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Exploring participatory learning beyond the Institution

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Engaged practices of participatory design and socially-constructed models of learning recognise that understanding alternative perspectives can elicit deeper insights and contribute to a rich culture of openness and exchange for those involved. Participatory design attempts to empower passive participants to become active contributors in addressing societal challenges. Academia similarly values active contribution, recognising that engaging beyond the walls of the institution can provide students with real-world experiences. However, while participatory design draws upon the values of democratic engagement, ethics and empowerment, the educational perspective is still situated within Western, neoliberal ideologies, framed around enhancing career prospects and increasing earning potential. Design education exists at the intersection of both these paradigms. Through the engagement of external voices, design education can encourage creativity, promote criticality and challenge current thinking in provocative and subversive ways. The engagement of external stakeholders in such endeavour has the potential to support learning in a new way. This paper attempts to reposition participatory learning away from an institutional-centric model towards one that democratises and decolonises value for all involved. Through the development of a values model, the paper examines how participatory learning might enable the transformation of knowing that extends beyond the institution.

Design; external engagement; learning; values.

1. Setting the Scene

This paper presents research undertaken in the Highlands of Scotland but written up for publication on the other side of the globe, in New South Wales, Australia. The findings, although embedded in the socio-cultural knowing of people in place, are also diffused across the human experience. To this end, the application of insights is relevant in Scotland, Australia and in any place where academia attempts to



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engage externally. However, as part of a discussion that contributes to pluralistic and decolonised futures, I must first recognise the role of place and its influence in this work.

I first acknowledge the valued contributions of participants based in Scotland. Scotland has a rich heritage complete with significant cultural and political conflict, from the 18th-century displacement of indigenous communities in the Highland Clearances to the failed referendum attempt to secure Scotland's independence from the United Kingdom in 2014. Without the motivation of participants to engage, this research would not have been possible

I also acknowledge the Dharawal speaking people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which I currently stand, live and work. As the place in which I reflected on the findings, and formed this knowledge into a piece of writing, I pay my respects to the Elders past, present and future, and value their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. I also recognise Scotland's deep cultural links with Australia, the role Scotland played in British colonialism, and my position as part of this history. This awareness has both influenced and informed the frame from which I write.

My motivation is curiosity; I am simultaneously an educator and a learner. There is so much of the world to consider, to explore and to learn. As first in the family to attend university, and first, to achieve a doctorate, I continuously negotiate tensions across achievement, privilege, entitlement, and reward. From an educational perspective, I have taught design in art classes for babies, in primary and secondary schools, in the community, industry and higher education across both undergraduate and postgraduate. Across these contexts, I have experienced autonomy both as a designer and as an educator, and each interaction has shaped my perspective and position.

This research was also, to an extent, endogenous (Trowler, 2011), I was an academic-based within the institutional context that I was researching. As such, the research was designed and delivered within the traditional colonial structures of an academic institution. While this approach supported the ethnographic and phenomenological inquiry desired, it also placed the work at risk of bias; participants may have a pre-formed expectation of my preferences and perceptions of institutional power. However, this did not mean the research activity was not a worthwhile endeavour. Instead, this is acknowledged from the onset and attempts made to mitigate risk and negative impact.

2. Introduction

Value systems underpin engaged practices of participatory design and socially-constructed models of learning. Both recognise that understanding alternative perspectives can elicit deeper insights and can contribute to a rich culture of openness and exchange for those involved. From the participatory design perspective, there is a shift away from the traditional one-way engagement of stakeholders in which the designer or institution is in a position of total power. Instead, the approach favours an embodied and reciprocal involvement, where participants are responsible for guiding and shaping their direction of travel. Participatory design attempts to empower passive stakeholders to become active contributors in addressing the challenges at hand.

An increasing focus on design as a socially-engaged practice that can address broader local, national and global challenges has shaped this development. Through the engagement of external voices, design education can encourage creativity, promote criticality and importantly challenge current thinking in provocative, decolonised and subversive ways. The exponential growth of design research has generated a body of educational offerings that aim to enable and equip designers to work in new

creative and collaborative ways, extending the reach of design across disciplinary boundaries and delivering impact in new contexts.

