognises important connections and offers an alternative method of operating. The commons concept envisions humans as proactive members of larger social groups, participating in diverse collective structures such as local associations, virtual communities, and community services. These relationship patterns do not nullify the unique characteristics of individuals but rather shape how their opinions, beliefs, and actions eventually determine their personal and collective identities (Bollier & Helfrich, 2012).

Humans initiate the construction of a culture centred on the principles of care and shared accountability for their collective resources while protecting their means of existence. In this context, the understanding of the commons enhances the capacity of humans

to identify, evoke, and improve these behaviours. The objective is to encourage people to consider the world from a more flexible, integrated, and long-range viewpoint based on the mutual principle that personal development is interconnected with the development of others and that these relationships are an essential part of a broader, interconnected social structure (Bollier & Helfrich, 2012).

Therefore, the most effective way to use shared assets is to establish platforms like Shifting Ground, among other social innovation services, for substantial communication and collaboration. This kind of service, focused on commoning, has the capacity to establish social practices and routines that enable individuals to engage in exploring, creating, and discussing alternative generative strategies, working as a medium for bottom-up activities to thrive and have an impact on the existing condition of citizenship and governance.

The collaborative platforms where social innovation occurs usually involve designers, artists, and other social innovation actors and stakeholders. It combines two approaches: working together to implement ideas that address societal needs and showcasing the commitment and ability to take action through various collaborative efforts. Hence, many civil associations, communities, families, and other social groups play crucial roles as valuable collaborators who may actively engage with professionals to test and organise diverse approaches. Establishing the rationale



for societal achievement and common ground is essential since most government policies are insufficient in resolving recurring issues (Manzini, 2015).

Within a social innovation art and design approach that prioritises the creation of subjectivity, creatives serve as catalysts for local communities, while creative sectors collaborate in open networks to provide services. They foster a common understanding of using art and design skills to develop innovative products, services, or communication artefacts, exploring several opportunities to shape cultural attitudes and behaviours.

The relational dimension is equally vital in service design for the purpose of social innovation. Considering service users as relational beings instead of simply customers must be a primary objective. The relational approach depends on being open to others and facilitating interpersonal interaction, which serves as the foundation for potential service opportunities. The effectiveness of people's engagement with the service is significantly determined by the interpersonal dynamics developed between them. Relational services differ from other types of services that rely on pre-established interactions between users and service providers. On the contrary, they are characterised by a connection between participants and service hosts, who facilitate a caring and flexible relationship that encourages an active part of everyone involved in the social innovation service (Cipolla, 2023).

Shifting Ground inevitably relies on the ideas of the commons and the significance of relational dynamics. This kind of service encourages substantial societal change by developing collaborative and flexible services that integrate local culture and actively involve the community. The emphasis on interpersonal aspects and the flexible nature of touchpoints guarantee that these services stay useful and efficient in tackling complex issues in society. By prioritising the establishment of inclusive environments for dialogue and collaborative exploration, individuals are empowered to actively participate in and benefit from the generation of innovative solutions. This, in turn, enhances the social structure and fosters a more cohesive and supportive community.

#### **4. Designing relationally: Shifting Ground's relationships, interactions, and ceramic sculptures**

In the context of the Shifting Ground project, it is crucial to consider the concept of relationality as defined by Escobar, Osterweil and Sharma (2014). In their book *Relationality: An Emergent Politics of Life Beyond the Human*, the authors scrutinise the concept of relationality as a strategy to combat inequality, climate change and ecological degradation. The authors challenge the prevailing dualistic perspective and argue for a policy that is based on interconnectedness and interdependence. People exist in constant relationships with each other and between them and the rest of the

environment (Escobar, 2014). It explores its epistemological and political implications and provides practical strategies for implementing relationality in various life aspects.

In the authors' opinion, building sustainable societies is based on recognising the diversity of knowledge and the interdependent relationship of all existing phenomena. According to this concept of relationality (Escobar et al., 2024), reality is interconnected, so human beings are no exception and cannot exist autonomously, disconnected from their non-human environment (Escobar 2014, p. 59). In contrast to the dominant modernist worldview, which is characterised by a single universal way of understanding and interacting with the world, this concept explores the idea of designing in a relational manner to promote pluriversal transitions, advocating for the recognition and valuing of a multiplicity of knowledge and ways of being (Escobar et al., 2024). According to the concept of pluriversal transitions, the Shifting Ground workshops, conducted through various interrelationships with immigrants from diverse backgrounds and cultures, highlighted the recognition of various epistemologies and practices from different cultures and communities.

