# Community Kinetics:
## Social Design Methods from Community Land Engagements

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# Corrections

The examination panel awards the degree of a Master of Research subject to the minor corrections detailed below.


## Correction 1

**"Literature review: short and simple explanation to the reader of why community engagement is essential to sustainable land reform."**

(Section 2.1.4, page 36) The summary of the literature has been refined in the final two paragraphs to help lead the reader into the context review in Section 2.2.

(Section 2.2, page 37 to 40) This section has been refined throughout to provide more comparison between it and the literature review. An exploration of community engagement as the connecting factor between the social design practice and the context of sustainable Scottish land reform has been added. Fig. 8, 9 and 10 have been added to strengthen the definition of community engagement within the context of community landownership.

(Section 2.3, page 45 to 46) The final paragraph of this section has been refined to strengthen the earlier changes and support the shift in scope from context to practice.


## Correction 2

**"Section 6.2: Change title to 'Exploration of the 3$^{rd}$ Space: The Public House,' and add a few introductory paragraphs to strengthen the transition from section 6.1 to 6.2 (as done orally in Viva)."**

(Section 6.2, page 84) The title has been changed and four paragraphs have been added to strengthen the transition from Section 6.1.


## Correction 3

**"Section 7: Refer back to community land ownership: revisiting journey of research and remind the reader of the shift in emphasis that emerged during the study."**

(Cover Page) The thesis title has been ammended from "Social Design Methods **for** Community Land Engagement" to "Social Design Methods **from** Community Land Engagements" to place emphasis on the practice over the context. This was done to maintain the promise of a community land discussion whilst being honest about the contribution towards the practice of social design.

(Chapter 7, page 96) The second paragraph has been added to remind the reader about the shift in research question and contribution before it is discussed in more detail.

(Section 7.2, page 98) The final paragraph has been added and summarises how responsiveness within the methodology allowed the inquiry to respond to insights as they arose; influencing the research direction and moving the focus and contribution from the context of community land to the practice of social design.

(Section 7.4, page 100) A few lines have been added to the final paragraph, detailing how the shift in scope, from a community land focus to a contribution towards social design methods, has identified the need for further testing beyond the context.

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# Declaration

I declare that this thesis meets the regulations stated in the course handbook for the degree of Master of Research. The submission is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

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# Preface: A Personal Statement

While the scoping phase of this research officially began in the spring of 2017, I began researching the context of community landownership in rural Scotland long before then. In the final year of my undergraduate degree in 2015, I embarked on a design project of the same name, Community Kinetics. From it I proposed a set of tools to support the residents of community owned land and democratise the process of wide-scale decision making.

My interest in community landownership comes from personal experience; as a child, my parents purchased a renovated military house next to the then-operational Ministry of Defence (MoD) airbase in Machrihanish. Together we experienced first-hand the transformation of the community that surrounded us as they gained ownership of the base we had overlooked and yet felt so distant from. The military base, our only visible land mark, had inspired years' worth of fantastical storytelling and creative conspiracies. So it came as a surprise not to know of the community buyout success until shortly after the land had been obtained. I did not set foot in the base until two years afterwards.

My speculation of possibilities that could follow such a transition in ownership, in contrast with the detachment that I felt from the land and community that owned it, encouraged me to use my design perspective to study other examples. I did this during the undergraduate project, visiting landowning communities in Knoydart, the Isle of Gigha, and the Isle of Eigg.

In comparison to my limited knowledge about MACC, understanding Knoydart, the Isle of Gigha and the Isle of Eigg provided an overview of the community land movement. By studying communities in this concentrated area that differed in scale, geography, experience and success, I appreciated the journeys that past communities had gone through in their transition to public ownership. From here I could make better informed speculations of the scenarios that future communities would face.

From previous experience of using my design practice within the community land movement, I expected this inquiry to feel familiar and close to home. I was surprised to find that the more I researched, the less comfortable I felt with my design practice and as I interrogated it through this research, I embarked on a mission of self-discovery. While I do not expect my practice to remain static or definable, I have enjoyed the struggle to pin it down within this thesis. Having the freedom to explore theory and craft definitions has helped me understand the dynamic nature of my practice and embrace the frustration that surrounds it. If there is one thing within this research that I am proud, it is that discovery.

*In the transition towards a networked and sustainable society, all design is (or should be) a design research activity and should promote sociotechnical experiments...*

*To do this we should look at the whole of society as a huge laboratory of sociotechnical experimentation, which in turn calls for producing and spreading design knowledge able to empower individuals, communities, institutions, and companies in inventing and enhancing original ways of being and doing things. This experimentation phase will last as long as the transition: a short period in the history of humanity but a very long time for us and our children. In practice, this experimental approach will become the "normal" approach in our future.*

'Design When Everyone Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation' (Ezio Manzini, 2015)

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Extended Abstract

Design for community engagement and community engagement within the process of design are growing areas of research within contemporary design disciplines. The merging of design with social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology, has seen a shift in designerly perspectives. As a result, socially focused design disciplines are emerging and responding to the complex socioeconomic issues that predominate our twenty-first century lives.

In theory, these emerging social design practices promise solutions to current global issues, such as community resilience in response to economic uncertainty and the embedding of sustainable action in younger generations. In practice, they conduct research within simple contexts that do not represent the complexities of wide scale issues, such as established suburban schools and community gardens (Jégou and Manzini, 2009). They do so through the repetitive process of implementing transient tools and workshops, which undervalue the importance of sustaining impact beyond the designer's engagement with the context.

This research investigates the methods of three leading social design practices, Design for Social Innovation, Design for Sustainability, and Speculative Design, and identifies the limitations within their principles, formats and contextual applications. Key theorists within these practices are studied to address the gaps in current social design research: Ezio Manzini, John Thackara, Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby.

From the analysis of these designers' projects and theories, the success of social design methods are discovered to rely upon engagement from participants within the contexts they are tested. In a school for example, the impact of social design methods might rely on engagement with and between teachers, children and parents, of which the designer facilitates. The limitations of social design methods are related to poor engagement from participants and thus this research asks how design methods might create more genuine and sustainable engagements within contexts that are socially complex.

By studying the unique context of Scotland's community land movement through the lens of a social designer, this research identify it as the type of complex context that social designers should be approaching. Within this context, communities across rural Scotland already innovate methods to engage residents with the shared land decisions they must make. A practice-led methodology allows the practice of social design to navigate the context, responding to insights and observations that occur during fieldwork conducted with one landowning community case study: the Galson Estate on the Isle of Lewis. Allowing the practice of social design to take influence from the community case study and its methods of engagement, the inquiry asks the question: what can social design methods learn from their application within the context of community-owned land?

In response, a social design intervention is tested that adopts the Galson Estate's predominant use of established community spaces, defined as 'third spaces,' to facilitate engagement. Mimicking the case study's use of a community café to host informal

consultation, the design intervention that is tested integrates social methods with the established community space of a pub, named The Public House. Conclusive from the testing is the discovery that the integration of established, community third spaces with social design methods can enhance engagement between participants and shared social issues.

## 1.2 Research Questions

As stated within the abstract, the primary research question that leads this inquiry is as follows: **'what can social design methods discover about community engagement from their application within Scotland's community land movement?'**

To answer this, the inquiry is divided into three analytical steps that each ask sub-questions:

Step one gains knowledge of the practice and its limitations by asking: how are social design methods already being used to stimulate and innovate community engagement within various contexts? This question is explored within the literature review and concluded in section 2.1.4.

Step two gains knowledge of the context and its limitations by asking: how are communities already engaging with the topic of land development and their shared ownership? This question is explored throughout the fieldwork and concluded in section 5.1.1.

Step three compares the methods of social design with the methods already being innovated by landowning communities in rural Scotland by asking: in what ways might social design methods learn from community-led methods of engagement, and how might the two enhance each other? This question is addressed through the testing of a social design intervention, analysed in section 6.2.

## 1.3 Aims and Objectives

The research aims to identify a set of learnings from social design's interaction with the context of community landownership. From these learnings, it aims to identify elements within the context of community land engagement that can be adopted and innovated by social design methods, to enhance and sustain engagement.

Insights that inform the creation of new social design methods, along with an account of any new methods formed, are then presented in a replicable way to be shared with fellow researchers who align with the practice of social design.

## 1.4 Thesis Structure

The structure of this thesis follows the chronological order of events that that took place during the research, which represents the design of the research inquiry.

Within the first half of the literature review, section 2.1, the practice of social design is assessed and a definition is crafted from the analysis of key theorists Ezio Manzini (2015), John Thackara (2015), and Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby (2013). The socially orientated disciplines that emerge from these theorists include Design for Social Innovation, Design for Sustainability and Speculative Design respectively. Project examples from each discipline are analysed and categorised to balance the theoretical principles initially defined. From the analysis, social design methods are defined as those that exhibit predominantly social or cultural directives and a summary of their strengths and limitations is included.

The literature review continues with the exploration of Scotland's community land movement as a context from which to explore innovate methods of engagement. Section 2.2 discusses the grassroots movement of community landownership as one that responds to inequality across the Scottish Highlands and Islands. The movement's motivations are discussed in relation to examples of communities who have transition from private to public landownership and the support they receive from land reform policy and non-government organisations. The chapter concludes by identifying the complex context of community land in Scotland as one that relies upon and exhibits innovative forms of engagement, and is thus an appropriate situation from which to test the boundaries of social design.

Chapter three exhibits a change of tone as the methodological approach is presented in relation to a theoretical framework. Due to the subjectivism of practice-led research, the declaration of a theoretical stance when conducting the inquiry and interpreting data is what provides this thesis with validity. Within this chapter various theoretical perspectives are explored before giving rationale to the social constructivist, interpretivist approach that has been used. Through the theoretical framework, the practice-led methods of this research are then briefly introduced. These methods are discussed individually within the three chapters that follow.

Chapters four to seven provide the discussion phase of the thesis. Due to the role of communication and interaction as indicators of engagement, a past tense, first-person narrative is adopted to position myself within the engagements observed. As the social designer leading the practice within this practice-led inquiry, a first-person account is necessary to provide the connection between myself and the practice.

In the fourth chapter, the process of selecting a landowning community case study (the Galson Estate on the Isle of Lewis) is presented through the narration of a responsive scoping method. The scoping phase details my attendance of the Community Land Conference 2017: Sharing the Knowledge, where initial contact is made with the case study before a site visit is conducted upon its land. Limitations of the scoping method are then discussed in relation to the appropriateness of the Galson Estate as a case study. Insights and observations from the site visit are recounted within chapter five, which discloses a failed attempt to construct a method of data co-interpretation with participants. Analysis of the method's failure results in a key insight: that social design methods must expect participants to interact only with formats that are integrated with familiar or daily activities.

Learnings from the context of community landownership and the Galson Estate case study are then innovated using social design principles and tested through a social design intervention, named The Public House. The test's variables and limitations are discussed within chapter six, which concludes with an evaluation of the method.

Finally, a summary of the findings, along with limitations and opportunities for future research are deliberated within chapter seven. The Public House design intervention demonstrates that the integration of established public community spaces within social design methods enhances engagement between participants. However, limitations still bind the experiment. Of these limitations, predominant is the inaccessibility of the context chosen to support the inquiry, that of community landownership. The thesis concludes with suggestions for future research by proposing research designs that would address these limitations and embrace more contexts with similar complexities.

# 2. Literature and Context Review

Social design methods and community land engagement are contextualised within this chapter, as illustrated in the diagram below. While social design methods take presidency as the practice within this practice-led inquiry, and thus the contribution that this research intends, the diagram illustrates its intersection with the context of sustainable land reform. Community engagement, in this case, is the binding concept between these two components and the area of inquiry from which the practice of social design seeks to gain knowledge.

Therefore, the following chapter follows the structure of the diagram and discusses the sections as they are numbered below, allowing the discussion of community engagement to intertwine throughout and position the practice of social design within the context of community land reform.
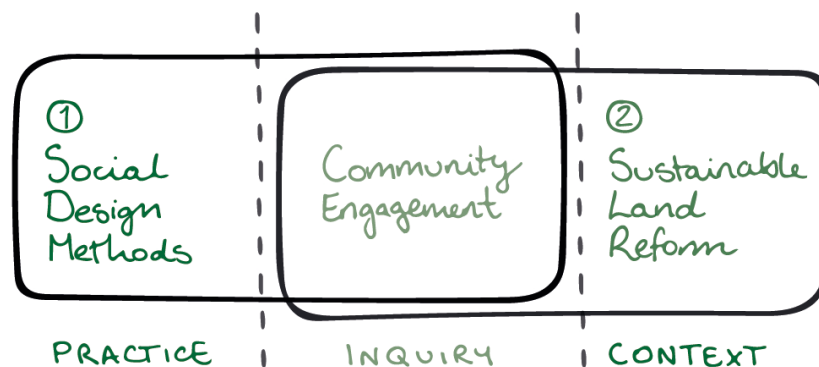


Fig. 1. Literature and Context Structure (Prosser, 2017)

Literature within these areas is analysed thematically and intends to provide justification for this new area of research. Social design is initially discussed through theory and project examples to reach a definition of the practice and a summary of its principles and limitations. Community land reform is then explored through an analysis of policy, media coverage and landowning community examples to provide rationale for the integration of social design within this context.

## 2.1 The Practice: Social Design Methods

This section of the review explores design as a social practice and argues that contemporary design practices and their methods, emerging from twenty-first century issues, are increasingly socially-driven. Social design methods are then defined by comparing emerging practices from key theorists within the area: Ezio Manzini, John Thackara, Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby. Their varying methods demonstrate the importance of community engagement within social design across various scales, with the objective to create sustainable futures and societies (Ehn, 1988; Dunne and Raby, 2013; Manzini, 2015).

From an analysis of the literature, issues relating to this field of design have been exposed. Amongst them are the implementation and adaptability of social design methods beyond the role of the designer, along with their embedding within existing systems, such as local infrastructure and policy making (Cipolla, 2009; Nesta, 2016). Limitations include the recurring use of similar and simple formats and contexts. These principles and limitations are then addressed before identifying sustainable Scottish land reform as a new context for the application of social design methods.

## 2.1.1 Design Under 21$^{st}$ Century Pressures

> *"Cultural activists, grassroots organizations, and design activists are converging towards a range of initiatives whose purpose is not to offer immediate solutions to problems, but to spark interest in these areas and show, often paradoxically or provocatively, that there are different ways of seeing and resolving them."* (Manzini, 2015)

Design, as a discipline of practice, industry, research and education, has evolved over the past century from an era of industrialisation and consumerism to that of human-centred and post-capitalist purposes (Walker, 1989; Burns et al, 2006). Now, contemporary design practices take influence from the social sciences, such as anthropology and sociology, and the unification of these fields is widely accepted as the foundation for many emerging practices (Frascara, 2002; Buchanan, 2012; Irwin et al; Manzini, 2015). Throughout history, design practices have directly reflected the social structures and ambitions of the current, whether they be industrialisation, capitalism, emerging technologies, or changing workplaces.[1] As our world grows in complexity due to increased demand for social justice and equality relative to declining resources, so too does design. Human-centeredness has emerged from the complexity: a principle within design that seeks to create products and services that match the behaviours and interactions of its end users (Blomberg and Kensing, 1998). No longer does the manufacturing of consumable products and services drive this area, but instead a focus on human interaction with existing infrastructures and societal concepts has become centrefold (Burns et al, 2006; Irwin, 2015). Beyond this lies the practice of participatory design, which not only positions the end users' needs at the centre of the design process, but collaboratively involves them within the process of designing (Bannon and Ehn, 2012). Further still, emerging design practices such as Design for Social Innovation (Manzini, 2015), Design for Sustainability (Thackara, 2015) and Speculative Design (Dunne and Raby, 2013) combine these principles with a new

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[1] An exploration of the development of design practices in response to 19th and 20th century pressures can be found in Appendix B.

perspective. Using a human-centred, participatory approach, they confront both the small and large-scale issues that affect global human societies in the long term, such as sustainability, education and equality. Influential bodies within this growing design community, such as The Design Council, increasingly prioritise design for social resilience in the face of complex worldly problems. These areas include design for health care, aging populations, public service transformation and engagement within the public sector, to name a few (The Design Council, 2017).

Socially focussed design is no longer concerned with the creation of new products to solve specific problems, but rather the design of new lenses from which to view wide-scale socioeconomic problems. By doing so it searches for new ways of doing and thinking about the assets that we already possess (Manzini, 2015). As a growing number of designers demonstrate diverse methods that align with these principles, and thus emerge within this socially directed design movement, social design as a practice requires clarity, definition and recognition. Three examples of such are now discussed to define social design as a practice and identify its boundaries.

## 2.1.2  Resilient Societies and Design for Social Innovation

### *"The creative recombination of existing assets"* (Manzini, 2015)

Resilient society is a theme rigorously explored by designer and researcher, Ezio Manzini, who takes the leading role within the University of the Arts London research project, 'Cultures of Resilience' (Manzini et al, 2015). Resilience, as Manzini defines, is an emerging scenario and yet a disruptive concept, meaning that societies' resilience against crises is necessary for survival but demands 'moving away from the dominant ways of thinking and doing' (pp. 10). This scenario is one that emerges from innovation, creativity and cultural diversity.