Within academia, active participation is understood as an essential enabler of learning and draws on a socially-constructed perspective with an emphasis on interaction and collaboration. Bingham and Connor (2010) define this as social learning, an approach that embodies a sense of community. Articulating the student body as a community is well established in this context, with team-based activities working to foster opportunities for social learning amongst students.

However, forms of community can extend beyond students. The engagement of external stakeholders in higher education is often positioned as an approach that provides students with valuable interactions and real-world experiences, supporting and extending the pedagogical learning offered within the institution. What is understood as value within this kind of engagement is often limited to and bound by the existing structure of the institution, for example in enhancing career prospects and increasing earning potential and as such, intended impacts often fail to be realised (Kowch, 2018). Considering decolonised research, Patel (2014) further questions effectiveness of the institution in its current cultural form, asking how the academy can embrace “any goal that isn’t about social reproduction and re-inscribing preferred knowledge” (p. 5).

Participatory design draws upon the values of democratic engagement, ethics and empowerment (Tulloch et al., 2019; Kelly, 2019; Iversen et al., 2012). However, the educational perspective is juxtaposed, situated predominantly within Western, neoliberal ideologies and framed around the ownership of knowledge as an intellectual and material asset. Design education exists at the intersection of both these paradigms, delivered within the institutional paradigm of institutional thinking but taking the form of a critically engaged practice that recognises the collective responsibility to address challenges of the future (Beghetto, 2016).

Considering possible pluralistic futures at the intersection of external engagement and design education, this paper attempts to reposition participatory learning away from an institution-centric model towards one that democratises and decolonises value for all involved. Drawing on data from qualitative research that engaged external stakeholders involved student design projects, this paper presents four key themes and an emergent values model. This model, as a frame for critically engaged practice, can support and contribute to a more inclusive, democratic distribution of learning. In proposing the model, the paper considers how participatory learning might enable the transformation of knowing that extends beyond the institution, challenging and extending the margins of mainstream discourse to consider pluralistic futures.

3. Participatory Learning in Design

Participatory design as an approach seeks to acknowledge, understand and respond to the pluralistic lived experiences that shape our world (Sanders, 2002). My participatory design practise is socially engaged, emancipatory and seeks to utilise design democratically. It has evolved in response to experiences across multiple diverse contexts, within and beyond the discipline of design, including policy, business, health and community engagement.

Within design education, the qualities of participatory design are inherently built within and enabled by the studio model. The studio is a model of teaching and learning that embodies creative exploration, a space that is both experimental and experiential (Crowther, 2013; Salama, 2007; Ward, 1990). Studio

learning shifts away from a teacher-centric model where students are traditionally passive receivers of knowledge. Instead, students have the autonomy to explore, to interpret, to critically reflect and importantly, to challenge current thinking in a way that enables them to make sense of their own experiences in the world.

A studio is also a place of practice, where knowledge can be explored and tested through participatory methods. Press (2013) reaffirms the importance of experiential learning in design, disputing the teaching of traditional forms of knowledge over practice: “there is no point in teaching students knowledge because knowledge ages fast. Instead, it is about giving them the tools to gain and adapt knowledge” (p.203). These tools and the associated practice are what Brandt, Binder and Sanders (2012) refer to when they suggest that “learning and knowing are closely tied to participation” (p.234).

As an environment that facilitates creativity, the studio encourages students to be speculative, to challenge mainstream thinking and to prototype for unpredictable outcomes. The studio also acts as a buffer, offering a safe, risk-free space for failure. Students frequently work in a self-directed way using a problem-based approach to address, respond to and design for new contexts. However, designers do not work in isolation. The complexity of the challenges facing the world, at both local and global levels requires a transdisciplinary approach. Actors from multiple disciplines must work together, drawing from and beyond their disciplines to consider experience, values and the underpinning features of pluralistic culture. As such, design education must also foster the skills for support such a practice, those of collaboration and interaction to enable students to work alongside other stakeholders, including non-designers (Manzini, 2015; Brackman, 2015; Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2010).

