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Collective Wellbeing and Community Resilience: Towards a Social Design Approach

ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper positions Social Design as a comprehensive framework to overcome the limitations of technocentric urban models, particularly the erosion of social cohesion within dwellings and settlements. It integrates theories of well-being, resilience, commons, participation, relational space, reputation, and social capital into a systemic approach aimed at fostering collective well-being and community resilience. Drawing on reflexive inputs accumulated through applied research in a Prop-Tech real estate context, the paper advances two interrelated methodological frameworks. The first, Social Design for Value and Reputation, elucidates how participatory engagement and shared values generate symbolic capital and socio-cultural legitimacy. The second, Digital and Service Acceleration, illustrates how service systems and digital infrastructures can act as catalysts of positive social dynamics—such as neighbourliness, well-being, and local economic vitality.

The paper offers theoretically grounded reflections and a preliminary methodological articulation that demonstrate how Social Design can serve as a repeatable and participatory grammar for systemic value creation through communities, placing relational, behavioural, and social dynamics at the centre of the design process. Although the paper provides no empirical data, its propositions emerge from practice. They may inform policymakers, urban designers, and community practitioners seeking strategic approaches to urban governance where well-being, reputation, social cohesion, and legitimacy are at stake. As a conceptual contribution, its scientific impact is limited to theoretical elaboration, highlighting the need for future research to empirically test and operationalise these frameworks across diverse urban and cultural contexts, and to develop methods for measuring relational impacts. By synthesising multiple theoretical strands, the paper contributes an integrative and original perspective to ongoing debates on urban well-being, resilience, and reputation.

Keywords – Design Studies, Social Design, Well-Being. Community Resilience, Social Capital.

1. Introduction

Since the advent of the smartphone in 2007, urban and organisational innovation has been dominated by technocentric paradigms such as the “smart city.” Focused on data management and efficiency, these models have optimised services but neglected inclusion, empathy, and human connection. Their gains in infrastructure and delivery remain transactional, often failing to reinforce the social fabric on which well-being depends. Meanwhile, the erosion of social cohesion has become a central global concern.

The World Economic Forum Global Risks Report (2023) highlights fragmentation, institutional distrust, and polarisation as major threats to democratic stability and collective wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed this fragility, showing how the loss of relational infrastructures, spaces, routines, and networks that sustain cooperation can rapidly generate isolation and conflict.

The growing fragmentation of disciplines and policy frameworks calls for a systemic perspective on social challenges. Wellbeing, resilience, and social capital are often treated separately, as psychological, technical, or economic domains. yet they are inherently interdependent. Collective well-being depends on resilient communities, and resilience on the quality of social relationships. A conceptual framework linking these dimensions is therefore essential to address contemporary complexity.

Social Design offers such a response. As Manzini (2015) and Cottam (2018) argue, it marks a shift from "designing for" to "designing with" people, transforming design from a technical discipline into a form of social inquiry. Rather than producing artefacts or spaces, it creates conditions for interaction, care, and collective meaning. Positioned between Action Research and activism, Social Design is both a mindset and a methodology grounded in collaboration and reflexivity, a systemic approach that treats relationships, behaviours, and social infrastructures as its core materials.

This paper contributes to the discourse on Social Design by integrating insights from social sciences, design studies, and participatory practices. It positions Social Design as a repeatable, participatory grammar for systemic value creation, articulated through two interrelated frameworks. The first examines how participation and co-creation generate symbolic capital and legitimacy within and beyond communities; the second shows how services and digital infrastructures accelerate wellbeing, neighbourliness, and local economic vitality, reinforcing cohesion and adaptive capacity.

Together, these frameworks converge toward a central proposition:

Social Design is not about solving problems but about cultivating the conditions that allow systems to learn, adapt, and care for themselves.

By abstracting insights from applied research into theory, the paper proposes Social Design as a meta-framework that unites social, technological, and ethical knowledge to reimagine cities, institutions, and communities as ecosystems of co-creation where design, governance, and ethics sustain collective wellbeing and resilience.