Innovation, in this sense, is a term that Manzini defines within 'Design when Everyone Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation,' as initiatives that:
> "… emerge from the creative recombination of existing assets (from social capital to historical heritage, from traditional craftsmanship to accessible advanced technology), which aim to achieve socially recognized goals in a new way" (Manzini, 2015, pp. 11).

It is this notion of remodelling and redistributing existing systems and ideas in novel, creative ways that fundamentally underpins the theory of design for innovation (The Design Council, 2011). What Manzini proposes in response, Design for Social Innovation, is a practice that moves beyond this understanding of innovation and applies it within social contexts:
> "Design for Social Innovation entails a sociotechnical transformation driven by and orientated towards social change" (Manzini, 2015, pp. 63).

Manzini uses this concept within the Cultures of Resilience research project to explore design for societal resilience within specific disciplines. Contributing researcher, Patricia Austin, documents her use of space and material public environments as a medium to communicate explicit narratives. She uses this tool to 'produce critical and speculative narrative environments' and demonstrates the designer's changing role from producing solutions to problems to 'proposing new possibilities and situations' (Austin, 2015, pp. 84).

Her given example of a community wishing wall at Loughborough Junction (Poggiali and Tijus, 2015) depicts a tool for community engagement with place by asking local residents to share their area-based wishes. This approach 'assigns agency to place at a local scale' and in Austin's opinion, contributes to community resilience by treating public spaces as fluid, responsive environments shaped by resident interaction.



Fig. 2. House in the Junction – Wishes (Poggiali and Tijus, 2015)

Another contributing researcher, Jane Penty (2015, pp. 87), further questions the role of the designer when challenged with societal resilience. While Austin's research maintains a local, person-to-person analysis, Penty proceeds to zoom out on societal structures, exposing a worldview perspective. Through the practice of product design, Penty engages with the issue of worldwide consumption and production. Her perspective is revealed: product designers should be less involved with the production of new material in a capitalist society and instead align design thinking with resilience thinking to bring about cultural change. Penty's use of example, the One Planet Living Initiative, illustrates this mode of thinking on a wide scale. Championing aims to make worldwide sustainable living a reality, the initiative centres culture and community as a principle of sustainability and identifies local identity and community engagement at the core (One Planet Living, 2017).

From the contributors and project examples discussed, it can be said that the connection between people and place is central to Design for Social Innovation. This may be towards a global shift in our environmental perspectives, as prioritised by the One Planet Living Initiative, or the facilitation of progressive neighbourhood conversation as seen within the Wishing Wall at Loughborough Junction. Both macro and micro scales of social change are achieved through the engagement of people with each other and the environments that they share, suggesting that community engagement is the foundation beneath Design for Social Innovation's methods.

To recap, Design for Social Innovation, as led by Ezio Manzini, is an emerging practice that lends itself to increased community resilience against current and future pressures, on a variety of scales. Several defining principles from this analysis can be summarised as follows:

1. Socially focused: Transformations are driven by and orientated towards a desire for social change.
2. From problem solving to situation design: The design and production of new products and systems must be replaced with an innovation of existing infrastructures. This approach should create new ways of thinking and doing instead of new artefacts and environments;
3. Grassroots approach: Creativity, cultural diversity and democratic community involvement lies at the core of this practice;
4. Disrupting the everyday: Design for community resilience and social innovation must disrupt everyday actions, interactions and behaviours in favour of an experimental approach to social change.

These principles have been defined from their occurrence across a range of examples, however it is important to note that Austin (2015) provides the only case that investigates design for community resilience and social innovation at a granular level. Therefore, it can be said that her adaptation of existing public spaces into designed engagement spaces is a development of the second point, 'from solving problems to instigating situations.' In partnership with this approach, Austin favours open and reactive public spaces, such as the side wall of a building, to support experimentation and adaptability in response to residents' needs. Might this suggest that reactive public spaces are best used to facilitate the community engagement that underpins social design methods?

## 2.1.3 Design for Sustainability

*"Small scale solutions to large scale problems"* (Thackara, 2015)

Sustainability is a recurring phrase within the resilient societies and Design for Social Innovation discussion. It appears as a concept throughout numerous projects in this area, such as the previously mentioned One Planet Living Initiative, and it is often viewed as an objective that lives parallel to that of social change.

The Sustainable Everyday Project (SEP) is a multidisciplinary initiative, involving key Design for Social Innovation theorists such as Manzini, that explores the role of Design for Social Innovation within sustainable everyday living. Along with scenario designer, Francois Jégou, Manzini demonstrates social design methods within the initiative, through the Looking for Likely Alternatives (LOLA) project (2009). Within the context of schools, the project implements a toolkit that encourages students and their teachers to identify and rate examples of everyday sustainable activities in their neighbourhoods. Students then use these to visualise possible future systems and activities that would further enhance sustainable living in their area.

Fig. 3. LOLA Step by Step Cards (Sustainable Everyday Project, 2017)

While demonstrating a socially innovative objective and process, the project looks beyond the event of learning to the facilitation of idea sharing at different scales. In a single school, the project allows for sharing at small scale: student to student and student to teacher. It also stimulates extremely detailed conversation about a specific, shared environment. Much like Design for Social Innovation, the LOLA project concentrates upon the connection between people and place to bring about social change, and relies upon the facilitation of community engagement to achieve this.

Globally, the project steps back and encourages sharing between schools through a web based platform that presents the catalogue of sustainable cases, identified by the students. Opening this social learning experience up to a broader audience intends to stimulate a change in personal attitudes and proposes a co-design approach:

> "… all processes of innovation can be understood as types of learning, rather than as 'eureka' moments of scarce geniuses. Instead, ideas start off as possibilities that are only incompletely understood by their inventors" (Cipolla, 2009, pp. 44).

Viewing examples of sustainable everyday life from the perspectives of students from different neighbourhoods, and even countries, is fundamental to this process. While asking participants to place themselves in the positions of others to expand their perceptions of sustainable living, the designer's role is to facilitate education through the transfer of incomplete ideas.

Another key theorist, philosopher John Thackara, explores this concept of sustainable everyday life by rigorously studying socially innovative community case studies from around the world. Aligning with the micro scale of community analysis, as demonstrated by LOLA's initial engagement within neighbourhood schools, and likewise the Loughborough Junction Wishing Wall, Thackara (2015) believes that unique, small-scale solutions are the key to solving large-scale problems. As illustrated during Thackara's talk for the School of Visual Arts (2014), when united, small-scale sustainable community innovations are greater than the sum of their parts. What Thackara explores is a strengthening response to human needs and interactions at a granular level through bespoke interventions of engagement. Throughout 'How to Thrive in the Next Economy,' Thackara (2015), summarises an analysis of various case studies, each carving the way to more sustainable, local and global futures:

"Sustainability, in other words is not something to be engineered, or demanded from politicians; it's a condition that emerges through incremental as well as abrupt change at many different scales" (Thackara, 2015, pp. 9).

This mantra emphasises the need for small scale solutions to large scale problems: those that can be easily implemented, adapted and shared. Thackara's belief in scalable, community-led solutions resonates also with Manzini's Design for Social Innovation, as exhibited in the LOLA project. LOLA's transition in scales, from interschool to neighbourhood to global engagement through idea sharing demonstrates Thackara's theory of scalability in practice. Various platforms are used at each stage of the project, ranging from physical step-by-step cards contained within school toolkits (Fig. 3), to an online platform that can be led by the participants. This example demonstrates that to achieve Thackara's scalability towards sustainability, various methods and formats must be considered.

Another measure of sustainability, as seen within these examples, is the projects' ability to exist beyond the designer's involvement. Just as the Loughborough Junction Wishing Wall (Poggiali and Tijus, 2015) acts as a canvas to share ideas and engage in progressive conversation without requiring the designer's presence, so too does LOLA in its second stage. While LOLA's initial stage relies upon the designer to facilitate the implementation of step cards and toolkits within the schools, its second stage does not. Transitioning in scale from inter- to cross-school and beyond, LOLA also evolves its format: from physical toolkits to a digital platform that the schools themselves can mediate, direct, and contribute content towards. Therefore, the designers' role as a facilitator of community engagement allows the engagement to continue beyond the initial design stage. The consideration of engagement formats, and willingness to adapt these formats to favour community-led over designer-led engagements, aids the scalability of methods and thus their sustainability.

In summary, design methods for community engagement are measured as sustainable when they can be adapted to fit various contexts and scales, and when this process is led by the community of engagers themselves, without requiring the designers' input. In these instances, the designers' role must transition from designer to facilitator, providing a structure for end users to fill with their own content. Within the examples discussed, community-led engagement appears to evolve from the structure and format of each method, such as the wall and stickers used in Loughborough Junction or the digital platform within LOLA. To this end they can be interpreted as tools for the facilitation of engagement, but they might also be perceived as limitations. Without the input of the designer, communities can only implement these methods of engagement within the boundaries of the tools that facilitate them. Suggestions stuck to the Loughborough Junction Wishing Wall will not materialise into action because stickers do not facilitate this. Incomplete ideas for sustainable action in schools will not be developed and implemented beyond the LOLA project because the sharing of ideas is limited to the individuals that the designer invited into the discussion when creating the digital platform.

Perhaps these methods of engagement should be designed to allow the communities who use them to shape and adapt their formats? Subsequently increasing their sustainability by aiding scalability and transferability between contexts.

## 2.1.4. Social Design Definition and Limitations

From an overview of the theories of Thackara (2014; 2015) and Manzini (2009; 2015), and the projects discussed, social design methods can be defined as:
**... those that exhibit a predominant social, cultural or ethical directive and are driven by a desire for sustainable, social change.**

For the remainder of this research, this is the adopted definition. However, this is not to say that all methods for social design exist exclusively within design practices that are socially driven. Instead, social design methods can exist discretely and be applied within a variety of contexts. Speculative Design, for example, is a practice that utilises methods to visualise possible future systems and scenarios: first theorised by designers Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby in their book 'Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction and Social Dreaming' (2013). While not always for predominantly social means, this form of critical design uses fiction and narrative to propose preferable future scenarios through the presentation of provocative artefacts and environments. Its methods are regularly utilised to stimulate progressive discussion surrounding political, technological and social issues and have recently been applied to policy making processes within the UK.

Scenscence is a research activity carried out by consultancy, Strange Telemetry, and commissioned by the UK Government Office for Science in 2015. Within the project, a series of digitally created future environments are presented to members of the public who identify challenges and opportunities for an ageing population. In one example, two images of future Manchester's transport infrastructures were debated; the first depicting a localised, social city and the other, a privatised, liberal one. Using artefacts and prompt cards to guide open discussion and debate, the workshops marked the "first active use of Speculative Design in UK Government policy processes" (Strange Telemetry, 2015).

Fig. 4. Scenscence – Future Manchester Transport 1 (Strange Telemetry, 2017)



Fig. 5. Scenscence – Future Manchester Transport 2 (Strange Telemetry, 2017)

While Speculative Design as a practice is not definitively driven by social change, much like Strange Telemetry its founders also apply its methods within projects that are. The United Micro Kingdoms (UmK) (Dunne and Raby, 2013) reflects deeply social and ethical values as it presents alternative perspectives of the UK that envision contrasting models of social democracy. Inspired by science fiction and existing political movements, the project provokes a discussion around the effects of technological advancements on social structure. Each area of the UmK is illustrated through the narrative of its people, their roles, and the products and systems they rely upon. Digitarians for example, who live in an authoritarian, right-wing county governed by algorithms and engrossed by digital consumerism, are presented through their self-driving automobiles. The interactive exhibition of these narratives allows the audience to experience and discuss speculative artefacts and their implications.
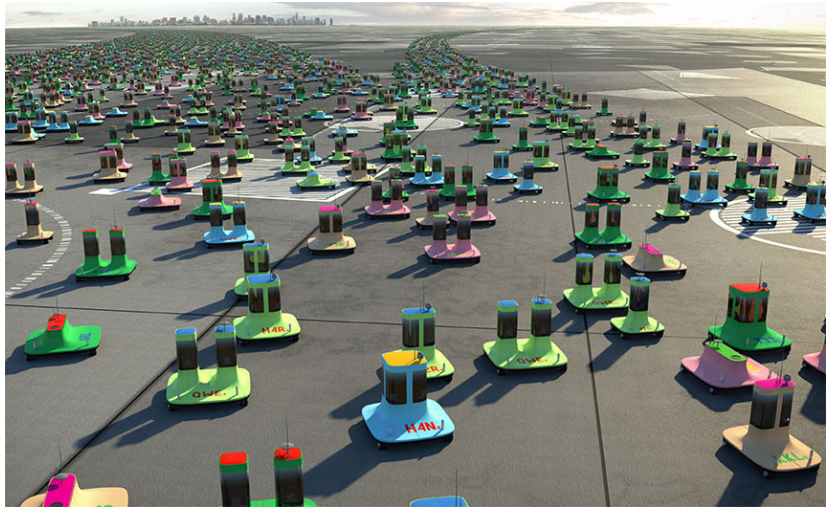
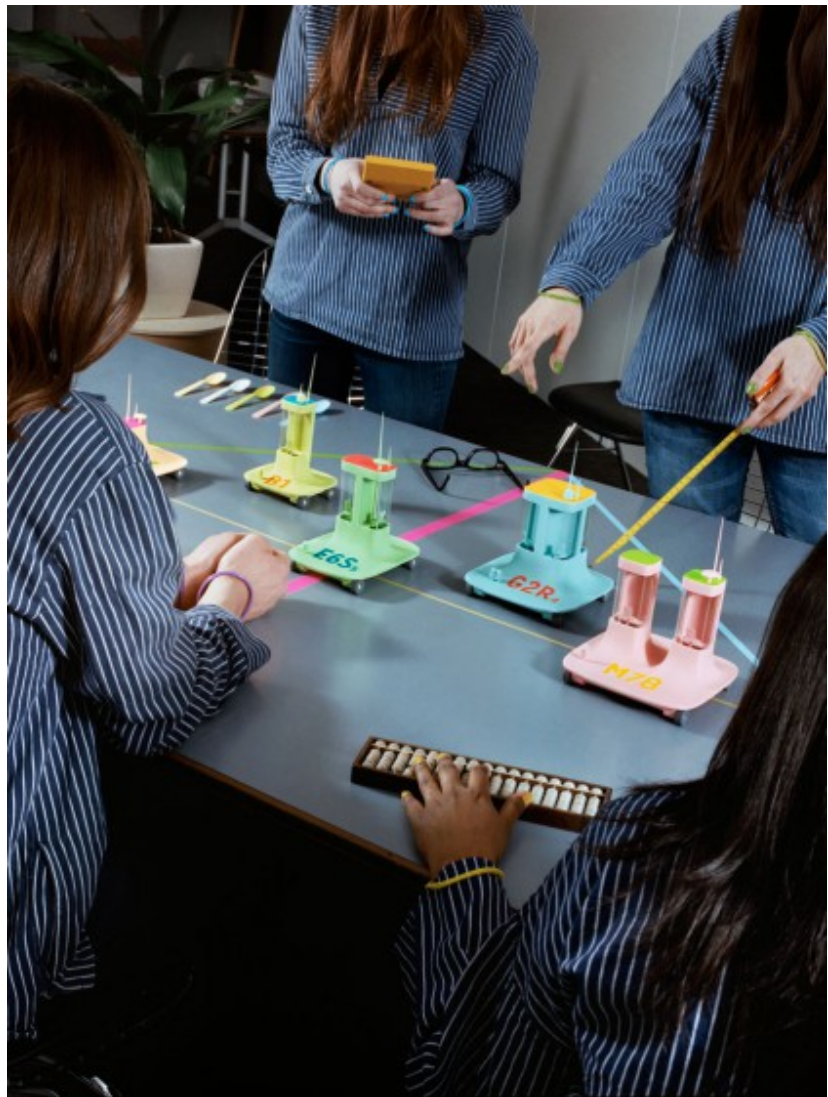Fig. 6. UmK – Digitarian Digicars (Dunne and Raby, 2013)



Fig. 7. UmK – Digitarian Exhibition (Dunne and Raby, 2013)

While this format encourages participant engagement and discussion in this instance, speculative design has been criticised for remaining inaccessible by removing end users from the design process:

> "Most speculative design is to be found in a gallery or curated festival setting, closer to the art world than the public it was perhaps seeking to engage" (Strange Telemetry, 2016).

Scenscence (2015) pushes past this assumption but it may be a pioneer as the first example of Speculative Design within policy. While the ability to visualise possible and probable future scenarios can enable change through provocative discussion, attention must be given to the format of outputs delivered and the process behind their design. The format that each social design method adopts, this being the form of its tools, artefacts or outputs towards engagement, subsequently defines the forms and quality of engagement that follow.[2] Just as the narrative artefacts within UmK facilitate imagination and progressive discussion, their exclusive existence within an exhibition format prohibits the democracy of those conversations. Much like the LOLA project, the quality and diversity of engagement is limited to those who are given access to the discussion.