External engagement in higher education can take many forms (Hughes and Kitson, 2012). At a granular level, engagements can range from guest visits and lectures to a more substantial investment of time, such as partnership projects. One approach is the application of ‘live’ projects within design education. Live projects engage stakeholders across multiple domains including industry, public and private sectors, charities, voluntary organisations and communities in the broadest sense. Taking the perspective of ‘designing with’ as opposed to ‘designing for’ (Sanders and Stappers, 2012), live projects offer a hybrid scenario. Students continue to design creatively but with an additional degree of formality and structure, more aligned to the professional working practices adopted in real-world. Students retain the power of autonomy, the ability to direct their design response. Still, they must also account for and respond to the desires, the needs and the knowledge and expertise of their external stakeholders. This approach demonstrates an expansion of the role of design education beyond the structures of the educational institution (Dodd, Harrison and Charlesworth, 2012), and simulates an experience of practice that is difficult to reproduce within the academy.

For students, live projects offer an opportunity to explore real-world work experiences within the safety of the institution, drawing from notions of professional education, transformative pedagogy and experiential learning (Chatterjee and Hannan, 2015; Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983; Argyris, 1981). Considering students as transformative leaders for the future, Sternberg (2017) suggests that the development of creative, analytic, practical, wisdom-based and ethical skills is critical, with live projects offering an opportunity to scaffold skills development in these areas.

However, scholarly activity has yet to fully consider the decolonised value of learning within live design projects. Indeed, much of the academic writing around live projects focus on value to the institution through knowledge exchange with industry (Vick and Robertson, 2018; Prigge, 2006; 2005), including the potential value of education to business (Harloe and Perry, 2009; Cox Review, 2005). Indeed, the

traditional metrics used to measure the impact of external engagements have focused on quantitative data and knowledge performance indicators. There is a need to understand the experiences of participation and engagement better, to be aware of and respond to ethics and equity, and to consider notions of value democratically.

4. Methodology

This research aims to understand better the learning experiences of external stakeholders engaged in live projects within a design education setting. The work was based within the Innovation School in The Glasgow School of Art (GSA), a higher education institution for education and research in visual and creative disciplines and contributed to a postgraduate award in teaching and learning. The focus is on live design projects undertaken in a Masters of Design Innovation (MDES) degree, where students worked with an external stakeholder over twelve weeks.

As part of the design approach within the program, students define an area of interest and identify gaps in knowledge. This scoping activity works to discover and define the problem space, with a stakeholder mapping exercise used to identify potential contributors. Students are encouraged to contact critical stakeholders, undertaking qualitative research to develop deeper insights into the problem space. From here, students analyse knowledge generated and establish research questions, resulting in the creation of a design brief. Students then respond to the brief, continuing to engage with external stakeholders to create a design response.

Between three and six months after the conclusion of the student projects, external stakeholders were invited to participate in a semi-structured qualitative interview. Recruitment resulted in twenty-three interviews, representing sixteen Masters of Design student projects. Eight stakeholders had an existing relationship with the institution and prior experience of participating in live design projects. The remaining fifteen stakeholder relationships were established directly by students. External stakeholders represented a diverse group of contributors, including industry (3), government and public sector (6), community and volunteer organisations (10) and charities (4). Several student projects included multiple stakeholders.

Interviews asked participants to reflect on three main areas of experience: pre-engagement; during-engagement; and post-engagement. The interviews took between forty-five minutes and one hour and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis and coding identified essential reflections related to knowledge acquisition, skills development, intellectual advancement, and collaborative learning, as well as descriptions of anticipated and realised value.

5. Findings and Discussion

Four key themes emerged from the data gathered and are now discussed.