Rational thinking aims to counter the egocentric view of human beings based on the idea that they were the creators of the Universe and existed in isolation and independently of other nonhuman beings. The concept of relationality, on the other hand, considers that everything exists in

interrelationship and interdependence so that individuals influence but are also influenced by the world. The self is not an isolated, self-centred entity but a conscious being that comes into existence through the act of creation. We mutually mould each other's realities since our personal perceptions and feelings do not arise in isolation. Empowering yourself and reducing the feeling of being at the mercy of an indifferent cosmos provides a greater sense of security. Relationality is a mode of understanding, existence, and action, forming a unique combination of knowledge and ontology, referred to as a new narrative of life (Escobar et al., 2024). The postcartesian notion of the interconnectedness of all life is central to ecology insofar as the relational and interdependent being replaces the autonomous and isolated being (Escobar, 2020; Gablik, 1992).

In the Shifting Ground project, we adopted the term designing (Escobar et al., 2024) as a continuous action, methodical process, and creative mindset aimed at improving life and expressing concern. It acknowledges our interconnectedness with one another, the planet, and nonhuman entities. Individuals are complex webs of relationships that involve minds, bodies, feelings, social structures, and information systems. We are interrelated beings with a link to both the future and the present and the stories we create about them. Designing relationally promoted a sense of possibilities in the Shifting Ground workshops by emphasising the connectivity and co-creation of life. Designers may enhance their problem-solving abilities by embracing

relationality and pluriversal viewpoints, enabling them to create solutions that are both inclusive and effective in tackling the intricate difficulties of our time.

The sharing of the participants' life stories generated the expectation that each immigrant could develop their individual freedom and make decisions in the creation of their sculptures, thus promoting inclusion and democratic involvement. Using a collaborative artistic approach, relational design contributes to participants' ambitions of knowledge production and cultural understanding.

The Shifting Ground shares the logic of the politics of relationality (Escobar et al., 2024) since it is based on the specific and constantly changing local context. The project evolves organically by adapting practices to the different cultures of the various immigrants, fostering new forms of knowledge based on mutual respect. The collective nature of relational politics is echoed in the collaborative practice of the workshops through which participants have a plural experience.

Contrary to categorisation, Shifting Ground promotes the coexistence and complementarity of its participants' diverse perspectives as productive knowledge. In this regard, the transformative potential of Shifting Ground is developed through the sharing of each immigrant's personal experiences, which promotes personal enrichment, resilience, and the production of knowledge.

The interactions among participants during the workshop also reflected the holistic perspective of quantum physicist David Bohm (1992), whose aim was to enhance well-being through the appreciation of interpersonal relationships and connections with the environment. Electrons' behaviour plays a crucial role in Bohm's understanding of the interconnected and interdependent nature of the entire cosmos, where everything is in a constant dynamic relationship and cannot be separated from its surrounding context. Bohm (1992) emphasises the importance of dialogue, comparing it to a methodology that can be used to enhance and foster connections between individuals and their surroundings. This approach aims to solve societal problems. In the case of the Shifting Ground ceramic workshops, dialogue among participants served as a strategy to promote active listening, strengthen relationships between people, and help address issues such as the social and cultural integration of the immigrants involved in the project.

According to Escobar (2020), relationally designed systems study the interconnection of all things and the ways in which these connections may be used for creative endeavours. Establishing links between individuals with different backgrounds and expertise to create a cohesive whole, the objects they make, and underlying structures like social formations, political systems, and personal subjectivities with the aim of developing creativity is one of the main benefits of the Shifting Ground ecosystem. Workshops, exhibitions, and dialogue

served as strategies to assist immigrants in integrating into the new culture. Designing relationally has enabled the project to transcend its material condition, establishing itself as a network of interactions and connections that continually transform and adapt to its environment.

## 5. Volunteers and participants' view

The Shifting Ground conducted a series of interviews with participants in its last iteration, gathering feedback from volunteers involved in the workshops. They acknowledged the project's quality, noting it as a learning experience that showcased alternative approaches to engaging migrant communities.

Everyone enjoyed the PS1 as the local of the exhibition. Alejandra Alvarez highlighted this space as an excellent venue for the Shifting Ground exhibition and celebration, as it allowed the Iowa community to learn about the real visions and stories of immigrants. She believed that promoting the project through other "guerrilla" methods was necessary because many immigrants arrive in different ways. She also pointed out that if the exhibition had lasted longer, its impact would have been greater.