From this exploration of social design, the primary discovery can be concluded as follows: social design methods fundamentally rely upon community engagement. The sustainability of these engagements marks the longevity of the design methods, and arguably their impact and success. Sustainability, in these instances, is measured by the transferability of social design methods between various scales and contexts and the ability for the engagement that follows to be led by the community of engagers without requiring continuous input from the designer. The transferability and adaptability of social design methods by the community it engages is determined by its positioning and format; these being defined as the form of the tools, platforms, systems or artefacts used to carry out the methods. For example, the side wall of a public building in Loughborough Junction, a card-based toolkit distributed within public schools, or provocative artefacts displayed within an exhibition. When the designer favours accessible positioning and simple, adaptable formats within their social design methods, the community it wishes to engage has increased ownership and engagements are increasingly sustained. Accessible and adaptable positions and formats are therefore the variables to be considered when implementing social design methods. From those that have been studied within this literature review, there is a recurring use of toolkits and workshop-like formats (Appendix B). While this appears to be effective within LOLA, which transitions from interschool to global engagement through a community-led digital platform, it does raise the question: are there alternatives?

Parallel to the lack of diversity within the formats of these methods, the contexts to which they are applied are also narrowly explored. Their situations lack complexity and prior experience with innovation or design for engagement. Residents of Loughborough Junction, children within the LOLA schools and audience members at the UmK exhibition might not have engaged with the topics raised by the social design methods beforehand. Nor had they necessarily engaged as a community before the methods were implemented. This may be the limiting factor in their ability to take ownership of the methods and continue engagement beyond the designer's input: because they are not linked, either as a community or by the topics discussed, outwith the methods for engagement.

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[2] A framework for measuring the engagement of social design methods has been designed and included within Appendix B. More studies and examples are required to test this as a reliable measure.

In summary, this investigation of social design literature concludes that the emerging practice of social design is limited by three factors:

1. The impact of social design relies upon the engagement of participants with its methods. If the methods demonstrate barriers to engagement then initial impact and the sustainment of impact is restricted.

2. Social design is being implemented through repetitive methods with limited formats, such as tools and workshops. These methods are regularly adopted by practitioners and researchers without rigour or criticism and as such remain underexplored.

3. The contexts to which social design methods are applied do not represents the complexities of the real world problems that they intend to contribute towards.

From the literature investigated within this review, it can be said that research in the field of social design is not adequately addressing these limiting factors. It is this identified gap that this body of research intends to contribute towards by proposing an alternative context, in the following section, from which to explore a diversification of social design methods.

## 2.2 The Context: Sustainable Scottish Land Reform

This research investigates the limitations of social design practices, addressed within Section 2.1, by introducing a new, complex context from which to gain learnings and consider the development of social design methods.

The new context is that of community landownership in rural Scotland: a movement of small communities across the Highlands and Islands of the country who are taking ownership of their previously private-owned land. Unexplored by social designers, the growing phenomena of community landownership in these geographies can be described as a movement. It originates in response to centuries of undistributed land ownership and monopolisation by neglectful private owners, leaving many communities unable to develop their land to suit changing needs (Wightman, 2010). Neglectful landowners regularly prevent the development of infrastructure and industry and contribute towards depopulation and the loss of culture in remote areas.

In favour of sustainable land reform, the Scottish Government is now combatting this issue by facilitating the transition of landownership to communities themselves. As these communities continue to develop towards autonomy, they increasingly rely upon the engagement of their residents to create sustainable and democratic societies (The Scottish Land Commission; Community Land Scotland, 2017). Their methods for improving living standards and achieving sustainable societies are community-led and unrestrained by governing bodies. As a result, these community-led methods of facilitating engagement are purpose-built, innovative at small scale, and unique. By exploring the context through community examples, this research intends for the practice of social design to be influenced by the achievements of community landowners in rural Scotland. Their diversity of methods and concentration on sustaining engagement are the qualities that social design practices lack (Section 2.1.4).

This section of the review will explore why the context of community landownership is an appropriate alternative from which to develop social design methods and identifies community engagement as the area of inquiry, shared between practice and context.

### 2.2.1 Landownership and Community Engagement

While recent legislation has been adopted by the Scottish Government to combat Scotland's land inequality by enabling community buyouts, the movement of community landownership was initiated by residents and community groups. The momentum of the movement and management of community owned land is still a community-led initiative. Grassroots campaigns and festivals, such as #OurLand in 2015 and 2017, form the backbone of the movement and present landownership as an everyday issue that affects all of Scotland's residents. Using social media as a platform, #OurLand encouraged urban and rural residents to identify neglected land and campaign for its development (Commonweal, 2017). Scottish celebrities, such as actress Elaine C. Smith, amplified the voices of individuals and drew parallels between the land issues of urban and rural communities.

By engaging diverse individuals, the campaign mainstreamed the issues of landownership, united a movement of supporters and democratised the discussion. Beyond campaigns and discussions, individuals within rural communities also take action towards more equitable land development. In 2014, 563,000 acres of land in Scotland had transitioned to the ownership of 494 community groups. Charity organised platforms, such as Community Land Scotland, provide a platform for the sharing of these communities' diverse and resident-led methods of sustaining the autonomy of their land and public services (Community Land Scotland, 2017). The online community is balanced by yearly Community Land conferences that enable residents across rural Scotland to share insights and narratives of success in person. As a result, archetypal community landowners lead the movement and represent the possibilities of landownership to aspiring communities and national media. The Isle of Eigg, Scotland's first island buyout, is one example of a popular landowning community that represents the movement. It's self-sufficiency, reliant upon the voluntary work of its residents to maintain wind turbines and material reuse, has established the community's land as "Britain's most eco-friendly island" (Wills, 2017).

At national scale, examples of community landownership such as the Isle of Eigg increase tourism and support community economies. The concentration of community landownership in the western isles of Scotland continues to increase due to inter-community support, resulting in the unified Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 2017). As individual communities begin to influence and support those around them, they begin to shape wide scale impact, as demonstrated by the Partnership's Economic Regeneration Strategy for 2020. With reference to social design theorist, John Thackara (Section 2.1.3), the movement of community landownership might be described as "small scale solutions to wide scale problems:" an effect that Thackara endorses as a principle of sustainable design.

At small scale, sustaining the development of community owned land relies upon voluntary participation and engagement from individual and diverse residents. For example, the crofting community of An Crùbh, in the Isle of Skye, purchased its land and developed a community hub, café and shop to support the marketing and trading of its residents' produce. To campaign for and purchase the land, residents first engaged with each other, the land and legislation by forming the Camuscross & Duisdale Initiative (2017). The community hub was funded through the Initiative's engagement with national charities

and trusts. The architecture and function of the hub was designed for the community's needs through continuous consultation with residents.



Fig. 9. An Crùbh Community Hub Café (Prosser, 2017)

During an An Crùbh sit visit, facilitated by the Community Land Conference 2017: Sharing the Knowledge (Community Land Scotland, 2017), observations were obtained that revealed the community's continued reliance on resident engagement. By creating opportunities for participation from diverse residents, Fig. 9. demonstrates how a cycle of engagement sustains An Crùbh's development in response to residents' changing needs.



1. A small number of residents in the community create opportunities for others to engage with shared issues by forming an Initiative.

2. The Initiative created opportunities for other residents to engage with each other and shared issues by developing a community hub.

3. Those who engage share their voice and become closer and more aware of each other's needs.

4. The community and hub responds to the identification of shared needs and becomes more tailored to them.

5. As the community and hub continues to develop, more opportunities for engagement and the sharing of voices are created. This increases the diversity of those engaging.

Fig. 10. An Crùbh Engagement Observation (Prosser, 2017)

The development of An Crùbh's land began during the formation of the community hub, which created opportunities for residents to engage with each other and their shared issues. During the development of the An Crùbh hub, accessibility to these opportunities for engagement resulted in a responsiveness to community needs. Without the accessible and democratic opportunities for engagement, An Crùbh would have been developed by the original Initiative, set up by a small number of individuals, instead of the residents who are directly affected. By forming the hub, the Initiative increased resident access to the discussion of land development, which in turn allowed individuals to continue to engage diversely.

From this observation it can be said that, much like the practice of social design, the context of community landownership in Scotland relies upon democratic engagement from its participants. In the instance of the community land context, participants can be viewed as the residents upon the land that they obtain. While participants within the practice of social design can exist within many context, the examples discussed in Section 2.1 demonstrate that they are bound by characteristics, such as attending the same school or living within the same neighbourhood. The two forms of participants can be defined as communities: groups of individuals with a particular characteristic in common. As such, the engagement that sustains both social design and community landownership can be defined as community engagement. This form of engagement is the quality that is shared between the context and the practice, from which they may be able to share methods and learnings.

Approaches towards instigating and sustaining community engagement however, differ between the context and the practice. Fig. 11. illustrates these approaches and their impact over time by highlighting the connections that are built, sustained and lost between stakeholders.

i. The Context: Community Land Movement
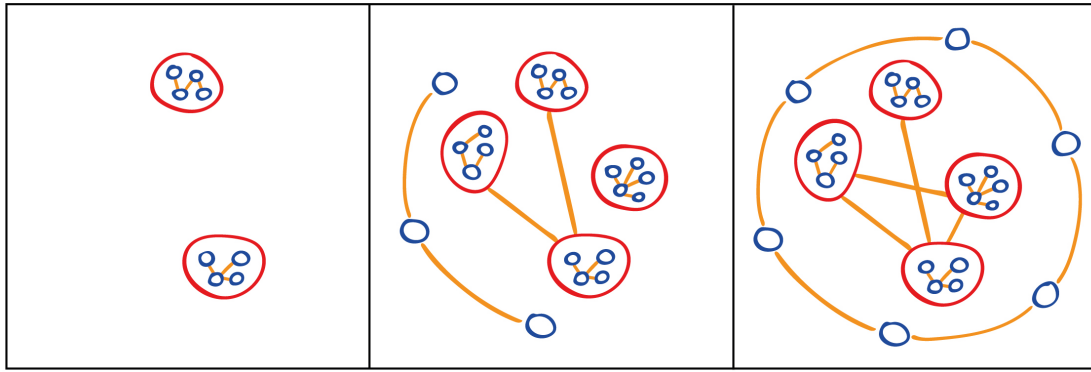


ii. The Practice: Social Design Methods
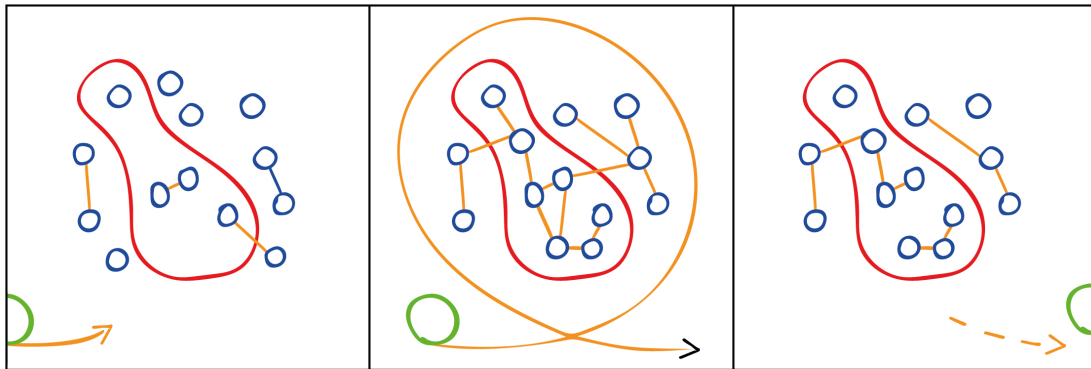


*Individuals,*
*Communities of individuals who share issues,*                          *Engagement with shared issues,*
                                                                         *Designers*

Fig. 11. Context and Practice Comparison (Prosser, 2017)

Within the context (Fig.11, i.), engagement between residents in a community strengthens that community's ability to develop land in response to shared issues. As communities within the land movement express desirable social and economic situations, such as the Isle of Eigg's eco-island title, they inspire others to follow their lead. Connections between the communities are built through platforms such as Community Land Scotland. Campaigns and conferences strengthen these connections by creating support from external viewers such as celebrities and the wider Scottish population. Engagement in this instance begins at a granular scale, led by residents themselves, and grows outwards. Diverse methods and platforms are therefore utilised at different scales to sustain small scale connections while growing the network that surrounds them.

In contrast, social designers (Fig. 11, ii.) appear to generate new engagements when working within various contexts but struggle to maintain these beyond the length of their projects (Section 2.1.4). Designers appear to enhance connections that already exist between engaged community members and facilitate new engagements between individuals and institutions with shared issues. Projects discussed in Section 2.1.4, LOLA and Loughborough Junction Wishing Wall, demonstrate how social designers facilitate new engagements between residents, neighbourhoods and schools through the implementation of workshops and tool kits. However, beyond the limitations of these social design projects, such as time restraints and designer input, new engagements are not sustained. While the LOLA project attempted to increase the scale of engagements that it generated by introducing an online platform to connect schools internationally, it is unclear if there has been any impact. In contrast to the platform utilised by the community land

context, Community Land Scotland, LOLA's platform was created by the designer for the community. Community Land Scotland is a platform that was created by communities for communities and its community-led methods appear to generate engagements that are more genuine and long-lasting.

Community development projects that are led by social designers appear to implement methods of engagement that are limited by the designer's perspectives and resources. When communities lead their own development, they appear to implement methods of engagement that respond more directly to resident needs and thus generate impact and engagements that are sustainable. The lack of sustained engagement and diversity of methods demonstrated within social design practices and the presence of both qualities within the context of community landownership suggests that the practice can take learnings from the context. These learnings should therefore explore the creation and implementation of methods for community engagement.

## 2.2.2 Community Land Engagement as a Wicked Problem

While the community land movement has been understood to demonstrate diverse and sustainable methods of engagement, this section explores limitations in relation to legislation and the support that it receives from non-government organisations (NGOs). Along with external support, geographic distribution and community resources contribute toward the engagement of residents within community development and the success of community landownership as a movement. The complexities that community landownership faces defines it as a wicked problem; the kind of complex problem that social design practices seek to contribute towards (Section 2.1.1).

Land reform issues and legislation are not specific to rural contexts, but Scottish land nationally. However rural communities, especially those on the west coast and Outer Hebrides, have been leading community landownership since the first island buyout of Eigg in 1997 (Land Reform Review Group, 2014). This is demonstrated by Figure 12, which is a map of landowning communities across Scotland as illustrated by Highland and Island Enterprises in 2014.
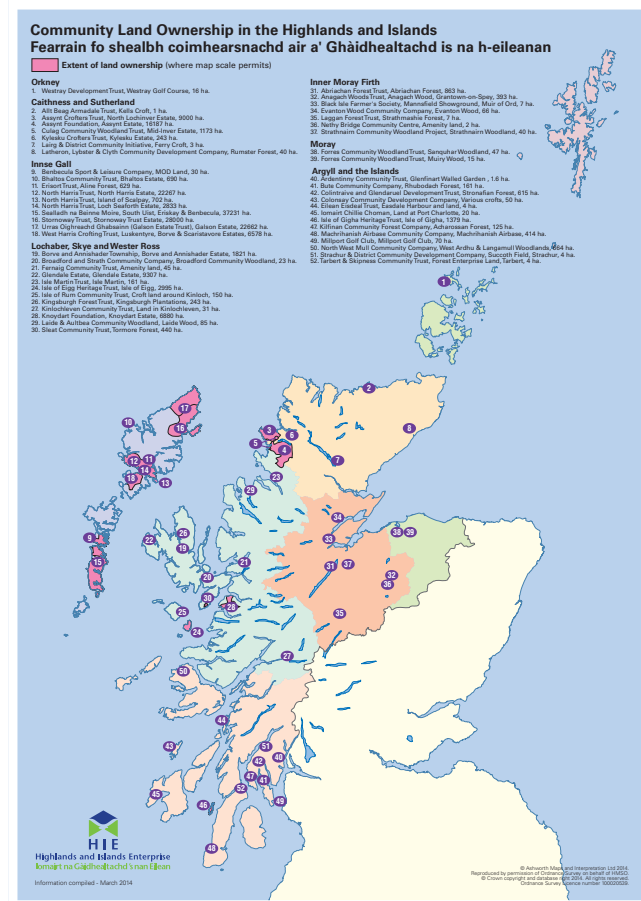


Fig. 12. Map of Scottish Land in Community Ownership (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2014)

Due to their small scales, remoteness, and access to rich natural resources, these rural communities often already exhibit strong social cohesion and a voluntary approach to creating change before land buyouts take place. This makes rural examples on the west coast of Scotland the most effective case studies for understanding existing methods for

community engagement and their potential to be innovated. In line with Thackara's (2015) theory of small scale solutions to large scale problems, remote community landowners and their methods are viewed as transformational seeds for wider scale changes.