5.1. *New Relational Publics*

One theme emerging related to interaction and is framed around the creation of new, relational publics that enabled authentic experiences to be shared. Participants discussed a desire to share their knowledge and expertise as motivation for contributing to the design projects, particularly when responding to a problem that was relevant to them or their work. Notions of **authenticity** emerged, participants described feeling “valued” for their experiences, feeling “important” and being positioned

as “an expert”. In this way, the design project enabled participants to acknowledge their experience as a valuable asset that could support learning:

Being listened to, you know, genuinely being heard. That was a plus for me (Public Sector Employee)

In this sense, those involved became a material part of the design practice; their first-hand experiences created and contributed authentic value. The collaborative act of engaging and co-creating was seen by participants to have equal to or often more important than the tangible output generated in the project (such as service or object design), with potential value for learning:

I didn't know what to expect [as an outcome], but it didn't matter. I'd learned so much just from being part of the discussion (Charity Volunteer)

Participants also talked about “raising awareness”, “sharing” and “swapping stories”, recognising the rich experiences of others, particularly those people active in their communities but previously existing beyond their social or professional circles. This marked a shift away from an individualistic notion of expert, towards a collective representation of the wider community and recognition that others were experiencing similar challenges:

...when you talk to people; you realise that we're all connected, we're all experiencing similar things, just on different scales or at different times. But because we don't usually see it, we don't know it's a problem (Public Sector Employee)

This development of a relational community highlighted both areas of commonality and contradiction between those involved and supported a new level of critical, **socially-engaged** thinking:

There was a feeling that we were contributing to change, to something that was much bigger than ourselves. It's easy to forget about bigger issues, we're all in our own wee bubble, but I had my eyes opened (Charitable Organisation Employee)

However, there did appear to be a gap between perceived and realised value amongst industry participants specifically, who did not identify explicit learning emerging from the creation of communities. Despite this, notions of value emerged tacitly in the experiences described, with participants stating how the space afforded by design allowed them to explore new ideas and perspectives:

...meeting other like-minded people, like other business owners in such an open setting. It wasn't the formal business networking environment I'm used to. We were just people, talking about real issues, finding something in common (Small Business Owner)

The sharing of authentic experiences was seen to support the emergence of new, relational, socially engaged publics, and contributed to the process of decolonised learning. The resulting social capital generated, including the development of place-based relationships within diverse populations appeared to create new learning experiences for the external stakeholders involved.

5.2. Participatory Provocation

The second theme emerging related to experience and was framed around notions of positionality and power. Similar to the idea of authenticity, participants discussed sharing their public, private, personal and professional experiences. However, here participants focused on acknowledging difference

perspectives, recognising the alternative and sometimes opposing value and belief system. By making explicit their cultures of knowledge, participants demonstrated their **positionality**, provoking and encouraging critical conversations with students. The design project was described as offering a space to explore perspectives on existing knowledge and challenge students to rethink their assumptions:

...not because I was being argumentative, but because I had had the opposite experience. They'd obviously spoken to one person and taken what they said for granted. My experience was different (Small Business Owner)

Positionality appeared to enable participants to revalue their knowledge and experience, contradicting the notion of the institution as the “traditional home of knowledge”. Similarly, many participants referred to students as “future thinkers” or “future leaders” and discussed a sense of social responsibility they felt, demonstrated through a need to educate them on “real-world perspectives”.

The conceptualisation of experience as an asset also highlighted challenges around the notion of **power**. Participants discussed feeling like a “free resource”, and talked of being “used” by the “rich university”. This was particularly common when the outputs of a project were not realised, or the expectations of participants were not met. For community organisations who represented vulnerable populations, of whom many participants were volunteers, there appeared to be a fine line between engagement and what was described “invasion”, highlighting the need for appropriate models of engagement and careful consideration of expectations:

Sometimes it was like an invasion; my office was full of six or seven students. And I didn't have time to hold all their hands, you know, I didn't have the answers all the time (Community Organisation Volunteer)