2. From Industry to Society: towards a definition of Social Design

Emerging from the Industrial Revolution to enable mass production, design has long evolved beyond its technical roots in engineering and aesthetics. Dewey's Art as Experience (1934) reframed it as an inquiry into human experience, while Schön (1983) portrayed the designer as a "reflective practitioner," navigating uncertainty through learning and iteration. This reflexive stance paved the way for a shift from design thinking, centred on user innovation, to Social Design, where the focus moves from products to relations, processes, and collective capacities. Buchanan (1992) identified design as an integrative discipline spanning four orders: symbols, things, actions, and environments. Social Design extends this fourth order, shaping systems of meaning and cooperation. Rather than solving discrete problems, it orchestrates relationships among actors, infrastructures, and institutions within networks of reciprocity, care, and governance.

Defining Social Design

Social Design recognises that social systems can be intentionally shaped to foster wellbeing, justice, and resilience. Manzini (2015) describes it as "design for social innovation," creating conditions for collaborative change. Likewise, Mulgan et al. (2007) define social innovation as the participatory process through which new ideas and networks address unmet needs.

Cottam (2018) shows how trust-based welfare can replace bureaucracy, while Ehn and Topgaard (2014) see design as a democratic act of "making futures," where participation is both the process and the outcome. Unlike traditional design or policy planning, Social Design does not offer fixed solutions; instead, it creates conditions for people to co-create meaning, share resources, and build resilience together. It serves as a platform for social learning, connecting communities, institutions, and technologies to co-produce well-being.

Social Design as Enabling Practice

At its core, Social Design is an approach that helps people collectively reshape their realities by creating supportive conditions. Rather than providing solutions, it builds the contexts where solutions can emerge, linking to ideas of resilience (Aldrich, 2012) and participatory governance (Ostrom, 1990; Mattei, 2011). The designer or researcher acts as a facilitator, helping communities imagine, test, and establish new practices — from shared digital tools to care networks. These processes build capacity, helping systems adapt, cooperate, and grow. In this sense, Social Design connects theory and practice, turning wellbeing and resilience into tangible parts of everyday life.

3. Towards Theoretical Foundations of Social Design

The concept of Social Design arises at the crossroads of multiple theoretical traditions united by a common question: how can societies foster wellbeing and resilience through relational, participatory, and systemic practices? This section outlines the key foundations of that question, drawing from wellbeing theory, resilience studies, and the commons, to frame Social Design as an integrated model for collective flourishing and renewed social capital within relational spaces.

Wellbeing

Well-being is a multidimensional condition encompassing physical, psychological, and social dimensions. Inghilleri (2021) describes "healing places" as environments that foster care, empathy, and self-realisation, highlighting wellbeing as co-produced between people and their contexts. This view departs from individualistic notions of well-being as mere satisfaction. Bruni and Porta (2005) advocate a relational economy of happiness, where welfare arises from meaningful connections rather than material gain. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) further show that equality and social trust enhance collective wellbeing, demonstrating that wellbeing is a property of relational systems promoting dignity, reciprocity, and inclusion.

Resilience

Originally rooted in ecology, resilience describes a system's capacity to absorb shocks and reorganise while maintaining function. In social theory, it has come to mean the ability of communities to learn and transform through adversity (Wright, 2022), highlighting resilience as a dynamic process rather than a return to stability. Aldrich (2012) shows that communities rich in trust and civic engagement recover faster after crises, proving that resilience relies more on relationships than infrastructure. Ramos (2016)

adds that the "city as commons" fosters resilience through participatory governance. Together, these views define resilience as an emergent property of connectedness, rooted in collaboration, learning, and adaptability.

Commons and Participation

The recent renaissance of the commons within cultural and political discourses related to cities, has reshaped ideas of community and governance. Mattei (2011) defines the commons as a political and ethical category beyond the public–private divide, grounding cooperation in shared responsibility. Ostrom (1990) similarly proved that communities can self-manage resources through collective institutions, challenging the need for centralised control. Within this framework, participation becomes the essence of collective agency. Venturi and Zandonai (2019) highlight the "dimension of place" where civic engagement and social enterprise converge, allowing fragmented societies to reconnect through local action. Participation thus generates legitimacy and accountability by embedding decision-making in lived community experience.

Relational Space

Urban theorists have long argued that space is not a neutral backdrop for social life but a medium through which relationships are formed and maintained. Jacobs (1961) described the "sidewalk ballet" of everyday interactions as the foundation of urban vitality, demonstrating how proximity, visibility, and diversity produce trust and safety. Lefebvre (1974) conceptualised space as a social product, created and re-created through practices, symbols, and power relations. For him, to understand or design a space requires acknowledging the social processes that continuously shape it. Sennett (2012) contributes to this lineage by defining cooperation as a spatial practice: the design of environments that allow for openness, negotiation, and mutual recognition.