While these transformations have been rigorously examined and discussed both economically and environmentally, very little has been explored in relation to the social impact of community landownership (Land Reform Policy Group, 1998, 1999; Macleod et al, 2010; The Highland Council, 2010; Community Land Scotland 2016, 2017). This is of interest in relation to the passing of land reform legislation, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which sets many socially-driven targets. Strengthening community participation within the development of public services and local decision making are two overarching objectives of the Act (The Scottish Parliament, 2015) however no methods of reaching these targets are included in the legislation. The Scottish Government is clear that increased community engagement is the key to sustainable land development, both within examples of community landownership and out-with. This suggests that the exploration of methods for community engagement is as valuable to the context of community land as it is to the practice of social design.

Before the intersection of the practice and the context can be considered, it is crucial to first understand what is meant by ownership of land in relation to communities in Scotland. Community development specialist, Paul Lachapelle and conservationist, Stephen McCool, write of ownership in relation to natural resource management:

> "The term is "ownership" and has been defined as a responsibility, obligation, and caring imbued by individuals in problem situations. We expand this definition to include three characteristics: ownership in process (whose voice is heard), ownership in outcome (whose voice is codified), and the ownership distribution (who is affected by the action). Ownership involves the association of citizens and agencies to collectively define, share, and address problem situations with implicit re-examination of the distribution of power" (Lachapelle and McCool, 2005).

Engagement and ownership are two foundational theories that appear within both social design and community land: community ownership of both land and design methods and their outcomes; and community engagement with both land decision making and design processes. This understanding of ownership in relation to community bodies and the ways in which these bodies represent voice within land developments is an issue that Lachapelle and McCool (2005) define as a wicked problem. The term can also be seen throughout literature within the design domain (Ehn, 1988; Buchanan,1992; Irwin, 2015) and the concept was originally formed in relation to social planning in Germany by Horst Rittel. Within his paper, 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,' Rittel (1973) sets out many characteristics of wicked problems, namely that the problems are complex, not fully understood until after a solution has been reached and that every problem is unique. This mirrors both the issues tacked within the social design projects previously discussed and the context of redistributed land engagement and ownership.

Essentially these problems cannot be tackled by using a set formula and demand adaptable, reactive approaches and methods. Legislation that addresses the issues of land redistribution however, sets out a clear repeatable formula for defining community bodies, the transition of ownership from private to public, and their decision-making structures thereafter (The Scottish Parliament, 2016). Scottish land reform, categorised as a wicked problem, is already demanding adaptable, reactive solutions in place of the rigid structures that are currently delivered by the Scottish Government. This is demonstrated by the

resident-led engagements that have been supported by communities such as An Crùbh. Other wicked problems and complex contexts that social design methods seek to contribute towards must therefore also require similar approaches. Their complexities demand design methods that are more adaptable and problem-specific than the basic tools demonstrated in LOLA and the Loughborough Junction Wishing Wall (Section 2.1.4).

## 2.2.3 Social Design Methods for Land Engagement

Just as the community land movement demonstrates qualities that social design lacks, such as diverse community-led methods and sustained engagement, it is still supported by external stakeholders who regularly behave like designers. Examples of these include the Scottish Government and Community Land Scotland, which have previously been discussed. This section explores, in more detail, the support for community landownership that already exists and compares it to the approaches and principles of social design theory. In doing so, it argues that while the practice of social design can learn from the context of the community land movement, the context can also benefit from interaction with the practice.

Many community planning and engagement tools already exist and are deployed by governing bodies and third sector organisation, such as Community Land Scotland and the Community Development Centre (SCDC), however they remain inaccessible and undemocratic. An example, the Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOiCE) tool (SCDC, 2008), help community organisers document and analyse the engagement of residents in their community group. The tool's digital nature does not allow accessibility and it is unclear how intangible engagement should be analysed and measured by untrained volunteers using a web-based platform. Physical methods of engagement are the most common forms of consultation found within rural landowning communities, such as annual general meetings (AGMs), board member meet ups and community newsletters. However, these methods can be similarly exclusive and rely on the extensive textual documentation of resident input over the prioritisation of actions from the findings.

As exposed by experts in the field of social sustainability, measuring the qualitative attributes of social impact, such as community resilience, engagement, empowerment and capacity for change, is extremely disputed (Magis, 2010; Steiner and Markantoni, 2014; Gaviglio et al, 2016). Reflecting on the ambition of the Community Empowerment Act, it can be concluded that the Scottish Government's (2015) objectives are inherently social, cultural and driven by a desire for social change. Thus, the socially sustainable development of land reform in Scotland is an area that is more complex that its economic and environmental counterparts and underexplored in terms of methods for measurement and development.

The methods of engagement provided by support organisations, such as VOiCE, differ from the community-led and social design-led methods discussed within Section 2.2.1 in their responsiveness to unique problems. Just as wicked problems require unique approaches (Rittel, 1973), community-led and social design-led methods allow participants to engage not only with the outcomes but with the process of designing the methods themselves. In this sense, participants gain ownership over the methods and, as shown by the An Crùbh hub and the LOLA project (Fig. 11), are empowered to continue adapting and redistributing them at different scales. The difference between these two examples is the forms of ownership that participants have over the methods: the An Crùbh community

hub is owned and designed by its residents, whereas the LOLA platform and tools are owned by the designer, with only the content being owned participants.

The Scottish Government and support organisations' implementation of rigid tools with a one-size-fits-all approach excludes participants from the process of community development. A lack of engaging artefacts and environments from these methods contributes to un-democratic input from community members. For example, few residents might be able to access a web based platform such as VOiCE in remote locations or feel confident attending annual general meetings in town halls. Meanwhile, Loughborough Junction's Wishing Wall is physically a part of the environment that it discusses and invites all members of the public to contribute towards discussion effortlessly. Textual documentation in this example is replaced with a prioritisation of democratic conversation and resident collaboration through idea sharing. This merging of engagement methods with existing, everyday environments and infrastructure increases opportunities for the democratic, long lasting input that is currently lacking. As Manzini's (2015) Design for Social Innovation and Thackara's (2015) Design for Sustainability theorise, the solutions lie in transforming systems that already exist, instead of creating new ones.

To summarise, the context of community landownership has demonstrated qualities that are lacking within the practice of social design. While many of landowning communities appear to be sustaining engagement and succeeding to develop their land to suit community needs, they regularly require support during the early stages of ownership. This support comes from the Scottish Government and NGOs, who implement engagement tools that are rigid and non-context specific; a nondemocratic quality that comes from the exclusion of communities from the design process. The practice of social design also suffers from the use of tools that are non-adaptable and implementable only by their designers. However, advances in the practice from theorists such as Thackara and Manzini value the involvement of participants within the design process and the use of accessible environments to counteract this. While the approaches of social design could provide more appropriate support for landowning communities than what is currently available, community-led methods of engagement appear to be the most valuable in this context. Instead of asking what the practice can contribute to the context, it is therefore more valuable to ask what the practice of social design can learn from the community-led methods of landowning communities. Can the practice of social design diversify its methods and sustain engagement beyond the input of designers by working more closely with the communities it seeks to support?

# 3. Methodology

This body of work seeks to explore a practice-led, methodological contribution of findings to the field of social design research. Unlike traditional research, such as quantitative scientific methodologies, this inquiry aligns itself with qualitative social research. The practice in this case is that of social design, aligning with art practices and residing within the area of Arts and Humanities. Emerging from the 1990s, this form of research values the subjectivism of art practices and identifies three areas: research about practice, research for practice, and research through practice. Knowledge in this area is built upon the philosophical assumptions of the investigator and requires a knowledge of the perspectives and beliefs of participants (Creswell and Poth, 1998, pp. 16).

Bruce Archer, partly responsible for the establishment of design as an academic discipline, proposes that the lack of objectivism in this field 'is why it is so-important for the investigator to declare his or her 'theoretical position'' (Archer, 1995). This is true since knowledge in this capacity is constructed through the practitioner/researcher's creative reflection of the research process and its findings.

To provide a reliable grounding for this methodological argument, qualitative social researcher, Michael Crotty, has been referenced in terms of structure. Within 'The Foundations of Social Research,' Crotty outlines:

> "… a framework for the guidance of those wishing to explore the world of research… Its aim is to provide researchers with a sense of stability and direction as they go on to do their own building" (Crotty, 1998, pp. 2).

It is this framework, illustrated in the diagram below, that has been adopted to appropriately communicate the theoretical framework of this research.
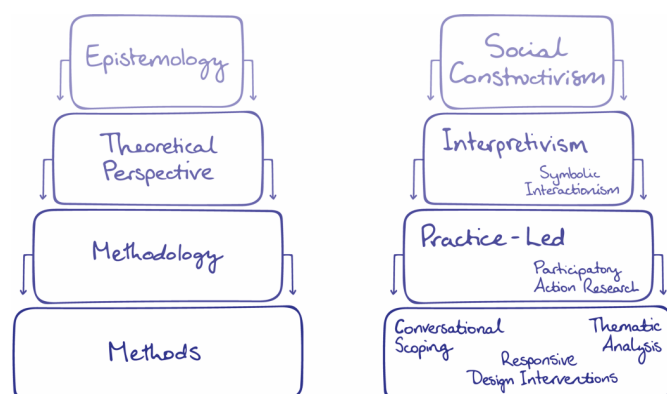


Fig. 13. Crotty's Theoretical Framework (Prosser, 2017)

By implementing Crotty's framework and the concept of a theoretical structure, this chapter intends to communicate:
1. The type of knowledge sought by this research;
2. The characteristics of the knowledge attained.

## 3.1 Epistemology for Qualitative Research

Deciding upon a research approach requires examination of the research problem in relation to various theories. Questions to be raised are that of background influences, defining features, challenges and procedures within the existing approaches considered (Creswell and Poth, 1997, pp. 66). Explored epistemologies in this section include constructivism along with phenomenalism and pragmatism.

Phenomenalism deals with structures of consciousness and the relationship between human perceptions and the phenomena they perceive (Husserl, 1970). This is appropriate when discussing human interaction with phenomena, objects and the concept of being in relation, but it does not align with the detailed study of human to human interactions and the social structures that form thereafter (Heidegger, 1927).

Much like phenomenalism, pragmatism was developed by sociology founders during the late 19th century. Pragmatism however, is concerned with the theory of truth and the nature of ideas. It is more contextual and less focused on individual experiences but rather the practical outcomes of research, taking the form of tools and processes for prediction, problem solving and action (Dewey, 2007, pp. 156). Pragmatists argue that knowledge, language and concepts are best viewed in terms of applications and successes, this 'emphasises the practical application of ideas by acting and testing them in human experiences' (Gutek, 2013). Unlike phenomenalism, pragmatism allows the researcher freedom of method choice, allowing for multiple approaches to collecting and analysing data. In this sense, it is a problem specific approach, which resonates with the reactionary nature of social design methods. However, its emphasis on analysis through tools and processes is restrictive in terms of this research's inquiry into innovative and alternative design methods.

Building upon Dewey's theory of pragmatism, constructivism believes knowledge to be a dynamic process of constructing and testing theories (Piaget, 1972). Piaget's view of knowledge as a social construct does not require scientific measurements of validity and accuracy, but instead bases its findings on human experiences. This approach uses no single method but rather a diversity of problem specific ones, allowing constructivist research to remain both situationally specific and embedded within social experiences.

A development of this concept is phycologist Lev Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism. Rejecting that knowledge and social contexts can be separated, Vygotsky believed all learning to take place first socially via interactions, and then on a personal level through reflection (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Within 'The Constructs of Social Reality' Berger and Luckmann (1966) contemporise social constructivism and explore the idea of multiple, socially constructed realities.

This body of work considers these theories and addresses the questions raised within chapter two through a social constructivist epistemology; interpreting knowledge as socially situated and constructed through interaction between individuals and community groups (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Exploring the idea that there exists multiple realities, each socially constructed by unique groups and individuals (Berger et al, 1966), allows for the contemplation of multiple stakeholder perspectives within the context of the community land movement. This is necessary due to the variety of engagement scales and actors within the sustainable land reform debate; from person-to-person community interactions to nation-wide policy making. Social constructivism embraces the purely

qualitative nature of the findings, that being an understanding of behaviour through interaction and of 'actors' perspectives on their own worlds' (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009).

As the foundation of knowledge in this instance is assumed to be constructed through social interaction, the theories of Jerome Bruner (1991), who identifies communication as the root of interaction, are also considered. New knowledge in this sense builds upon existing knowledge and is co-constructed via the social phenomena of language. This belief puts an emphasis on the use of dialogue and narrative within the research methods, which is continually interrogated throughout the research process.

## 3.2 Theoretical Perspective

Traditional social science research supports positivism: the belief that the world exists externally and can be measured by the researcher directly through observation. It states that only one reality exists, consisting of what is available to the senses and can be measured through empirical evidence and fact (Comte, 1855; 1880). Since this research is bound by the concepts of social constructivism and an analysis of human interactions through the perspectives of participants and the researcher, an interpretivist stance is taken. Anti-positivism, also known as interpretivism, challenges the traditional outlook by embracing subjective, cultural perspectives and social processes. This study of social action separates the social realm from the natural world and identifies the need for situationally specific methods of measuring and constructing knowledge (Habermas, 1967).

While a social constructivist epistemology embraces interpretivist beliefs about the construction of knowledge through social interaction, this knowledge is firstly interpreted before it can be communicated. Constructivism and interpretivism within this research are inseparable; social knowledge cannot be constructed without interpretation. As Thomas Schwandt explores these perspectives in relation to human inquiry, he concludes that together they share the goal of exposing complex human experiences from the point of view of those who experience it. The researcher's interpretive role is however the end method for communicating these participants' experiences and perspectives to the world:

> "The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to offer the inquirer's construction of the constructions of the actors one studies" (Schwandt, 1994, pp. 222).

Interpreting the human interactions and behaviours of specific actors in a specific situation is the process of knowledge construction that this research embraces; it seeks to expose participant perspectives and behaviours. To communicate these authentically, participants must maintain voice and ownership within the interpretation of the data. A deeper consideration of human interaction, the process of interpretation and participant and researcher effect on behaviour is required to validate the findings.

The interpretivist theories of social behaviourism and symbolic interactionism are referenced to expand this understanding. First developed by pragmatist George Herbert Mead, the concept of social behaviourism is defined as the study of the mind and self as it emerges from the social process of communication (Mead, 1934). Mead's teachings break our understanding of reality into three entities: mind, self and society, separating the 'me' from the 'I.' An analysis of the communication of gestures that make up behaviours within

societies is prevalent but this raises questions surrounding the role of the researcher and effect of the self upon others in relation to communication and representation.

Blumer, further developed this concept into the theoretical perspective, symbolic interactionism. Two principles emerge from this theory: that people act towards things based on meanings they prescribe to them; and that these meanings are derived from social interaction, modified through interpretation. Human's exist in a world of varying objects and these can be physical, social or abstract, thus we respond to the filter that is our own perspectives of these objects and social definitions (Blumer, 1980).

Arguing that the individual and society cannot be separated, and that people are products of their society, Blumer believes that the best test of this theory is to solve complex social problems. This aligns with the agendas of social design methods and the sustainable land reform debate under question. Blumer (1969) explores three principles from which to solve these complex social problems:
1. The study of micro-societies can inform larger societal structures;
2. Close contact with individual participants' everyday activities is necessary to understand their actions;
3. Close up human interactions must be analysed within specific situations.

Again, Thackara's theory of small scale solutions to large scale problems reoccurs within this approach to societal studies. Furthermore, the focus on small scale human interactions in response to specific environments and conditions, makes this an appropriate perspective when interrogating social design methods for land engagement at different scales. However, this precision also removes the ability to zoom out on the situation under study and consider multiple case studies or scales of engagement, which this research demands. Thus an interpretivist perspective is adopted in line with the social construction of knowledge whilst borrowing from the societal philosophies of symbolic interactionism.


## 3.3 Practice-Led Methodology

Due to the exploration of social design methods within this research, a practice-led methodology has been utilised: primarily concerned with the nature of practice and construction of new knowledge that has significance to that practice (Candy, 2006).

Originating from medical research during the 1990s, practice-based research is 'an ongoing investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge through practice and the outcomes of practice' (Candy, 2006). While it offers a less constrained approach to social research, one that embraces uncertainty, it maintains principles that are less applicable to this body of work. As Candy explains, practice based contributions must be solely 'demonstrated through creative outcomes' and a 'full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes' (2006). This does not elude to a methodological contribution but rather one of artefacts, outcomes or techniques.

Practice-led research however, addresses the limitations of the practice-based approach and introduces the ability to contribute methodologically to the practice. The difference between them being that if a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge then it is practice based; if the research leads to new understandings about practice, then it is practice-led. Partnered with a social constructivist epistemology and interpretive theoretical perspective, practice-led research maintains an exploratory, context specific

mode of inquiry that identifies appropriateness over truth. While it 'falls into the general area of action research' (Candy, 2006), it offers the researcher more freedom to be responsive to individual issues that arise during the act of research.