An alternative perspective valued the social power of participants, recognising them as experts and appreciating their contribution as a core to the project. This was seen to shift the dynamic towards a collaboration that was less transactional and more reciprocal:

It's easy to forget how much you know. You spend your days just reacting. It's just my job but, do you know, it was actually a surprise to see how much I knew (Public Sector Employee)

The role of the design brief also emerged in discussion around power, with participants recognising it as a “guidebook” or a tool to help “navigate” the experience. As an artefact, the brief appeared to work as a boundary object, mediating the space between participants and the institution. It was clear that to realise the learning potential for external stakeholders, power relations must first be confronted and questioned, and the brief offered a structure for this. It made explicit the roles, responsibilities and expectations, and it was only through exploring perceptions of control of knowledge, and how this power is embodied and exerted, that value was fully realised for those involved.

The ability of design education, and the live project to facilitate a space for this critique, albeit it within the boundaries of the very institution that it is reacting against, is essential in contributing to change.

5.3. Reciprocal Practice

There was an underpinning notion of practice emerging in the experiences, with a focus on participation that related to “doing with” rather than ‘doing for’ within the design projects.

One focus related to a developing sense and enactment of **agency** in participants. Participants were immersed in an experiential and embodied design practice that shifted and evolved as knowledge was

developed. The experience was not static but instead responded to the interactions taking place. As such, participants described a process of negotiation that continued for the duration of the project in which they had to balance their own intentions alongside those of the institution:

...sometimes it felt like we really had to argue our points, or justify our comments. Jot in the initial stages when the designer wanted to know about our experiences, but later on, when designing (Charitable Organisation Employee)

In this way, the sense of agency was closely related to the translation of both expectation and intent, and participants can be seen as individual actors generating agency through performative action. The learning in this sense can be considered as increased capacity, through exposure to new methods and tools but also in the application of new ways of thinking that could be utilised beyond the design project:

I took a lot from the activities we did, learning how to do design and then being confident that I can do that again in my organisation (Volunteer)

The agency of the institution was perceived to be deeply embedded within traditional colonial structures and exposed through the working practices and policies. However, design students were seen to mediate the imbalance of agency through their role between the institution and external stakeholders:

I felt sorry for them[students] sometimes, they were stuck in the middle. It was eye-opening, they had all the ethics forms and paperwork... (Small business owner)

Participants also described a notion of mutual and cooperative exchange that is framed around a sense of **reciprocity**. For participants, engaging with live design projects was seen as a way to ensure relevancy, a way for them to keep up to date with current intellectual and technological thinking. Participants described the live projects as providing access to and training in new or popular approaches such as design thinking, and new technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality.

This conceptualisation of reciprocity was understood on a practical level through the exchange of knowledge and skills, and on an intellectual level through the realisation of perceived value with an understanding that one should not be privileged over the other:

We all knew that there had to be value for the institution, that's why they wanted us there in the first place. But I'm in business, I know that I'll find something that's equally as valuable for me too (Small Business Owner)

Industry partners discussed the association with the institution as being of value and referred to the potential for using it as leverage to gain a competitive edge. Here, participants could be seen to both embrace and exploit the transformative benefits offered:

I felt that the credibility of the university was valuable to us, you know, we could use the name and say 'we're working with [institution] (Small Business Owner)

However, this sense of advantage was not as strong amongst community sector partners. While some participants discussed using the live project partnership as a way to attract funding, participants appeared less aware of how they might leverage benefit from the relationship. This suggests an area of learning potential that is not yet fully realised.

5.4. Redesigned Reflection

The final theme considered reflection as an approach to consolidate and enable more in-depth learning. Here participants reflected upon the emergence of new perspectives and discussed how engaging in the design project helped them to realign with an informed sense of personal and collective responsibility.