Regarding the participants' experience in the project, overall, it was valued a lot. Miriam Alarcón Avila, a Mexican immigrant, activist artist, founder of the collective Immigrant Luchadores, and mentor to the other participants, highlighted the importance

of projects involving the Latin immigrant community in artistic activities that enhance integration. From her viewpoint, the Shifting Ground project accomplished this by unveiling the individual attributes of every member. The way the workshop combined writing, voice, and touch to explore memories and turn those experiences into a sculpture captivated Alejandra Alvarez. She highly appreciated her involvement in the initiative, deeming it important on both an individual and collective level. Pamela Quintero Rodriguez (Pammie) highlighted the significance of engaging in the ceramics workshop, as it provided her with the opportunity to convey her thoughts and feelings through manual expression, utilising the medium of art. Jose Marentes (Seso), a Mexican immigrant, activist artist, who belongs to the Collective Immigrant Luchadores, was exhilarated by the chance to listen to others' motivations and rationale for their creations. From his perspective, it is not the art itself that adds value to the pieces, but rather the narratives we have shared. Javier Espinosa Momox, a master's student in ceramics, volunteered for the Shifting Ground project and helped to facilitate the workshop for other participants. His interest in bringing ceramics to those who would not normally have access to these methods was what inspired him to take part. Nahid Rivera's engagement with the initiative started with the facilitators' explicit request. The explicit invitation served as a catalyst for their engagement in the project.

Regarding how art, such as ceramics and

sculpture, can serve as a means to express both personal experiences and those of other immigrants, and how they contribute to valuing immigrants' memories, skills, and cultures, participants provided positive feedback. Nahid Rivera, admitted that ceramics do indeed contribute to the value of memories. Patricia Rodriguez, Pammie's mother, regarded her experience of participating in the collaborative workshop as profoundly enriching. Particularly during the initial phase of dialogue and sharing the participants' life stories, she sensed a strong and beautiful emotional connection among all the participants and the clay. Miriam Alarcón Avila expressed great joy about the use of clay as the primary material in the workshops, noting that it is an ancestral, malleable, inspiring, and effective medium for communicating and valuing immigrants' diverse life experiences. Specifically, it allows the creation of sculptures with significant meaning. Alejandra Alvarez mentioned that initially, she faced some difficulties as she had never worked with clay, but she realised that accepting the material's "life" and her inability to fully control it helped her let the artistic and emotional process flow. For Pammie, the experience of working with clay was highly relaxing. According to Seso, ceramics is the perfect medium for expressing feelings. He articulated a powerful desire to physically seize something when feeling anxious, and perceived clay as the ideal substance to satisfy this requirement. Particularly for Javier Espinosa Momox, ceramics offer a means through which people can engage with the earth's inherent qualities and our

shared humanity. Furthermore, ceramics have cultural characteristics unique to certain societies, which contributes to an appreciation of immigrant experiences, talents, and cultures.

Everyone agrees that games should be used as a tool to find their own ideas for creating sculptures. Miriam Alarcón Avila praised the use of the MEMO game to stimulate the sharing of life stories, generate ideas for creating sculptures, and foster bonds among participants. She found this both beneficial and moving. The MEMO game was vital to Alejandra Alvarez because it was lively and generated a powerful, distinct bond. The game's lightheartedness facilitated individuals in expressing and embracing aspects that could otherwise be challenging to disclose or acknowledge. In her opinion, using the game as a strategy for creating a sculpture made the transformation process even more engaging. Pammie regarded the MEMO game as an excellent strategy to help individuals think about what they want to create. For Patricia Rodriguez, using the game MEMO proved to be a highly effective method of eliciting personal memories from each participant and facilitating their sharing. For her, it was a remarkable and beautiful experience, as all participants were pleased to recall their loved ones and other memories, allowing them to momentarily escape their daily concerns. She found it deeply moving to physically engage with the clay and to realise that, together with her daughter, she was creating a sculpture that symbolised the unity among all the members of her family. For her, it was

an extraordinary experience. Seso believes that games are ideal for alleviating our anxieties, thereby enabling our willingness to participate in conversation. Nahid Rivera considers that the use of games is crucial for challenging preconceived notions of what qualifies as “artistic” creations. According to her, games help to remove rigid notions and facilitate a more open approach to generating ideas for sculptures.