Once again, this methodology will borrow from a supporting theory: Participatory Action Research (PAR). This approach emphasises the researcher's participation within the action of change, seeking to understand the world by changing it collaboratively. A focus on the involvement of participants and researchers within decision making can make this methodology an empowering and democratising experience (Whyte, 1991). This aligns with the issues of equality, ownership and voice explored within the context of community land engagement. Authors Chevalier and Buckles (2013) identify the three key foundations of PAR as being:
1. Participation within life in society;
2. Social action and experiences;
3. Research and the generation of knowledge.

In relation to these characteristics, PAR embraces the experimentation of methods with a means to evoke change and questions the researcher's role within the community under investigation. It's grassroots approach to self-transformation means that this methodology is regularly applied to rural communities and natural resource planning.

One example of PAR being used in a similar context to sustainable land engagement is 'Fighting Eviction: Tribal Land Rights and Research-in-Action' (Buckles et al, 2012). While design methods are not applied within the project, the practitioners explore techniques to research 'with,' instead of 'on,' a community of people. Another example of PAR being used in conjunction with community action, is 'Involving the Community: A Guide to Participatory Development Communication' (Bessette, 2004). The project's mantra of 'putting people first' is one that arises from a need for community self-organisation in the face of poor governmental management of natural assets; a similar condition to that of community land in Scotland. Again, design methods are not implemented however similar principles prevail, such as the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of solution searching.

The researcher's role within the community is also expanded upon by this approach, which continues to question researcher interpretation. Instead of assessing the community independently, researchers using PAR allow the community to identify the issues that will then lead into research questions. Thus, the researcher takes on the role of facilitator in place of investigator.

While these attributes align both with the issues of engagement within the community land movement and the social design methods under investigation, PAR requires the researcher to deeply embed themselves within one community case study. This approach is not applicable to the analysis of land engagement at varying scale and so for the validity of the investigation, a practice-led methodology has been adopted. This approach will borrow from PAR's mantra of 'putting people first' (Bessette, 2004) and the researcher's role of facilitation.

## 3.4 Methods for Social Design

The theoretical framework that has been outlined encourages an approach that is flexible and responsive to data collected from participants. In terms of social constructivism, the findings realised reflect participants' perspectives upon the specific situation of land engagement. Perspectives are deeply engrained within the environments that participants find themselves, that being their roles, opinions and physical surroundings. Therefore, the social design methods developed maintain an interpretivist stance on data collection and are led by the practice of social design, previously explored within Section 2.1. Donald Schön, who writes of the experimental structures of reflection in action, identifies 'what if' as the fundamental question 'in order to see what the action leads to' (Schön, 1983). 'What if' is hence explored in relation to the speculative design principle of visualising preferable future scenarios, adopting the social design principle of co-creating new ways of thinking and doing in place of new products and systems. In keeping with the practice-led methodology, influenced by PAR's support of community-led, responsive research directions, the methods adopt what Schön outlines as 'move-testing experiments.' Those that are exploratory in their quest to develop new knowledge within a specific situation, to produce intended change through researcher and participant action. An alternative to hypothesis testing in this case, 'there are no unintended outcomes and one either gets intended consequences or does not' (Schön, 1983, pp. 146). These methods of data collection, experimentation and analysis of the findings include: scoping though responsive conversation; the co-interpretation of data with participants; and social design interventions.

## 3.4.1 Responsive, Conversational Scoping

Thematic analysis encourages the systematic collection of participant data, but it also allows this information to lead the research direction (Charmaz, 2007). Social constructivists, interpretivists, and symbolic interactionists embrace analysis of stakeholder perspectives through person to person interactions and specific situations (Blumer, 1969). The research questions and directions are therefore identified from open, democratic conversation with research participants. As participants lead the research direction, they too lead the conversation, demanding that the researcher adopt the role of facilitator. As Bruner (1991) identifies communication and language at the root of interactions, it is this basic tool that is used to scope the alternative views and perspective of the participants in question. Interaction and conversation, indicators of engagement, are therefore also the intended outcomes of the research interventions.

To gain a fair picture of the current issue of land engagement within Scotland, a diversity of stakeholders are investigated through this means, allowing for an understanding of the spectrum of socially constructed worlds that exist (Berger et al, 1966).

Belief that individuals and their interactions cannot be removed from their social contexts (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), suggests that conversational scoping provides the most valid findings when conducted in the participants' familiar settings, language and tone. For example; a policy maker is approached during a conference or within government office; community engagement officers are conversed with during site visits and within community hubs of trust centres; while residents are approached in public houses, post offices and local shops. Attention is given to everyday environments, mirrored by the

theory of design for social innovation and sustainability, which champions this approach as the most meaningful and with the highest capacity for change (Manzini, 2015; Thackara, 2015).

### 3.4.2 Interpreting Data with Participants

Interaction between participants and the methods that facilitate them, their positioning, tools and environments, are thereby the units of data under analysis. Thematic analysis, whilst remaining flexible in approach, provides a valid method from which to 'identify verbal or visual patterns and develop appropriate codes' (Boyatzis, 1998). This form of analysis moves the researcher through three phases of inquiry: 'recognising an important moment (seeing) precedes encoding it (seeing it as something), which in turn precedes interpretation' (pp. 1).

Just as the participants' perspectives are individual and interpretive, so too is the researcher's act of seeing the data. Transparency of the researcher's interpretation is therefore necessary to provide validity and accessibility to the findings. In response, field notes are documented in a first person, journalistic style and outputted as a distributable, community-style newspaper. Each research activity forms one issue in the series and is re-evaluated by the participants who contributed to the data collection.

Returning to the data, and the interpretations thereof, in this way is a technique embraced by the theoretical framework. Involving participants within this process is intended to allow for the research direction to be reactive to emerging researcher-participant interaction and encompassing of both researcher and participant interpretations.

### 3.4.3 Responsive Design Interventions

Forms of interaction and engagement observed during site visits are analysed in relation to the social design theories and method examples explored within the literature review. Similar issues and approaches are identified between social design theory and case study observations for the development of new methods. These methods, while remaining led by the context, reflect upon, and are so rooted within, the theories of social design. This maintains a grounding for these methods within the area that they wish to contribute towards: the nature of practice and construction of new knowledge within that practice (Candy, 2006).

Returning to the theory of resilient communities within Manzini's design for social innovation, these new methods intend to disturb the existing patterns of engagement that have been identified (Manzini et al, 2015). Disrupting the everyday in this way allows experimentation into the enhancement of existing engagement and promotion of innovation where gaps have been identified.

Drawing upon the examples of social design presented within the literature review (Section 2.1), the innovation of new methods within this context responds to the methods of engagement observed within the context of community land. Allowing the context and the practice to affect and learn from each other in this way, requires that new methods are tested within appropriate contexts.

Just as local interactions are studied and therefore innovated, democratic participant engagement within the process of data interpretation, method creation and testing contributes to the validity of the findings. Maintaining participant engagement within the process of designing methods for engagement is done so to identify new ways of thinking and doing that are both practice-led and community-led.

Move testing allows the innovation of these interventions and methods to remain purely experimental (Schön, 1983). A lack of intended outcomes or hypotheses further empowers the participants to take ownership of the research and its methods whilst maintaining responsiveness. To ensure that only new or enhanced interactions are being interpreted, familiar environments and existing knowledge is used as a foundation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). As exhibited within the literature review examples, this approach is already widely accepted to maximise democratic engagement. Thus, the use of everyday environments and social structures will provide the base from which social design interventions and methods are constructed.

As new methods are developed and tested, thematic analysis is revisited to assess participant interaction with the design interventions. Findings are shared amongst participants using the community newspaper format and reassessed in relation to further method development. Scoping and testing is intertwined with thematic analysis and the process can be continued circularly, revisiting theory, data and interpretations within a responsive feedback loop. Adopting circularity within the methods provides opportunities for further research through the iteration of scoping techniques and design interventions.
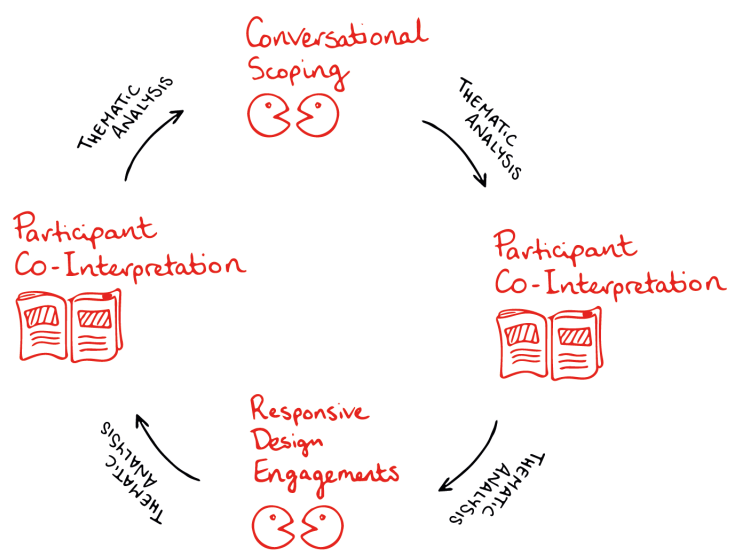


Fig. 14. Responsive Feedback Loop (Prosser, 2017)

# 4. Responsive Scoping

This chapter marks the beginning of the research discussion and outlines the first of the three methods deployed: responsive scoping of the community land context through the lens of social design. First person narration is adopted from here on to support the communication of the practice-led methodology, positioning myself as the social designer leading the practice within the context.

Many landowning communities across rural Scotland give momentum to the national community land movement. As more continue to transition to autonomous ownership, in numbers beyond 500 (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2014), it becomes increasingly difficult to select appropriate case studies from them. To guarantee that I was informed before making a case study selection, I adopted a method of scoping by attending wide scale land reform events, such as conferences and 'meet and greets.' Maintaining an informal, responsive approach whilst scoping allowed me to gain perspective before depth and ensure that any selected communities would be responsive to the social design methods being tested. As a gap identified within the practice of social design, contexts (or in this case communities) chosen for case study must adhere to three variables: they must represent the complex issues of wicked problems (Section 2.2.2); approach these issues through innovation and engagement; and do so in a community-led way (Austin, 2015; Cipolla, 2009; Thackara, 2015; Manzini, 2015).

This first section of this chapter discusses the responsive scoping method that I used to select a single case study from the Community Land Conference 2017 and consequently conduct a site visit within that case. Through interaction with Commercial Development Manager, Lisa Maclean, her community of the Galson Estate on the Isle of Lewis is then chosen for study.

Within the second section of this chapter, the responsive method is further developed during the site visit to the Galson Estate community. Development Officer, Maclean, is encouraged to lead the visit and thus present her perspective of the community that she interacts with. This section is narrated through my interaction with Lisa Maclean and the community that she represents whilst identifying the platforms and spaces that facilitate these interactions as indicators of engagement.

To conclude, I present the opinion that this method successfully utilises communication as the root of interaction (Bruner, 1991) to provide a community perspective that compliments my designerly interpretation of the case study.

## 4.1 Selecting the Single Case Study

Within this section I recount the first half of the scoping phase, conducted at the Community Land Conference 2017. I discuss how, given the variety of community land supporters that I interact with, scoping the context in this way affects the research question. As the research question and its direction develop in response to interaction with the context, I discuss how this directs me towards selecting a single case study.

## 4.1.1 The Community Land Conference 2017: Sharing the Knowledge

Community Land Scotland, a charity supporter of landowning communities, "was established in 2010 as a response to the need for a collective voice for community landowners in Scotland" (Community Land Scotland, 2017). The unified voice amongst the growing network of individual community landowners reflects the grassroots nature of the movement and its objective to increase equality by democratically involving the individuals from within it (section 2.2.1). While Community Land Scotland maintains an online platform to facilitate the exchange of information and learnings from others' experiences, it strengthens the relationships formed between communities by hosting annual Community Land Conferences. Having attended the previous conference in 2016, I was aware of the uniqueness of these events and knew it to be a diverse starting point for fieldwork. Their ability to physically represent community land owners from across rural Scotland in one location provides the movement with energy and momentum. The interactivity between community representatives and the network that supports them is exclusive to the physical events, unable to live within a digital platform.

The Community Land Conference of 2017, titled 'Sharing the Knowledge' therefore provided me with an appropriate entry point into the context; one that would favour the diverse socially constructed perspectives of many communities across rural Scotland. Before embarking upon my journey to the conference at Sabhal Mor Ostaig on the Isle of Skye during the 30th and 31st of May, I contemplated engagement issues that might arise during the scoping phase.

It is necessary to declare that at this early stage of fieldwork, I was not yet asking what the practice of social design could learn from this context, but rather what it could contribute: '**In what ways can social design methods contribute to community engagement within sustainable Scottish land reform'** was the initial research question.

In relation to this question, the practice-led nature of the inquiry demanded that I, the social designer and researcher, participate within the contribution of social design methods towards a community and do so by responding to individual issues that arise during the act of research (Whyte, 1991). The validity of my interpretation of these spontaneous issues during the scoping phase however, firstly demanded transparency of the research and the practice that leads it. Providing transparency of the practice when instigating brief conversations with strangers raises an issue: the practice of social design is unfamiliar, abstract and undefined, even within its own community of practitioners and researchers. I demonstrate this by requiring a review of literature to construct rudimentary definitions in Section 2.1. To moderate confusion surrounding the practice and time required to clarify this, I instigated conversations at the conference using a prepared definition of social design, presented in a familiar business card format. Printing my contact details on the business cards supported post-conference conversation and provided me with an opportunity to answer questions about the practice at a more suitable time.

Fig. 15. Sleat, Isle of Skye (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 16. Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Community Land Conference 2017 (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 17. Land Responsibilities Panel, Community Land Conference 2017 (Prosser, 2017)

Since the conference format facilitates intercommunity engagement and provides a platform that amplifies the voices of communities beyond their geographies, I assumed that those in attendance were also in support of engagement and voice. Of the community representative who attended, those who chose to present their community's narratives during conference panels and workshops were expected to be the most supporting of experimental approaches towards engagement. Adopting this assumption, I attended the panels and workshops that were most likely to include discussions around the theme of community engagement. I intending to use these moments during the conference as opportunities to discuss the importance of engagement to various communities and the methods that they currently use to facilitate it. Examples of these include the 'Community Land and Culture: Celebrating our Love of the Land' workshop and 'Community Engagement and Succession Planning' panel. The latter panel, chaired by a board member of the Galson Estate, Agnes Rennie, was where I make first contact with the case study.

## 4.1.2 The Case Study: Galson Estate

Both the chair of the panel, Agnes Rennie, and its main speaker, Lisa Maclean, were representatives of Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn, the community owned Galson Estate on the Isle of Lewis. Lisa Maclean, the Commercial Development Manager of the estate, addressed democratic engagement as a requirement of successful community landownership and provided examples of innovative engagement methods developed within her community. Ten years after its buyout, community ownership in the Galson Estate has continued to expand and now encompasses twenty-two distinct townships, spanning 56,000 acres. As the most north westerly point of Scotland it remains remote even to the neighbouring islanders of Lewis. Alongside the crofting families who work the land, the Galson Estate remains home to many elderly residents unwilling to leave their under-resourced but native towns to attend care homes in Lewis' largest town, Stornoway. This growing ageing population and its requirement for care, in contrast with the lack of employment for younger residents, has driven a wedge between the generations within the estate. In response, Maclean designs services that alleviate both young and aging residents' issues through the facilitation of engagement between the two groups.

During winter months, Maclean equips discouraged youths with lightbulbs, purchased through the Galson Estate Trust, and directs them towards the homes of the elderly. While youths ensure that the elderly's homes are safely lit, and the elderly provide the youths with labour to keep them occupied, the act of installing lightbulbs is not the objective of this engagement method. Instead, Maclean reveals, facilitating engagement between the disparate generations is intended to form bonds between them, create further opportunities for youths to seek labour and instil an ethos of empathy and care between them (Appendix D). The Galson Estate's ability to respond to complex issues of sustainability thought this innovative, community-led method of engagement highlights it as an appropriate case study to fill the contextual gaps within social design research. I responded to this realisation by exercising the opportunity to further convene with the representatives of the Galson Estate during the conference.