Social Capital and Reputation

Social capital bridges the micro-level of relationships and the macro-level of well-being. Putnam (2000) distinguishes between bonding capital, which reinforces cohesion, and bridging capital, which connects diverse groups and enables inclusivity, crucial for social innovation and democratic governance. Coleman (1988) defines social capital as a resource that fosters collective action through trust and shared norms, while Granovetter (1973) shows that weak, diverse ties often drive adaptability and innovation. These insights are central to Social Design, which treats networks and trust as design materials. Extending this to the symbolic realm, reputation reflects the authenticity of shared values and practices. As Govers (2018) and Anholt (2010) argue, a community's legitimacy stems not from image management but from the credibility of its collective actions.

Towards a theoretical framework: synthesis and preliminary considerations

Across these multidisciplinary perspectives, a coherent view emerges: wellbeing and resilience are interdependent outcomes of relational systems. Communities flourish when they co-manage commons, sustain participation, and maintain networks of trust that extend beyond immediate boundaries. While space and technology act as enablers, sustainability ultimately rests on social connectedness and collective meaning-making.

Social Design encapsulates this synthesis as a meta-framework integrating relational, participatory, and systemic dimensions of social life. It:

- Treats wellbeing as a systemic quality, rooted in infrastructures of cooperation and empathy;
- Frames resilience as a cultural capacity, cultivated through participatory processes of care and learning;
- Identifies participation as the core mechanism for co-creating social infrastructures and maintaining commons;
- Views relational space as both object and outcome of design, where interdependence is orchestrated rather than imposed;
- Understands reputation as an emergent form of social capital, expressing coherence between practice and representation.

By aligning these domains, Social Design reframes design as the cultivation of adaptive and caring systems, where value arises through cooperation, legitimacy through participation, and stability through renewal. Despite this convergence, several gaps remain. Theories of social capital and governance (Putnam 2000; Coleman 1988; Ostrom 1990; Mattei 2011) explain cooperation but lack design-based methods to sustain it. Conversely, design scholarship (Manzini 2015; Cottam 2018) describes participatory innovation but seldom connects it to broader sociological theories of wellbeing and resilience. Most social innovation models remain local and temporary, depending on specific contexts and leaders rather than scalable systems. Digitalisation adds both promise and risk: it can strengthen participation and shared intelligence, but also deepen inequality and isolation if not grounded in strong social frameworks. The key challenge is to design digital and service systems that support collective wellbeing instead of replacing human connection.

This paper does not aim to provide empirical proof, but to outline a conceptual framework for future applied and comparative research.

4. Research Question

Despite wide academic and policy interest, a clear gap persists between recognising social interdependence and designing systems that truly support it. This gap appears in fragmented approaches: wellbeing is seen as an individual issue, resilience as a matter of infrastructure and risk management, and participation as consultation rather than genuine co-creation. Against this challenge and within the above theoretical background, this paper aims to address the following question with a strong orientation to active implementation:

What are Conceptual Frameworks activating Social Design as a repeatable, participatory, and systemic approach capable of enabling collective wellbeing and community resilience?

This research question is designed to articulate a theoretical and conceptual grammar where dispersed strands of social innovation, design thinking, and community development might converge into a coherent framework. The underlying hypothesis is that Social Design, understood as the design of social relations and infrastructures, offers such a unifying paradigm.

5. Epistemological and Methodological Background

As a conceptual paper, this study does not include an empirical methodology but draws on key epistemological and methodological foundations to frame the proposed conceptual frameworks. Social Design rests on two complementary references—social constructivism and Action Research—which together define its reflexive and participatory nature. Furthermore, a third pillar, systems thinking,

completes this foundation by situating Social Design within an adaptive and interconnected understanding of social change.

The constructivist episteme

From a constructivist perspective, social reality is not fixed but continuously co-produced through dialogue, interpretation, and practice (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1999), where the core focus of research shifts from world-mirroring procedures to world-making ambitions (Gergen, 2015). From this perspective, the researcher's role is not to impose order but to enable collective meaning-making. In this sense, Social Design becomes a "meta-design" practice, a way of designing the very processes through which design happens.