Participants first discussed the role of personal and professional **autonomy** and how the design project challenged their practices in intellectual ways. In the first instance, participants needed to understand their role within the project, with clear expectations and an accessible route for contributing:

*The whole thing was new to me, and I needed to know the situation, how does this thing work and why me? why am I the one that can add something here?
(Community Volunteer)*

Through a sense self-governance, participants considered contributing to shared goals and direction within the projects as a critical approach to enacting autonomy. In this way, they described having the freedom to offer valid and meaningful contributions within the institutional system:

It was good that I could make suggestions, you know. I had a few ideas about what the design should be like (small business employee)

The institution, as both the perceived driver and leader of the project, was seen to have a more significant appropriation of autonomy. However, participants recognised that their role in the projects was essential and that without the experiential contribution, the design outcomes would have been lacking. Similarly, participants discussed how the design project enabled them to develop their capabilities, expanded their thinking and practice:

It was a challenge. The students asked brutally honest questions about how we work. They kind we usually shy away from. You never get asked those usually, we're just hamsters, day in, day out. But it was good to be challenged. To think, actually, why do we do that? why do we work that way? (Public Sector Participant)

Despite an overall sense of positivity emerging, participants also discussed reflection as being aware of the underlying challenge of **equity**. Within the context of the design project, participants raised concerns around control and inclusivity, and of the ability of the institution to steer and shape the direction of a collaboration:

The projects were still on the university's terms – I'd much rather be involved at an earlier stage. What if we could co-design a course, not just a project? (Small Business Owner)

Similarly, for participants who had engaged on more than one occasion, there was a desire for a more equitable partnership. Reflecting on their past experiences, participants discussed identifying areas or issues they wanted to explore, learn or develop and negotiating this into the live design brief:

The first time [we engaged] it was one way. We didn't even get to find out what happened in the end. The next time, we made some demands at the start (Charitable Organisation Employee)

In this way, equity from the perspective of participants could be realised through contributing to and benefiting from the experience in an accessible and inclusive way. While the design brief was acknowledged as one way of enabling equitable engagement, this was not a shared experience. Without

a more explicit and equitable route for inclusive participation, participants considered that the learning of students was privileged over that of external partners. With this in mind, reflection must be a core activity of a decolonised educational offering. It should explicitly respond to both the structures and power dynamics that enable learning internally and externally.

6. A model of participatory learning

To challenge the norms of current practice, considering how external stakeholders are engaged in design projects in order to democratise and decolonise learning, a new frame of reference is required. From this basis, it will be possible to consider, to review, to reflect and to challenge both the intellectual and pedagogical value of external engagement, ensuring that consideration is made of learning beyond the institution.

This paper proposes a values model that articulates the fundamental values emerging and offers a perspective through which to consider *how* the institution engages with external stakeholders and more importantly, asks the question of *why*. The model, although in its early stages, could offer insights into the pre-planning and post-engagement phases of external engagement.

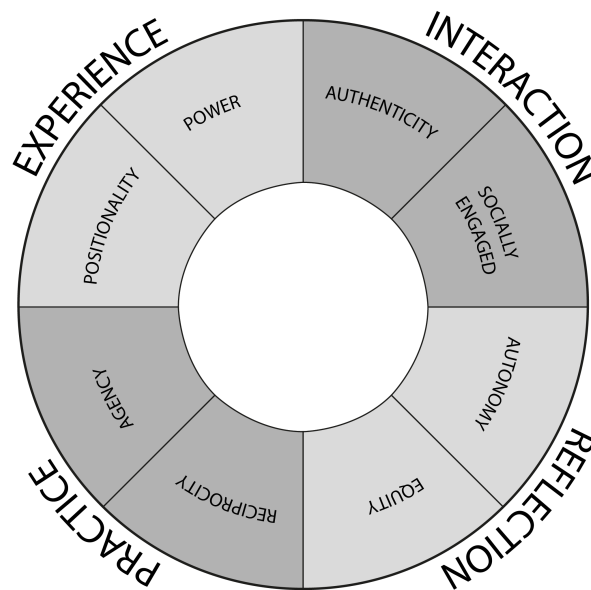


Figure 1 External Engagement Values Model

The descriptions in table 1 highlight the emerging meanings associated with the values. In providing a framework for considering how design engages with external partners, the model aims to rebalance power and equity between the institution and external partners, articulating the values that could support participatory learning beyond the university.