With reference to Agnes Rennie's hierarchal position as Chair within the Galson Estate Trust board of directors, I considered her to be a compromised participant to approach. Rennie's seniority within the community land collective was apparent from her interaction with conference organisers and Maclean. Through the lens of social design, I perceived Rennie's position to have surpassed the small-scale intercommunity engagement that I

sought to investigate and opted to continue the conversation with Development Manager, Lisa Maclean, instead. From Maclean's presentation, she appeared to be an active and integrated member within the community of residents. Her use of individuals' names and personal details throughout the narration suggested that, as a participant within the research, Maclean would represent the perspectives of others in her community along with her own. I hypothesised that, of the conference speakers, Maclean was the most appropriate participant to provide diverse resident perspectives within the community of the Galson Estate.[3]

The conference concluded with a site visit to one of two nearby landowning communities: The An Crùbh community hub, or the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust. I took this opportunity to further conversation with Lisa Maclean and join her on her visit to An Crùbh, a community owned hub designed to serve its surrounding crofting community. During the tour of An Crùbh, Maclean and I discussed the social filters through which we view community engagement: hers the position within the Galson Estate, and mine the practice of social design. Maclean detailed her interest in the An Crùbh community hub: its use of adaptable spaces to suit the ever-changing needs of its community. As discussed in Section 2.2.1, the hub provides its crofting residents with a post office, café, shop and multipurpose hall and was designed by residents through continuous consultation (Appendix C). By maintaining an understanding of residents' needs through consultation, the hub does not respond to them individually but rather provides a "flexible gathering space… suitable for all kinds of events" (An Crùbh, 2017). This principle of adapting engagement around the situational needs of residents is one that Maclean takes influence from. When I interrogated her interest in An Crùbh, Maclean extended an invitation to visit her community of the Galson Estate to gain perspective.



Fig 18. An Crùbh Community Hub, Isle of Skye (Prosser, 201



Fig. 19. An Crùbh Community Shop, Isle of Skye (Prosser, 2017)

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[3] Other communities considered for case study during the Community Land Conference 2017 include the Mull and Iona Community Trust and Coimhearsnachd Chàrlabhaigh Carloway Community. More information about these examples and rationale against selecting them for case study is found in Appendix C.

### 4.1.3 Developing the Research Question

As I reflected on Maclean's presentation of the Galson Estate, its issues of intergenerational engagement, her method towards overcoming them, and her admiration of An Crùbh, I also reflected upon my research question. Maclean's experience with innovative methods of engagement, without the input of a social designer, and openness to experiment with alternative methods, provided me with a realisation: that I had made false assumptions when designing the initial research question.

By asking what the practice of social design could contribute towards engagement within community landownership, I had assumed two beliefs: that all communities experience the same engagement limitations; and that these limitations can be overcome through the application of social design. The first assumption is not one that can be disregarded, as it would require an extensive analysis of the engagement issues faced by all landowning communities. Contemplating the second however, allowed me to appreciate that engagement through social design is as much limited by its methods as landowning communities are by theirs. Instead of investigating social design methods by simply applying their existing principles within this new context, could these methods learn from the ways in which landowning communities are already instigating engagement? Instead of attempting to fill an undeterminable gap in landowning communities' engagement methods, the practice of social design might learn more from being influenced by these communities' situationally-specific approaches towards engagement. This consideration marked a shift in the research question, from how can the practice of social design contribute to the context of community landownership to: **what can social design methods discover about community engagement from their application within Scotland's community land movement?**

## 4.2 Galson Estate Site Visit

In response to the development of the research question, I use this section to introduce the site visit that was conducted with Maclean's community of the Galson Estate on the Isle of Lewis. I continue to narrate the responsive scoping method through the journey of this activity and intermittently address delays in the research and insights that occurred during this time. From these insights, I give rationale to the observations taken during the site visit, the choice of data collected and the method for doing so.

## 4.2.1 Research Delays: Returning to Machrihanish

Following my initial meeting with Lisa Maclean in the Isle of Skye, during the Community Land Conference 2017, we remained in contact and an invitation followed: to visit her and the Estate on the Isle of Lewis from the 2nd to 3rd of August 2017. Busy schedules during the summer season resulted in a significant amount of time between the first and second stage of scoping. During this period of uncertainty, time restriction became more apparent and I deliberated the Galson Estate's suitability as a case study. Concerned that an August site visit would leave me with limited time from which to conduct successful fieldwork and testing, I returned to my familiar community, the Machrihanish Airbase Community Company (MACC), for security (Preface: A Personal Statement, pp.14). While MACC is not a case study within this inquiry, my position of integration within the community makes it a secure place to maintain momentum and connection with the wider context of the community land movement. Having previously lived and researched within this community, I instinctively use its condition and lack of intercommunity engagement as a comparison while scoping the context and the Galson Estate case study.

In preparation for the August Galson Estate site visit, I attempted to engage with MACC community discussions to maintain momentum. During this time, further scoping raised an engagement insight that tuned my perspective for the approaching site visit with the Galson Estate. While in Machrihanish, I attended the MACC Annual General Meeting (AGM) and conversed with a fellow attendee afterwards. The meeting itself was poorly attended, with under ten individuals, and the discussion was rigidly structured by a prewritten agenda. While residents are invited to attend AGMs through social media, public signs and door-to-door letters, it is unclear how to add topics to the agenda beforehand. Topics themselves were specific to the community owned land in question and remained driven by environmental facts over community opinion; for example, the discussion of plumbing complications and gardening contracts excluded many attendees from contributing due to a lack of knowledge or interest in the subject. MACC directors, who spent the duration of the meeting leading the discussion and taking minutes, appeared to dictate the topics discussed and thus presented the community owned land and its issues through a narrow perspective. Carrying the responsive scoping method into this observation space, I approached a fellow attendee of the meeting, non-director Thomas[4], and invited him to drink tea with me afterwards. In contrast to the AGM's rigid structure, I allowed Thomas to direct a casual conversation with myself; his disappointment with the AGM format became more apparent due to my lack of prompt. Without my conversational input, Thomas revealed a community-wide insight: that he, and others, find more opportunities to share their voice, and subsequently feel better represented, within

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[4] As a familiar neighbour, Thomas has been anonymised and his name has been changed for the purposes of the research.

their community-organised newspaper: the Campbeltown Courier (Fig. 20). As a resident within the small Scottish town of Forres, I support his statement: the Forres Gazette is a staple of community-wide narration, appearing on pub table tops and at the doors of most High Street shops, distinct from mainstream competitors.



Fig. 20. Campbeltown Courier (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 21. Forres Gazette at the Door of Tesco, Forres (Prosser, 2017)

Fig. 22. Forres Gazette at the Red Lion 'Beasite' Bar, Forres (Prosser, 2017)

The community newspaper, in these cases, is a facilitator of wide-scale conversation in small-scale societies across rural Scotland. The format's effectiveness over established engagement methods such as the AGM, reiterates the importance of the positioning and format of engagement methods (Section 2.1.4). The newspaper's democratic reach and inclusion of resident-specific stories, such as the café owner's creation of new jobs (Fig. 20), tuned my perspective towards the structures of communication within small societies.

## 4.2.2 Participant-Led Site Visit

During the fieldwork that followed this observation, I was accordingly aware of the platforms that facilitated democratic forms of community engagement. During the Galson Estate site visit, I diverted my attention towards the tools, platforms and places that supported social interaction.

Although the distance from Forres to the Galson Estate is only 160 miles, the eight-hour journey to reach my designation required one train, two buses, a ferry and a rented electric car. MacLean greeted me at the Galson Estate Trust, a small but modern building constructed for the nine members of staff who intermittently represent the Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn, Galson Estate community. A modest exhibition space within the building hosted 'Buntanas: The People of the Galson Estate' by a local photographer. In celebration of its tenth year of community ownership, this series of resident portraits was commissioned to capture "the contemporary face of our rural community, highlighting a cross-section of those living and working within the Galson Estate area" (Rennie, 2017). In addition to celebrating individual identity and voice within the community, the exhibition implied that residents had been recently and creatively engaged with the topic of their landownership: an indicator of inventive engagement methods at work.

Fig. 23. Travelling Across the Isle of Lewis (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 24. The Galson Estate Trust, Isle of Lewis (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 25. Buntanas Exhibition, The Galson Estate Trust (Prosser, 2017)

Following the responsive approach that is engrained within the scoping method, I asked Maclean to lead me through a 'day in the life' of her role as Commercial Development Officer; effectively shadowing her in her role. Just as Berger and Luckmann (1966) theorise, unique individuals within a social network view that network and engage with it through their own socially constructed realities. These realities can be understood by observing the behaviours, and thus interactions, between individuals and their perspectives (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). To ensure that my understanding of Maclean's perspective was genuine, I encouraged her to show me what she believed to represent the community's social network; her natural, undirected view of community land engagement. Admittedly, this method allows Maclean to be selective, and thus the site visit can only represent the perspective that she wishes to reveal.

As we toured the Estate, I observed Maclean's inspection of various locations and participated in her check-in conversations with residents along the way, introducing myself as a community land supporter: a common phrase within the land movement. Removing myself from the role of researcher/designer during these informal conversations, allowed me to study intercommunity interaction and Maclean's methods of engagement. Documenting these observations through photography, I paid close attention to the physicality of each moment of engagement: the locations, artefacts and tools that surrounded us and their effects on interaction (Appendix D).

# 5. Co-Interpreting Data

Knowledge cannot be constructed before first being interpreted. As Schwandt (1994) theorises, participants' voice and ownership is required within the researcher's interpretation of data collected. When analysing qualitative data, for reasons of validity, the researcher must also remain transparent in their interpretations. Due to the various personal perspectives engrained with data collected during the Galson Estate site visit, I designed and tested a method of co-interpretation to create opportunities for participants to involve themselves within the process of data interpretation.

In the first section of this chapter I detail the insights gathered from my interpretation of the Galson Estate site visit whilst using the MACC AGM observation (Section 4.2.1) as a reference point to position these within the wider context of the community land movement. Addressing the lack of participant voice within my interpretation, I then discuss consequent issues of validity.

A method of co-interpretation is crafted in response to this limitation, influenced by the format of the community newspapers discussed previously. A reflection of its testing within the case study is outlined in Section 5.2 and while the method's success is debatable, further insights are revealed from its limitations. The chapter concludes with an analysis of why the method of data co-interpretation does not succeed to engage participants. From here accessible public spaces, and their ability to enhance community engagement, are identified as environments for further testing.

## 5.1 Interpretation of the Site Visit

Within this section, the findings from the Galson Estate site visit are summarised. Interpreted by myself, as the designer/researcher, the data collected has been analysed through the lens of the social design practice. The units of data under analysis during this activity include the locations, artefacts and tools that facilitate engagement between Maclean and the diverse residents within the Estate.

## 5.1.1 Galson Estate Engagement Insights

Insights drawn from the site visit are demonstrated through two moments of community engagement during the site visit: a spontaneous conversation with a local birdwatcher, to give context to Maclean's position within the community; and a lunch at the Ness Historical Society, to summarise the community's most prevalent methods of engagement.

When we arrived at the tip of the Estate, which is the most north-western coastline of the Isle of Lewis, named Ness, Maclean conversed with a familiar bird watcher. He explained the migration behaviours of local birds and encouraged us all to birdwatch together for a short time. Maclean, who later told exposed her lack of knowledge in Isle of Lewis birdlife, was utilising the environment and activity as a shared point of interest from which to interact with the birdwatcher. By indulging his interests, Maclean had created an opportunity for the resident to discuss his specific needs and desires for the community.

Following our interaction with the birdwatcher, Maclean directed us to the nearby Loch Stiapabhat observatory. Built in 2012 by community volunteers in response to a growing number of birdwatchers, the observatory is now used to educate children, host school events and appeal to tourism. Maclean's method of engaging with residents through their personal interests, in the locations that facilitate such interests, allows her to manage community development that responds to their situationally-specific needs. By developing spaces for these interests to live, diversity is encouraged and others are invited to celebrate unique identities and shared commonalities. Maclean's attentiveness to individual residents defines her role within the community as someone who engages with and supports diverse perspectives, even when she does not share them.

Fig. 26. Lisa Maclean at the Ness Coastline, Galson Estate, Isle of Lewis (Prosser, 2017)



Fig 27. Loch Stiapabhat Observatory, Galson Estate, Isle of Lewis (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 28. Loch Stiapabhat Observatory Notice Board (Prosser, 2017)

The second observation, which enriches this insight, took place during our lunchbreak in the Ness Historical Society café. Established in 1977 long before the buyout, to promote local history and language, the Ness Historical Society is a community-led charity of volunteers and limited staff. Organisers have expanded the Society in response to the buyout and now operate a shop, café and museum. Their curation of extensive community archives has led to the publishing of a community-led book: 'The Going Down of the Sun,' an account of those from the area who served in World War One (Comunn Eachdraidh Nis, 2015).

The museum is a growing, dynamic collection of donated objects from residents; precious to them and rich with local cultural value. The café and shop buzzed with residents as they discussed recent news with Maclean: a child had recovered a red brick from the shoreline and after careful studying, the Society had discovered that it was a remnant of the Rubha Robhanais Lighthouse, lost to the violent waters during its build in the 1860s. This narrative of unlocked treasure became the topic of conversation during Maclean and I's lunch with the fellow residents[5]. In response to the conversation, Maclean guided the discussion towards the possible expansion of the Society's building, to make way for collected community items. Maclean had taken the informal conversation as an opportunity to conduct an unofficial consultation of the Historical Society's development. The dynamic and adaptable quality of the space, determined by the museum's display of changing donated objects, instilled a feeling that this environment was crafted for the community, by the community. The ensuing familiarity, of people and place, facilitated constructive but informal discussions; a form of engagement that was owned by the community of engagers.

Maclean utilises the spaces within her community that residents already naturally engage with to tune into their interests and issues. In doing so, she uses her familiarity with residents to guide conversations into constructive consultations. By maintaining an unimposing stance, she integrates with the community that she seeks to engage, allowing her to observe genuine ideas and concerns. Maclean's consideration of her use of language and even the clothing that represents her in these established, community spaces supports her familiar, non-intimidating role (Appendix D).

Beyond the behaviours of Maclean and other residents, units of data under analysis within these observations include the environments, tools and artefacts that support the facilitation of democratic engagement. Insights from the analysis of these observations can be contextualised as follows:
Locations that support informal engagement are community-orientated, community-led and public facing;
The tools that support them are products of their public environments that can be accessed and shared by all residents, such as refreshments and the staff who serve them;
The artefacts that stimulate interaction are representatives of commonalities between residents, such as the museum objects on display, locally made gift shop goods, and the observatory's notice board.

In direct comparison to the MACC AGM format (section 4.2.1), Maclean responds to the community's natural structures of engagement. She adapts herself to fit the engagement needs of the community instead of requesting that they adapt to engagement formats that she proposes. In place of set agendas and minute taking, she allows topics to arise

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[5] Images of the café and interaction with residents have been excluded with respect to the participants' request.

spontaneously and ensures that diverse individuals find opportunities to engage instinctively. In these instances, constructive community engagement becomes a daily activity, not an annual event. Within the Galson Estate, existing forms of engagement are amplified and constructively directed through the adoption of established community spaces and subsequent adaption of the infrastructure that supports them.



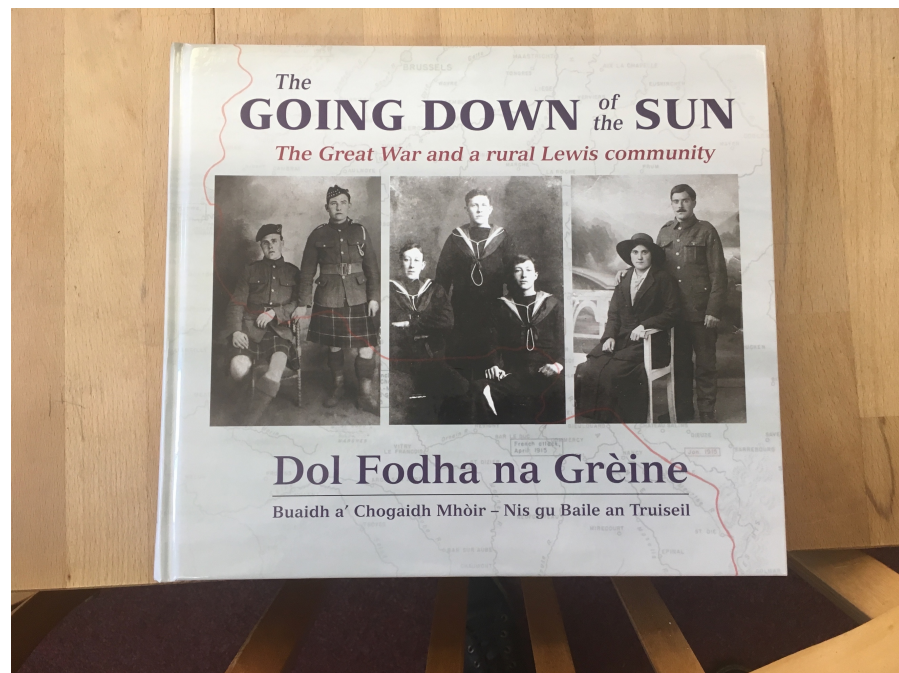Fig. 29. Rubha Robhanais Lighthouse, Galson Estate, Isle of Lewis (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 30. Comunn Eachdraidh Nis by the Ness Historical Society (Prosser, 2017)

Fig. 31. Ness Historical Society Archives, Galson Estate, Isle of Lewis (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 32. Community Designed Museum Space 1, Ness Heritage Society, Galson Estate, Isle of Lewis (Prosser, 2017)

Fig. 33. Community Designed Museum Space 2, Ness Heritage Society, Galson Estate, Isle of Lewis (Prosser, 2017)

## 5.1.2 Issues of Validity

The insights identified in the previous section are drawn from my interaction with residents of the Galson Estate and balanced by my observation of their community-specific engagements. While many residents influenced these insights, the interpretation of these engagements has been my own, and this raises an issue of validity.