Action Research as a methodology

Action Research embodies this constructivist approach within the social sciences. Emerging in the 1960s in education and healthcare, it was socially driven to create positive change through participation. Reason and Bradbury (2001) define it as a participatory and iterative process that blends reflection, experimentation, and learning. The researcher works with participants to create and study change at the same time. In this cyclical model, theory and practice are intertwined, each continuously shaping the other.

Systemic Orientation

While participatory design focuses mainly on involving users, Social Design broadens participation to the systemic level (Friedman, 2019), connecting human, institutional, and technological dimensions into a unified framework. It applies systems theory to explore how changes in one part of a network can generate ripple effects throughout the whole social fabric.

This systemic orientation implies that Social Design operates simultaneously at multiple scales:

- Micro-level: interpersonal relations, trust, empathy, and collective learning;
- Meso-level: community networks, organisations, and governance structures;
- Macro-level: societal narratives, institutional norms, and digital ecosystems.

By working across different scales, Social Design supports what Manzini (2015) calls "cosmopolitan localism", the ability of communities to act locally while staying connected globally through shared values and digital networks. It views resilience and wellbeing as outcomes that emerge from interlinked systems, not as fixed targets. Combining constructivism and action research makes Social Design an adaptive, self-reflective practice that evolves through feedback and iteration. It follows loops of inquiry, cycles of testing, observing, and reshaping social relations, reflecting Meadows's (2008) principles of systems thinking. Through this ongoing learning process, Social Design acts less as a rigid framework and more as a catalyst for continuous transformation.

6. Developing Conceptual Frameworks of Social Design

As a point of extreme synthesis of all the above, Social Design might be conceptualised as a systemic architecture composed of two interdependent frameworks that separately describe the relational and infrastructural dimensions of social value creation. Together, they illustrate how well-being, resilience, and legitimacy emerge not as isolated outcomes but as the effects of recursive processes that connect people, infrastructures, and shared meaning. These frameworks are presented not as empirical models

but as conceptual mechanisms, abstract structures capable of being adapted to multiple contexts. They provide a coherent language to describe how relational systems evolve and how social innovation can be sustained through enabling infrastructures.

The first framework, "Social Design for Value and Reputation", explains the internal logic through which social participation and co-creation generate symbolic and reputational capital. The second, "Digital and Service Acceleration", describes the mechanisms by which infrastructures and services sustain and amplify these dynamics across scales.

Social Design Conceptual Framework 1: Social Design for Value and Reputation

The first framework captures the relational mechanism through which participation and collaboration generate shared values and, over time, collective reputation. It describes how the micro-processes of engagement lead to macro-level legitimacy and recognition.

The model unfolds through three interconnected phases, namely: 1) Engagement and Co-creation; 2) Shared Values and Symbolic Capitals; and 3) Legitimacy and Reputation:

1. **Engagement and Co-creation** Every Social Design process begins with active participation. Through co-creation, people collectively shape their environments, building networks of trust and collaboration. These participatory practices form the relational foundation for developing social capital. They embody what Dewey (1934) and Schön (1983) described as reflective inquiry, learning through action and creating meaning from experience.
2. **Shared Values and Symbolic Capital** As participation grows, shared values start to emerge. Principles such as care, reciprocity, and equity form the basis of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), strengthening cohesion and belonging. Symbolic capital becomes the shared resource through which communities build narratives of identity and purpose, key to continuity and mutual recognition. In Social Design, these narratives are themselves designed artefacts: relational outcomes of co-created meaning.
3. **Legitimacy and Reputation** Over time, shared values evolve into reputation—the outward expression of internal trust and coherence. As Anholt (2010) and Govers (2018) suggest, reputation reflects social integrity: a form of symbolic legitimacy that grows from authentic practice rather than strategic communication. This progression from participation to reputation creates a value cycle where internal wellbeing and external credibility continuously strengthen each other.

A feedback loop links these stages: the legitimacy and visibility gained through collective reputation attract new participants and resources, restarting the cycle of co-creation. In this way, the framework becomes a self-sustaining process of value creation, where trust, cooperation, and recognition continuously renew social systems.

Social Design Conceptual Framework 2: Digital and Service Acceleration

The second framework describes the infrastructural mechanism of Social Design, focusing on how digital technologies and service systems can accelerate, scale, and sustain the relational dynamics outlined above. While the first framework addresses the social fabric, this one explains the operational layer that enables that fabric to evolve.

The framework consists of three interdependent layers, namely: 1) Enabling Infrastructures and Service Systems; 2) Domains of Social Impact; and 3) Integrated Outcomes.