Table 1 External Engagement Values Model Description

Theme	Value	Description
Interaction	Authenticity	External stakeholders are recognised for their authentic experiences and individual perspectives in an empathic and accountable way.
	Socially-engaged	External stakeholders can contribute to the creation of social capital, realising a sense of social responsibility using a relational approach.
Experience	Positionality	External stakeholders can draw from experiences to acknowledge personal views, values and beliefs, related to the nature of knowledge and their cultures of knowing.
	Power	Institutional power structures shift from power over to power with, making explicit the dynamics and recognising the social power of external stakeholders, derived from lived experience.
Practice	Agency	The balance of agency, related to intent, expectation and capacity is constantly re-negotiated between external stakeholders and the institution.
	Reciprocity	Forms of generative reciprocity are negotiated and established between external stakeholders and the institution to support exchange and demonstrate transformative mutual benefit.
Reflection	Equity	External stakeholders to contribute to and benefit from the institutional structures of the academy in an accessible, inclusive and equitable way.
	Autonomy	External stakeholders can contribute to the shared direction, goals and intent of the project, with a focus on strategic interdependence and intellectual freedom.

7. Conclusion

Engaged practices of participatory design and socially-constructed models of learning recognise that understanding alternative perspectives can elicit deeper insights and contribute to a rich culture of openness and exchange for those involved. Participatory design attempts to empower passive participants to become active contributors in addressing societal challenges. Academia similarly values active contribution, recognising that engaging beyond the walls of the institution can provide students with real-world experiences.

However, while participatory design draws upon the values of democratic engagement, ethics and empowerment, the educational perspective is still situated within Western, neoliberal ideologies, framed around enhancing career prospects and increasing earning potential. Design education exists at the intersection of both these paradigms. Through the engagement of external voices, design education can encourage creativity, promote criticality and challenge current thinking in provocative and subversive ways. The engagement of external stakeholders in such endeavour can support learning in a way that is currently undervalued.

Considering possible pluralistic futures at the intersection of external engagement and design education, this paper has attempted to reposition participatory learning away from an institution-centric model towards one that democratises and decolonises value for all involved. To this end, the paper presents an emergent values model that describes eight emerging values: authenticity, socially-engaged, positionality, power, agency, reciprocity, equity, and autonomy.

As a frame for critically engaged practice, the model can support and contribute to a more inclusive, democratic distribution of learning by supporting academics, designers, and external stakeholders a lens through which to reflect on and reconsider the values of engagement. In this way, the model has much to offer both pre-and post-engagement stages.

In proposing the model, the paper considers that participatory learning can enable the transformation of knowing that extends beyond the institution, challenging and extending the margins of mainstream discourse to consider pluralistic futures.

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About the Author:

Leigh-Anne Hepburn is a design researcher with a focus on design-enabled collaboration to inform and influence meaningful change. Her work explores socially-driven innovation at the intersections of industry, academia and community and she is particularly interested in how vulnerable and isolated populations can be supported and enabled to co-design new models of engaging and interacting in the world. Leigh-Anne’s research traverses transdisciplinary participation, engagement and activism, with a particular focus on policy, ethics, and health. Leigh-Anne has previously taught at community, corporate, undergraduate and postgraduate levels and currently teaches design theory and culture, exploring how plural practices and discourses can inform the discipline and engage a new cohort of future-thinkers. Having moved to Australia from Scotland after a period of political change in the UK that saw Scotland’s failed bid for independence and the UK’s departure from the European Union, Leigh-Anne is acutely aware of historical and contemporary notions of colonisation in both contexts. She believes that design and in particular design education has a role to play in the reformation of the structures that dominate this discourse, to engender new ways of seeing, being, thinking and doing.