Understanding knowledge as a social construct while considering the various contrasting perspectives of the residents involved in the engagements proposes that no two individuals' interpretation of an interaction are the same (section 3.1). I, as the designer/researcher, have a different experience and perspective of the research activities than that of the participants. Since this inquiry relies on interaction as an indicator of engagement, my interpretations remain limited by the lens through which I view them; in this case the lens of a social designer and researcher. In response, data collected during the site visit requires a situationally-specific method of interpretation; one that maintains transparency and creates opportunities for the sharing of multiple perspectives.

## 5.2 Co-Interpretation of the Site Visit

From the issues of validity raised by my interpretation of community engagements during the site visit, I use this section to detail the development of a co-interpretation method. To facilitate collaborative interpretation, I allow my perspective of the site visit to assume the form of a community newspaper, explored as a successful medium of communication within MACC and Forres (section 4.2.1). This section provides rationale for the creation of a community newspaper, named Community Kinetics, and recounts the testing of this newspaper as a methods of data co-interpretation with the Galson Estate case study. It concludes with an evaluation of the method and a declaration of its limitations and lack of success within the context.

### 5.2.1 Community Kinetics

As I sought to understand the engagement between residents in the Galson Estate by participating within their interactions, the data that I captured required collaborative interpretation. To address the accounts of other residents involved in the interactions, my findings and insights had to be shared and discussed.

Due to the personal experiences and perspectives engrained within the acquired data, attempts to co-interpret required a medium of communication that was far reaching and familiar (Section 3.2). Returning to the theories of social design that lead the inquiry, a method of co-interpretation should innovate from existing mediums of communication within the context of rural Scottish communities (section 2.1.2).

One such example of a wide-reaching and established format of communication is the community newspaper discussed in relation to my previous connections with MACC and residency in Forres (4.2.1). Influenced by the newspaper's use of common, interpretable language and familiar formatting, I began documenting my own fieldnotes in the same style: each research event, such as conferences or site visits, became a separate issue of the newspaper; each research activity within the events, such as talks or lunchtime engagements, became short articles, written in a journalistic style. Once complete, the Galson Estate site visit issue was sent to Maclean digitally along with instructions: to distribute the paper, review my interpretation of the visit, address any disagreements that she might have and contribute her own interpretation if possible. Space for one concluding article was left black and Maclean was encouraged to fill this with her own input, open to her interpretation. Expecting to revisit the Galson Estate before the completion of the research, I had intended for the newspaper to be circulated among the residents I had previously engaged with, to create an opportunity to discuss, develop and validate our shared interpretations.

However, I received no responses or criticisms of the newspaper and remain unsure as to who received it. Project limitations, such as a lack of time and resources, prevented me from conducting additional site visits. As a result, the testing of this method of co-interpretation remains inconclusive.

Fig. 34. Community Kinetics Newspaper, Issue 01 (Prosser, 2017)

## 5.2.2 Evaluating a Failed Method

Upon reflection, I have theorised that flaws existed within the co-interpretation method that resulted in a lack of responses. Firstly, passing the responsibility of dissemination to Maclean put distance between myself and potential findings. If the opportunity arose to iterate this method, I would utilise physical space within the community to distribute the Community Kinetics issues and be present and responsive to discussion. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to limitations but this alternative format is worth considering. If the co-interpretation method had effectively reacted to insights from the site visit, it would have adopted an established public space from which to engage residents; perhaps a newsagent. Discussion should have remained spontaneous, informal and conversational. Instead, the digital newspaper format required reading time and contribution through retrospective textual documentation.

Likened to the MACC AGM format (section 4.2.1), this method demanded involvement from participants that was unfamiliar and out-with their daily pursuits. Activities such as lunching at the Ness Historical Society or reading a newspaper can be categorised as spontaneous, public moments of engagement, however contributing to that newspaper through the writing of an article is far removed. Expecting participants' input in this medium is undemocratic due to the resources and skills they would require to contribute. This understanding is validated by the MACC AGM observation discussed earlier: where regimented forms of engagement resulted in low attendance and participant frustration.

Instead, future methods of engagement should remain informal, conversational, accessible and spontaneous. As demonstrated by the Galson Estate, these qualities emerge from engagement that occurs in established community spaces through a responsive approach.

# 6. Testing A Social Design Intervention

Insights from site visit, along with the limitations of the co-interpretation method, reflected a need for this inquiry to further question community engagement, and social design's place within in it, through a process of testing.

The Galson Estate's utilisation of established, public community spaces to facilitate spontaneous moments of engagement can be identified as the primary insight from the fieldwork thus far. Categorised as 'third spaces,' these public environments and the services that exist within them become the medium of communication in these instances. Social design project examples discussed in Section 2.1.2, such as the Loughborough Junction Wishing Wall, have already eluded to this insights. Their use of public and familiar environments has already proven to increase accessibility to engagement. However this has only been demonstrated within context that are simplified and when impact is has not been measured or sustained.

To validate the use of third spaces to enhance and sustain engagement, and to discover whether social design methods can better utilise them within contexts that are socially complex, an intervention was designed and tested. The design intervention integrated the use of third spaces and the complexity of community land discussions with the principles of social design.

Due to limitations within the research, testing could not be conducted within the Galson Estate case study. This resulted in a controlled, localised experiment, carried out during the September progression exhibition of this research. Adapting to the environment of an exhibition, the design intervention adopted the format of common 'third space' the bar and was titled 'The Public House' with reference to public engagement and the traditional title for pubs. Photos of The Public House construction have been included on the following page to provide context before introducing testing in the second section.

Clarity is given to the term 'third spaces' within the first section of this chapter. I then define the limitations of conducting testing without access to the original context and detail the boundaries and variables of the test. The second section of the chapter provides an account of the social design intervention, a summary of the findings using thematic analysis and an evaluation of the method.

Fig. 35. The Public House Construction 1 (Sheppard, 2017)



Fig. 36. The Public House Construction 2 (Sheppard, 2017)



Fig. 37. The Public House Construction 3 (Sheppard, 2017)

## 6.1 Space as a Medium of Communication

Before discussing the social design intervention, The Public House, in Section 6.2, I use this section to clarify the primary insight drawn from fieldwork: the use of space as a medium of communication. The spaces in question are defined as third spaces and rationale is given for this classification. Using the definition of third spaces, I then state the limitations of testing The Public House, and discuss the experiment's variables and parameters.

## 6.1.1 Third Spaces

During the Galson Estate site visit, Commercial Development Officer Lisa Maclean, ensured that residents within her community engaged with the development of their land democratically. In place of the structured AGM format of community consultation (section 4.2.1) Maclean responded to existing engagement between residents in the locations that naturally facilitated them: public, established community spots, such as the Ness Historical Society's café, shop and museum (5.1.1). By positioning herself within the locations that spontaneously facilitate resident interaction, accessibility to engagement and responsiveness to current issues is maintained. As a result, residents of the Galson Estate demonstrate their voice and a sense of shared ownership.

From this observation, two variables appeared to control the situation: Maclean's responsive approach to issues that arise from spontaneous conversation, supported by her integrated and unassuming position; and the familiar, public environment that surrounded the engagement, the café that already acted as an unofficial community hub. Testing a social design method within these conditions would therefore determine whether the practice of social design can make discoveries about community engagement from the context of Scotland's community land movement.

However, before testing a social design intervention within these variables, further definition is required. Returning to the literature, established public spaces that often act as hubs within their communities, can be defined as sociocultural 'third spaces' (Oldenburgh, 1989). Various theories exist about third spaces and the one that defines their accessibility is worth considering: third spaces, separate from home (first space), and work (second space), are the public places in society where the oppressed and oppressors interact without hierarchy (Bhabha, 1994). Within the context of landowning rural communities, the oppressed and oppressors can be interpreted as follows: those who have more opportunity to share their voice within decision making, such as the MACC directors or Commercial Development Manager, Lisa Maclean; and those who have less opportunity to share their voice, such as the residents they interact with.

From here onwards, the term third space is used to define the environment being tested within the social design intervention. The requirement of any third space is that it must sustain public accessibility and inherently facilitate community engagement, free from hierarchy.

## 6.1.2 Limitations of the Test

For maximum validity, the testing of social design methods within third spaces should follow the context of the fieldwork and adopt the Ness Historical Society café as its environment (section 5.1.1). However, due to project limitations, I was unable to revisit the Isle of Lewis and a local alternative was used in its place.

During this phase of the research, I was preparing for a progression submission on the 13th of September 2017 at the Glasgow School of Art campus in Forres. The progression under examination was my transition from Master of Research into year two of Doctoral study. Taking the form of a viva presentation and exhibition, the submission provided me with a space to demonstrate the practice within this practice-led inquiry and test the use of third spaces alongside social design methods. As such, my exhibition took the format of a social design intervention, replacing Galson Estate residents with audience members from Forres and the topic of shared landownership with shared experiences of community and land. To mimic the settings of the Ness Historical Society, the intervention was designed to encouraged audience engagement, not only with the research topic, but also with each other. By embracing the audience's personal and shared connections with community and land, discussions could mimic the type of conversations that would arise within landowning communities.

The third space chosen to host the activity was constructed within the progression exhibition and thus it was necessary for the space to exist normally within an exhibition environment; something that audience members would expect to interact with. One such recognisable space that exists within the majority of Glasgow School of Art exhibitions is a bar, supplying the audience with refreshments throughout the event. In line with the third space requirements, public bars across rural Scotland regularly act as unofficial community hubs where various forms of non-hierarchical interaction spontaneously occur. As an experienced pub engager within Forres, as demonstrated by observations discussed in section 4.2.1, I assert that this is true for the surrounding area where most audience members would reside. While many members of the audience were visiting the campus for the first time, and thus felt no ownership of the land, the creation of a familiar third space within it encouraged spontaneous forms of engagement and counteracted this unfamiliarity. To ensure that The Public House maintained a connection with the community of Forres, I recruited a local barman, Euan Girvan, from Forres pub, the Red Lion, to co-host. Since many residents are well acquainted with Girvan, his presence enhanced the sense of familiarity that encouraged inter-audience engagement.

To reconstruct the engagement conditions observed during the Galson Estate site visit, the Ness Historical Society café was replaced with the familiar bar format and refreshments were offered in place of soup and tea. However, one such condition of the Galson Estate could not be reconstructed: the Forres area that surrounded the exhibition was not an example community landownership. Thus, community members that attended the exhibition were not united by the shared ownership of land and remained partially unaware of the wider community land context. Since audience members could not be treated as a unified community with shared land responsibilities, alternative engagement topics were considered, raising a further question: If the audience is being assumed as a community then what, if anything, unites them as one? What commonalities do they have?

In response, each audience member had been invited to the show by someone exhibiting work (five in total) and were thus united in their expectation of viewing practice-led

research, under the exhibition's title of 'Between Practice, Place and People.' Since my practice of social design was being tested through The Public House intervention, I used the remainder of the title to engage the audience: 'Between Place and People.' Influenced by the recurring role of people and places within the fieldwork, the question that engagers were promoted with became: **'where do you feel most connected to people and place?'**

## 6.2 Exploration of the Third Space: The Public House

> *"In the pub once a man* [or woman] *has bought, or been bought, his glass of beer he has enters an environment in which he is a participator rather than a spectator."* (Mass Observation, 1943)

From observations taken during the Galson Estate site visit (Section 4.2.2), residents have demonstrated that trusted, community spaces, such as the Ness Historical Society, facilitate spontaneous discussions about shared issues, needs and ideas. This atmosphere of familiarity and social informality was therefore what I sought to recreate within The Public House intervention.

Development Officer, Maclean, who had subtly tuned in and directed conversations with Galson Estate residents into constructive community consultation, inspired me to take on the role of facilitator within the intervention. As the social designer, implementing the theories of my practice (Section 2.1), I was able to test Maclean's use of third spaces to facilitate informal community engagement within a social design method.

Existing in the space between community consultation, an accessible third space (the pub) and a designed social situation, The Public House sought to engage audience members with their shared experiences of community and land. Familiar artefacts from pub environments, such as glasses, drinks, and even bartenders were designed within The Public House to subtly influence the conversations towards community development, as Maclean had demonstrated. Adapting existing infrastructures and artefacts in this way replaces the over-simplified and rigid tools and workshops that have been critiqued within the leading social design literature.

While these designed artefacts were also intended to contribute towards the process of data capture, the most valuable insights came from intangible interactions: spontaneous topics of conversations between audience members, the quality of their engagements and the atmosphere of the environment. The act of participating within Public House conversations was an invitation extended to anyone who entered the space and was served by the pub (Mass Observation, 1943). As such, The Public House attempted to address the limitations of social design practices by taking influence from the community-led methods of engagement demonstrated by the community land movement.

A recount of The Public House within this section brings animation to the testing boundaries previously discussed. Using photography and description, I provide a narrative of The Public House during testing and a thematic analysis of the data collected by the designed artefacts. Concluding with my reflection, I then evaluate the method as a social design intervention that adopts the use of third spaces to enhance community engagement.

## 6.2.1 Testing Social Design Methods

Along with four other postgraduate research students, I presented The Public House as a demonstration of a work in progress during the evening of the 13th of September 2017. The event was attended by over forty audience members, the majority of which resided in the surrounding Forres area, including friends and family of the exhibiting students. My instalment, The Public House intervention, provided a familiar public point amidst the abstract topic of practice-led design research.

Using branded t-shirts to disguise ourselves as Public House bar staff, myself and Girvan, used the interaction of serving drinks to facilitate conversation in relation to the question 'where do you feel most connected to people and place.' Just as the Galson Estate had demonstrated, the use of third spaces and their public service infrastructures provided opportunities for spontaneous and positive engagement between strangers.

On approaching the bar, audience members were presented with three beverage options, each representing a principal theme from the research: voice, community and ownership. Just as the bar and its service were integrated within a social design method, the research themes were integrated with the drinks on offer: 'Find Your Voice Vino,' 'Community Conscious Craft Beers,' and 'Joint Ownership Juice.' As a result, someone ordering a beer would be encouraged to contemplate their connection to people and place alongside experiences of feeling connected to a community. Someone drinking wine would discuss moments when their voice was heard by a wider group of individuals. To facilitate initial conversation surrounding the themes, and collect data in the process, each refreshment was handed out with a sticker that correlated to its theme. Stickers asked participants to recall a moment under the chosen theme using a prompt, such as "a time when you felt ownership over a shared place…" The stickers were then geographically plotted on a map of Scotland.

Therefore, the data collected represented individuals' memories of engagement between place and people, categorised by the three research themes. Once a moment had been recalled, audience members continued to carry their drinks, each marked with a reference to the theme of that moment. This was intended to spark further conversation throughout the evening; an example being "tonight I was asked about taking ownership over a shared place." During the three-hour event, Girvan and I tended to a constant stream of engagers. While this pace prevented us from mediating the map of stickered moments, we balanced this with conversation whilst serving drinks and introducing participants to the task. We received positive feedback from the audience during the event, especially in relation to the thematic drink options, and they appeared to find the task engaging, amusing and straightforward.