1. Enabling Infrastructures and Service Systems
   Digital and service infrastructures—including communication platforms, data systems, and distributed governance tools—act as enablers of participation and coordination. Their purpose is not to replace human relations but to enhance connectivity, transparency, and accessibility. In systemic design terms (Friedman, 2019; Meadows, 2008), they form the structural conditions for feedback and adaptation.

2. Domains of Social Impact
   These infrastructures produce effects across several interlinked domains:

   - Efficiency and shared resource management, by promoting collaborative consumption and reducing redundancy;
   - Health and well-being, through preventive, data-informed, and community-centred services;
   - Neighbourliness and inclusion, by fostering local interaction, empathy, and diversity;
   - Local economy, by enabling small-scale entrepreneurship and circular value creation.
     Each domain operates as an entry point for resilience and collective well-being.

3. Integrated Outcomes
   When these domains converge, they yield integrated outcomes: social cohesion, adaptive resilience, and reputational legitimacy. These are emergent rather than additive results, reflecting the interconnectedness of the system. Social Design thus becomes an infrastructure for wellbeing, not merely a design philosophy.

A feedback loop sustains this conceptual mechanism as well. Data, narratives, and behavioural insights generated through digital and service systems are fed back into participatory processes, refining governance and ensuring ongoing relevance. This cyclical exchange transforms infrastructures from static tools into learning systems, adaptive and reflexive structures aligned with social purpose.

To summarise, these conceptual frameworks articulate the architecture of Social Design as a theory of transformation. They offer a vocabulary for understanding how well-being, resilience, and legitimacy emerge as co-produced phenomena, shaped by the interplay between human cooperation and the infrastructures that sustain it.

4. Discussion

The two conceptual frameworks articulated above, Social Design for Value and Reputation and Digital and Service Acceleration, provide a coherent architecture through which the logic of Social Design can be interpreted as both a theory of value creation and a method of systemic transformation. This section discusses their implications for design theory, social sciences, and governance, highlighting the epistemological and methodological contributions that emerge from their integration.

Theoretical implications: from design objects to social systems

The proposed frameworks shift design from creating artefacts to orchestrating social systems. As Manzini (2015, 2021) notes, designers now shape “relationships between things and people,” positioning Social Design as a meta-disciplinary field uniting social theory, ethics, and systems

thinking. This view aligns with Krippendorff's (2006) idea of design as making sense of things, a process of constructing meaning, and with Simon's (1969) definition of design as a science of the artificial, capable of intentional intervention in complex systems. Applied to the social realm, Social Design becomes a science of relational systems, creating conditions for interaction, recognition, and collective well-being. The two frameworks together redefine value creation: in the relational one, value arises from trust and shared identity; in the infrastructural one, it is sustained through digital and service systems that expand participation. They outline a non-linear economy of meaning, where value is co-produced and continuously renewed.

Methodological implications: designing with systems

The methodological significance of Social Design lies in its reflexive and iterative nature. Both frameworks operate through feedback loops that embody learning and adaptation, core principles of systems thinking (Meadows, 2008). This cyclical logic sets Social Design apart from traditional planning and aligns it with systemic design and participatory governance (Friedman, 2019; Ehn & Topgaard, 2014). Here, design outcomes, whether symbolic, relational, or infrastructural, are not final results but steps in an ongoing process of observation and transformation, similar to Action Research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), where knowledge develops through participation.
This cyclical nature also carries ethical significance. Escobar (2018) advocates for "autonomous design," which allows communities to shape their own futures. The relational framework supports this through participation and symbolic capital, while the infrastructural framework puts it into practice by creating the platforms, services, and interfaces that sustain collective autonomy.

Integration and Systemic Coherence

The two frameworks operate as complementary dimensions of a single ecosystem. The first explains the social logic of how value is produced through relationships, while the second articulates the systemic logic of how that value can be maintained and scaled through enabling infrastructures.

Their interaction constitutes the essence of the Social Design approach:

- The relational mechanism (Framework 1) generates meaning, cohesion, and trust—the qualitative value of social systems.
- The infrastructural mechanism (Framework 2) provides the means to operationalise and extend that value—the quantitative and temporal dimension of sustainability.

Together they form a recursive, self-reinforcing structure: social interactions create shared meaning; infrastructures amplify and stabilise those meanings; the resulting legitimacy feeds back into further participation. This circular dynamic exemplifies what Manzini (2015) calls design for social innovation: a process that enables communities to design the very systems through which they evolve.