Every participant acknowledged the important role that art plays in deepening our understanding of people and their cultures. Miriam Alarcón Avila thinks that one of the noblest ways to foster creativity, share, and shape ideas that are frequently hard to articulate is via art. Additionally, it encourages individuals in discovering their synchronicities and emotions within a community. Alejandra Alvarez highlighted the power of participatory art by promptly enabling all participants to collaboratively establish a communal environment, even without prior acquaintance. She has the belief that art amplifies awareness and facilitates the cultivation of empathy towards others. She holds the belief that art serves as a medium for expressing the thoughts or feelings of something or someone. In the context of Shifting Ground, it allows us to immerse ourselves in the viewpoints and realities of others. Although she believes that individuals frequently reject what they cannot comprehend, art delves into uncharted territories that have the potential to be embraced in the future. According to Nahid Rivera, art is vital for comprehending

and relating to other individuals and their cultures. Through her participation in the project, Pammie came to the awareness that art functions as a medium for comprehending and acknowledging the multiplicity of individuals and societies. In this sense, the workshops facilitated an appreciation of immigrant culture. According to Patricia Rodriguez perspective, art serves as the finest method of avoiding stress and daily worries. Working on art completely shifts one’s attention towards creation, disregarding everything else. She establishes a clear and strong connection with the other participants in the project. She considers that throughout the process, all the participants had the opportunity to develop their creativity and design their own unique creations. Seso considers that art transcends linguistic barriers, becoming a universal medium of communication. Introduced as a method of expression, art transforms language into a universal tool for conveying meaning. Seso believes that although the participants came from different backgrounds, the art exhibition gave them a chance to momentarily connect and find common ground. Javier Espinosa Momox thinks that art can facilitate comprehension of individuals and their cultures by virtue of the sentiments and emotions conveyed therein.

The concluding event was an exceptional moment, emphasised by the participating immigrants in the Shifting Ground project and acknowledged by all those in attendance. Almost everyone emphasised that the exhibition served as a distinct celebration



of immigrant culture and the unity among various communities. They noted that the event showcased the most creative aspects of the involved communities, along with the participation of family and friends. For them, the celebration of immigrant culture was enriched by the fact that participants prepared regional dishes and drinks, featured a curated playlist of Mexican music, and decorated the exhibition space predominantly with Mexican cultural ornaments, all of which were considered exhilarating by everyone. Alexandra highlighted that PS1, the space of the exhibition, was an excellent venue for the Shifting Ground exhibition and celebration, as it allowed the Iowa community to learn about the real visions and stories of immigrants.

The positive feedback we received from participants in the Shifting Ground project demonstrates the importance of community-based efforts in fostering a welcoming environment for immigrants. It also signifies that the methodology employed is suitable and beneficial. We assert that collaboration and cooperation among individuals and groups with special interests are crucial determinants for the societal shift towards more fairness and long-term viability in the social and cultural domain. This process should be supported and systematically overseen by local organisations.

## 6. Conclusions

The Shifting Ground, through its iterations in Cedar Rapids, Lisbon, and Iowa City, showed considerable promise as a social innovation art and design service. The initiative demonstrates how effective it is at fostering social and cultural assimilation through the use of art, as evidenced by the success in bringing together immigrants who identify as Latino, Latina, or Latinx, as well as those from multiple international backgrounds. Through ceramic workshops, Shifting Ground has created an atmosphere where immigrants can express their abilities, cultural heritage, and personal narratives by utilising the social dynamics inherent in community-based artistic activities. The MEMO game, a crucial element of the campaign, has fostered a sense of community among participants through the promotion of empathetic conversation and artistic self-expression.

Relational services and the commons concept have played a major role in shaping the project's framework. By emphasising human-centred, relational, and societal components, Shifting Ground has created environments that are conducive to social innovation. These services integrate local culture and expertise and build strong relationships with community members to tailor their approach to specific problems. The initiative is based on the concept of the commons, which offers a comprehensive social framework for understanding humanity's collective experiences and expressing a fundamental

socio-political perspective. This strategy prioritises the importance of collaboration, adopting established protocols, and taking responsibility for shared resources in order to foster a more supportive and unified community.

The project's focus on creating in a relational manner and prioritising the commons underscores the need for collaborative methods in tackling current social problems. The project's influence in fostering comprehension and inclusiveness is evidenced by the positive responses garnered from participants and the wider community. Shifting Ground reflects how art and design can promote social transformation, generating a unified and nurturing society through the celebration of diversity and the promotion of active engagement in cultural dialogue. This initiative highlights the significance of collaborating with local organisations with the aim of attaining enduring social and cultural sustainability.

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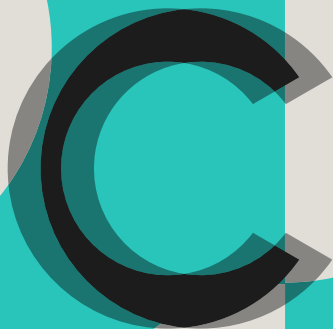
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