Fig. 38. The Public House (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 39. Thematic Conversation Prompts, The Public House (Prosser, 2017

Fig. 40. Delivering a Beverage and Sticker, The Public House (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 41. Moments Mapped on Scotland, The Public House (Prosser, 2017)

Fig. 42. Geographic Mapping Exercise, The Public House (Prosser, 2017)

Fig. 43. Opening of the Progression Exhibition 1, Glasgow School of Art, Forres (Bebbington, 2017)



Fig. 44. Opening of the Progression Exhibition 2, Glasgow School of Art, Forres (Bebbington, 2017)

Fig. 45. Participant Filling out a Public House Sticker, The Public House, Glasgow School of Art, Forres (Bebbington, 2017)



Fig. 46. Fellow Postgraduate Research Students, The Public House, Glasgow School of Art, Forres (Bebbington, 2017)

## 6.2.2 The Findings

The Public House was designed to test the use of third spaces within social design methods, to discover if the use of such spaces enhances community engagement. Thirty-nine stickers were recorded on the map. In comparison to the forty-some audience members this would reveal an estimated engagement rate of 80%.[6] Since the stickers do not represent the informal conversations that balanced the documentation, I would interpret the realistic engagement rate to be higher than estimated. From this analysis, and the responses from audience members during the event and afterwards (Fig. 47), I conclude that the social design intervention succeeded to create democratic engagement. Due to the audience's inclination to engage with the familiar, I would hypothesis that the rate and quality of engagement would have been significantly lower had the activity not adopted the bar format. I therefore argue that the practice of social design can expect an increase in the quantity and quality of engagement when third spaces are adopted.
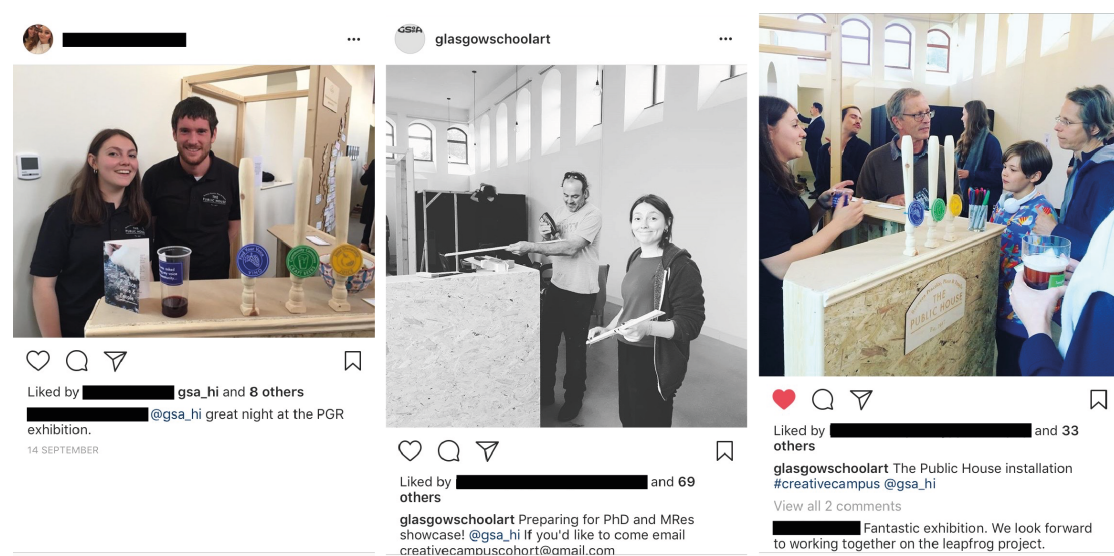


Fig. 47. Instagram Posts from the Public House Testing (The Glasgow School of Art, 2017)

Following this discovery, which became apparent during the exhibition, a thematic analysis of the stickered moments was conducted to evaluate the appropriateness of the data recorded. This activity intended to determine whether The Public House engagement generated constructive outputs that might be useful to landowning communities; effectively asking if the method could contribute towards community consultation.

By implementing Boyatzis' theory of thematic analysis (1998) I categorised the audience's stickered moments of engagement from the Scotland map using two frameworks. The first was intended to discover the forms of engagement that commonly belonged to specific environments using a grid with two axes: shared versus individual activity (measuring the form of the engagement); and shared versus individual benefit (questioning the motivation behind, and effect of, the engagement). Similar forms of engagement were then categorised; for example, a voice that was heard "at the committee for planning a local gala

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[6] Allowances have been made for the discrepancy of individuals who may have contributed more than once.

day" was placed in a category with others who engaged through their positions on community boards. A less tangible example includes a person who felt connected to a wider community "when (they) know the names of the people in (their) local cafes;" this was categorised within the 'spontaneous public moments of camaraderie' category. The most common answer: sharing voice within a community "when campaigning for Scottish independence" was categorised alongside others who campaigned for shared issues. The second thematic framework mapped the categorised moments on a scale of public to private places, to investigate the environments that facilitated specific forms of engagement (see Appendix E for a full documentation).

The results can be summarised as follows:
Ownership is primarily an individual sensation, even when this ownership is of a shared space. Ownership is a shared activity with shared benefit when collaboration between groups of individuals results in creative outputs, for example "being part of a project between GSA and Newbold Trust[7]." Individuals who feel part of a community primarily do so when activities are shared or have shared benefit amongst the community. These moments are defined by positive, everyday interactions with those who share locality, but not necessarily camaraderie. While it is not identifiable from these findings, it does raise the questions: are interactions with local strangers more rewarding than those with friends; are these engagements responsible for community cohesion? If so, then this might explain why third spaces provide a platform for democratic community engagement; because they host the widest diversity of residents, from 'oppressors' to the 'oppressed' (Bhabha, 1994).

From the analysis of environments in relation to the forms of engagement, open public spaces, such as parks or high streets, facilitate significantly more forms of engagement than closed public spaces, such as community boards or charities. Surprisingly, few responses appeared to be connected to third spaces, although cafes and airports were mentioned. This might highlight a lack of directed or constructive engagement within these spaces.

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[7] The Newbold Trust is a community-led charity within Forres that maintains a donated estate that facilitates resident wellbeing, including activities such as organic gardening, yoga and meditation.

Fig. 48. Framework 1, Measuring Forms of Engagement (Prosser, 2017)



Fig. 49. Framework 2, Analysing Environments (Prosser, 2017)

### 6.2.3 Evaluation of the Method

From the engagement outcomes discussed in the previous section, it can be argued that The Public House, as a social design intervention, was enhanced through the adoption of a third space. Whether is it a method that can live beyond the progression exhibition it was tested within, is debatable.

The involvement of local community member and barman, Girvan, within the facilitation of The Public House might yet test the method's transferability beyond my input as the designer. If Girvan adapted the method for use within his pub, The Red Lion in Forres, then I could evaluate whether the involvement of a community member increases transferability and maintains context-specificity. While findings from The Public House were insightful and arguably constructive towards community development, they were only made available through the process of thematic analysis, conducted by a designer/researcher. This suggests that while the adoption of third spaces will increase engagement with the topic of land development in rural communities, implementing social design methods within these spaces might produce results that are only decipherable by the designer. Thus, without further testing, it is unclear how transferability would be achieved without the input of the social designer. However, the adoption of third spaces as a format for engagement is worth considering within the social design community.

An additional insight from the involvement of Girvan within The Public House is valuable for social designers who might consider the method: the familiarity that encouraged engagement during the intervention was not an exclusive result of the third space used, but also of the people who facilitated it. Both Girvan and I were familiar to residents from the Forres community and this allowed us to maintain our bar staff appearance while acting as facilitators instead of research investigators. Girvan being recognised as a local barman, ensured that my role as researcher did not affect the behaviours of the audience. Had I conducted this method within the Galson Estate however, I would not have had sufficient knowledge of the area or community to respond appropriately to inter-audience conversation. My lack of knowledge would constrain me to the position of investigator, interrupting the flow of conversation to question unfamiliar contexts. While this does limit the validity of the test, suggesting that I could not re-appropriate it within an unfamiliar community and expect the same results, perhaps is highlights a discovery. Might it be that this method only leads to increased, informal engagement when facilitated by someone who is embedded within that community? If so, a reiteration of the social design intervention within the Galson Estate would expect similar results if Maclean collaborated with the facilitation. The importance of collaboration between the designer and an integrated community member should therefore be considered upon any further testing.

# 7. Findings, Limitations and Future Research

Before providing a conclusion to the inquiry, I the reader should be reminded that this body of work has been conducted with the intention to progress into doctoral study. This means that while I have prepared to package the research as a one year Master of Research submission, the questions that have been asked throughout have been conducted with a further two years of investigation in mind. As such, the summary of findings proposes more questions than it does answers and sets the basis for further research. It makes suggestions towards an original contribution to knowledge, lacks the rigour that a further two years of inquiry would provide, and compensates for this by proposing conditions of future research.

While reflecting upon the journey of this inquiry, it is important to reconsider the shift in emphases that has occurred. Initially, the study of the community land movement led the exploration, with the intention to allow social design methods to contribute towards the context. As limitations within social design literature and insights from community landownership were revealed, the practice of social design instead began to learn from the context. The contribution is therefore towards the practice of social design, from the context of community landownership.

As such, the research question that will be answered within this chapter is as follows:
**what can social design methods discover about community engagement from their application within Scotland's community land movement?** The findings, limitations and conditions for future research discussed within this chapter are intended to provide insights for practitioners and designers within, or adjacent to, the field of social design.

## 7.1 Defining the Practice

Social design, as a contemporary practice that offers promise of wide scale social transformation and sustainability, remained undefined before this inquiry. Research within the area repeats similar processes and formats, such as toolkits and workshops, and applies them within contexts that lack the complexity necessary to advance this emerging field of design (Section 2.1). Defining the social design practice that lead this inquiry was the first step towards creating a contribution to that field. This understanding of the practice is primarily established through the categorisation of principles that appear within emerging socially focussed theorists and projects within the broader field of design. By comparing Design for Social Innovation (Austin, 2015; Manzini, 2015; Penty, 2015; Poggiali and Tijus, 2015), Design for Sustainability (Cipolla, 2009; Thackara, 2015) and Speculative Design (Dunne and Raby, 2013; Strange Telemetry, 2015), I am able to define social design methods: **as those that exhibit a predominant social, cultural or ethical directive and are driven by a desire for sustainable, social change.**

Since an analysis of only three emerging theories, detailed above, contributed to the definition of the practice, it can be described as rudimentary. However, the techniques that I used to construct the definition can continue to contribute towards the classification of social design: identifying emerging design disciplines, deciphering principles from their methods and analysing these in relation to their practical application within projects.

Furthermore, only one typical example is used to represent each practice, which excludes examples that might be atypical, and potentially boundary-pushing. These limitations were embraced due to the limitations of the research and its focus on the practical over theoretical impact of the practice. To this end, providing a baseline definition of the practice was all that was necessary to continue with the inquiry. As new, socially focussed theories and disciplines emerge, the techniques I have demonstrated can be used to develop this definition of social design. A first attempt at creating a framework to continue defining this practice can be viewed within Appendix B.

## 7.2 Responsiveness within the Methods

Embracing this new, unestablished definition of social design and allowing it to determine the practice that led the inquiry carried a level of uncertainty. Instead of attempting to alleviate uncertainty, it was embraced within the methodology of the research, which remained spontaneous and responsive to the context. Transparency was maintained within the methods by allowing participants to lead casual conversations instead of the use of researcher-led, formal interviews. This ensured that only the individuals and situations that would be most responsive to the principles of social design were involved.

The responsive method of sampling case studies (Section 4.1) is a contribution towards social design practitioners and researchers who regularly attempt to test their practices with participants who find its concepts to be abstract. This scoping and sampling method ensured that only those open to the concepts of social design became participants. Responsiveness during the Galson Estate site visit ensured that data was collected in a manner that adhered to the requirements of the social constructivist, interpretive theoretical perspective. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) request, the diverse individual perspectives of participants were considered by observing their behaviours and interaction without interference. Accordingly, the method of scoping remained responsive to the

individuals and contexts involved; its adaptable, situationally-specify qualities met the requirements of the interpretivist perspective.

Building upon the interpretivist theories of Habermas (1967), responsiveness was furthermore adopted during the interpretation of data within the case study. To embrace Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of participants' multiple, socially constructed realities, I conducted a co-interpretation of the data that responded to the prevalent use of community newspapers in rural Scotland. By adopting the newspaper format, I attempted to craft a method that would maintain participant voice and ownership in the interpretation of data. Due to the requirements that this placed on participants, who were asked to read my interpretations of our engagements and contribute towards them by writing short articles, the method received no responses. While the method failed to achieve its goal, the lack of responses provided valuable insights in relation to the format and positioning of engagement methods. The lack of data co-interpretation therefore creates a gap within the inquiry which can only be acquitted by returning to the interpretivist theories of Schwandt (1994), who embraces the research's sole interpretation as the end method of communicating participant experiences.

Responsiveness, engrained within the methodology, allowed insights to influence the direction of the research as they arose. During the scoping phase, conducted at the Community Land Conference 2017 and Galson Estate site visit (Section 4.1 and Section 4.2), the research direction responded to qualities that were discovered about the context that could contribute towards gaps within the practice of social design. Innovative approaches towards community-led engagement and the use of third spaces as facilitators of engagement were identified as attributes that the practice lacked. During this point in the research, responsiveness allowed the research question to mature from this discovery and the contribution to be directed towards social design theory and practitioners.

## 7.3 The Use of Third Spaces

The primary discovery, observed during the Galson Estate site visit, is the use of space as a medium of communication during moments of engagement. The spaces observed were defined as third spaces (Oldenburgh, 1989): those that maintain public accessibility, act as unofficial community hubs and facilitate moments of spontaneous, non-hierarchical interaction (Section 6.2.1). During the final stage of this research, the use of a third space within a social design method was tested through the intervention of The Public House. Tested during the progression exhibition of this degree, the intervention asked if the integration of third spaces within social design methods would enhance democratic community engagement.

By adopting the third space form of a bar and recruiting an established community barman to co-host, the intervention successfully validated the use of a third space to enhance the rate of engagement and richness of interaction within social design methods. Due to participants' instinctive desire to engage with familiar environments and services, third spaces are now understood to facilitate democratic, informal engagement by evoking a sense of belonging within a community (section 6.2.2).

Returning to the literature, social design theory states that innovation is a recombination of existing assets, and that design for social innovation is concerned with new ways of thinking and doing, over new products and solutions (Austin, 2015; Manzini, 2015). New ways of thinking and doing are established from community engagement, and within the context of this inquiry, engagement appears to be best supported through open, reactive third spaces and a responsive research approach. By testing this theory through the The Public House, I conclude that social design methods can enhance the engagement that they rely on by not only embracing third spaces as environments, but by integrating them into the design of tools and techniques. This is demonstrated within section 6.2.1 through the use of refreshments as thematic conversation prompts. What The Public House demonstrates for social designers, is the observation that social design methods should responsively adapt to, and integrate with, the established infrastructures within the communities they seek to engage.

However, the social design intervention crafted to test this discovery, was limited by the context to which it was tested. Unable to return to the Galson Estate case study for testing, I reconstructed its conditions within a controlled environment: the progression exhibition within the Glasgow School of Art Campus in Forres. Testing the third space theory out-with the context of community landownership jeopardised its validity and, as a result, further testing is required to account for this

Upon reflection, I now realise an assumption that was made when defining the third spaces under analysis: that third spaces must be physical spaces. As this inquiry continues, further research would be conducted into the nature of third spaces, asking the question: might third spaces be digital or virtual? While social media platforms demonstrate the same principles of third spaces, they do lack some of the criteria that was used to define them in Section 6.1.1. For example, the anonymity that social media provides its participants facilitates non-hierarchical engagement, but general accessibility is limited to those with digital capabilities. Without further study, it is hard to determine what this consideration might entail. However, blurring the lines between digital and physical spaces proposes an interesting discussion.

## 7.4 Limitations of the Context

As stated within the previous section, a lack of accessibility to the context resulted in research limitations. The time and financial resources required to reach remote rural communities prevented rigour within the testing. Ultimately, this meant that findings were tested by implementing a social design intervention within the non-landowning context of the Glasgow School of Art campus in Forres. Since the case study's conditions for engagement were replicable within the campus context, it is unclear how a change in context affected the test. It is possible that my integrated position within the Forres community might have enabled the success of The Public House design intervention (section 6.2.3). Thus, further testing is required to determine whether the contextual limitations have affected the findings.

When social design methods can be adapted and transferred between contexts by the communities who engage with them, the sustainability of that method can be measured. This is discussed with reference to the theory of Design for Sustainability in Section 2.1.3. Therefore, by embracing the contextual limitations of the inquiry, I might further test the sustainability of using third spaces within social design methods, by retesting The Public

House beyond the constraints of community landownership. The shift in scope that this research underwent, from a community land focus to a contribution towards social design methods, further highlights an opportunity for further testing. Since the community land context was chosen to represent the complexities that are lacking in current social design research, the use of third spaces should be tested within various contexts that exhibit similar social complexities. Potential contexts for further testing should therefore also represent situations that require small-scale community action to impact wide-scale social change; such as natural resource management, political activism and social injustice.

## 7.5 Areas of Future Research

Due to the indented methodological contribution of this research, a strong theoretical underpinning was required. My lack of knowledge in this area, and enthusiasm to explore new theory, resulted in significant time spent reviewing and analysing literature. This theoretical focus prevented me for conducting ample fieldwork and testing to support the practical side of the research. In hindsight, I believe the practical outputs that emerged from the practice, such as The Public Bar testing, to be where the true value and impact of the inquiry lies. Knowing this now, I believe further doctoral studies would provide me with the resources to refine and rigorously test this practical component.

In the meantime, while I prepare for doctoral study I will attempt to experiment with the practical components of social design by volunteering with local community development groups, one example being the Govanhill Baths in Glasgow.[8] I believe that by relocating the research to an urban context, I will be able to diversify the scope and reduce limitation when conducting fieldwork. Embracing the contrasting definitions of community from urban and rural contexts will also develop the argument and enhance the transferability of the social design methods being tested.

Thus, the integration of established community third spaces to enhance engagement within social design methods is still the hypothesis to be tested. What remains to be interrogated is the definition of third spaces in relation to social design methods: their digital capabilities and existence within urban, as well as rural, contexts. To discover if the integration of third spaces within social design methods is truly the variable affecting engagement, the methods themselves must be retested within various environments, including non-third spaces. Alternative contexts, separate from community landownership, will also be considered. As I do, I will refine my social design lens by searching for alternative community examples who approach engagement in diverse and unusual ways.

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[8] First steps have already been taken to integrate my practice with the Govanhill Baths and I have become a shareholder of the community development initiative.

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