Toward Social Design as a meta-framework

By connecting social, technological, and symbolic dimensions, Social Design can be seen as a meta-framework for collective wellbeing. Its value lies not in prescribing solutions but in offering a structure, a shared grammar that enables collaboration across disciplines around principles of participation, care, and adaptability. This meta-framework bridges micro-level practices such as community engagement and participatory governance with macro-level systems like digital

infrastructures and institutional policies. It reframes well-being and resilience as emergent outcomes of ongoing negotiation among people, technologies, and meanings.

8. Future Research: Social Design as Governance Paradigm

Future research focusing on Social Design should build on this conceptual foundation in four directions:

- First, by operationalising the frameworks through empirical studies that measure relational and reputational impact using hybrid indicators (qualitative, network-based, and digital).
- Second, by exploring the role of generative AI and emerging technologies in mediating participation, transparency, and design ethics within social systems.
- Third, by connecting Social Design with the arts and humanities, using creative practices as laboratories for empathy, narrative, and collective imagination.
- Fourth, by investigating the possibilities and opportunities to stretch and expand the notions of Social Design into larger areas of potential impact within societies and cultures where challenges as identified in the theoretical and bibliographic review exist.

Future research should explore how Social Design can evolve from a methodology into a paradigm of governance, complementing institutional mechanisms with relational and collaborative forms of regulation. Latour's (2005) Actor-Network Theory frames this shift, viewing social systems as co-produced by humans, technologies, and infrastructures. Within such a networked ontology, Social Design mediates between material and symbolic dimensions, coordinating distributed actors.

This makes Social Design especially suited to tackling "wicked problems" (Buchanan, 1992), complex, interdependent challenges that call for adaptive governance rooted in local knowledge. It promotes a relational model of legitimacy, where authority arises from shared meaning, empathy, and reputation rather than hierarchy. By bridging public and private spheres and placing the commons (Mattei, 2011; Ostrom, 1990) at the centre of design, Social Design fosters emergent, not imposed, forms of governance, a state of conviviality (Thackara, 2005) where social, ecological, and technological systems sustain one another.

9. Conclusions

This paper has presented Social Design as a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding and fostering collective wellbeing and community resilience. Drawing on design theory, social sciences, and systems thinking, it introduces two interconnected frameworks—Social Design for Value and Reputation and Digital and Service Acceleration—which together explain the relational and infrastructural dynamics of how social value is created.

Three key insights emerge from this conceptual elaboration:

- First, well-being is redefined not as an individual condition but as an emergent property of relational systems. Communities thrive when their members can co-create meaning, share responsibility, and cultivate mutual care. Social Design provides the conceptual tools to design such enabling conditions, positioning participation and empathy as design materials.
- Second, resilience is reframed as a cultural and systemic capability. It is less about recovery after a crisis and more about the ongoing capacity to adapt, learn, and reorganise collectively. Through iterative cycles of feedback, reflection, and redesign, Social Design enables

communities and institutions to build the adaptive infrastructures that sustain resilience over time.

- Third, reputation emerges as the symbolic outcome of this process, a form of legitimacy derived from coherence between values and actions. Reputation is not an external asset but a social mirror, reflecting the authenticity of collective practices. It connects internal well-being with external recognition, thereby reinforcing trust and continuity.

Together, these three dimensions form the grammar of Social Design: wellbeing as purpose, resilience as process, and reputation as outcome. The two frameworks outlined in this paper show how these dimensions interact within a recursive, self-sustaining system, where relational processes generate meaning and infrastructures ensure continuity and amplification.

Theoretically, this synthesis positions Social Design as a meta-discipline, a transdisciplinary field connecting design, sociology, governance, and digital culture. Methodologically, it emphasises reflexivity, iteration, and participatory inquiry, aligning with traditions of Action Research and systemic design. Ethically, it promotes a paradigm of care and autonomy, echoing Escobar's (2018) "designs for the pluriverse" and Manzini's (2021) "cities that care."

In conclusion, Social Design offers both a theory and a practice of collective transformation. It reclaims design as a fundamentally social act, one that empowers communities to imagine, create, and sustain their own systems of wellbeing, resilience, and reputation. In doing so, it provides a conceptual lens for seeing future societies not as networks of individuals or data, but as living, learning, and caring systems.

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