

Anticipating Precarity and Risk in Social Innovation Design for Entrenched Place-based Disadvantage

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ABSTRACT We outline considerations for anticipating precarity and risk in design for social innovation through a case study tackling place-based disadvantage for young people with The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI). In shifting the focus from creative or managed risk within the design process, we ask: what practices of decision-making can lay alternative foundations for change for those who are experiencing precarious lives? We contribute an alternative conceptual framing of risk by drawing from Judith Butler's position on precarity as a heightened attentiveness to complex interconnected concerns. In moving towards transformational design we argue for practices that *work through precarity* to offer more nuanced understandings of risk when seeking to develop sustainable change. From the perspective of a design team in the midst of a project we reflect on the value of responding to risk in relation to precarity highlighting intersectional concerns that support ongoing decision-making. With direct measures of what is considered successful and valuable from design interventions, what becomes most precarious is the lack of recognition of complex personhood, translation through design, and opportunities for working across multiple sites of experimental intervention.

KEYWORDS: social innovation, risk, precarity, design, disadvantage

Introduction

Terms such as 'innovation' have become synonymous with elements of risk-taking as a necessary and largely positive attribute of design practice and research (e.g. Hall et al. 2017; Ham 2016). Practitioners are regularly engaged in creative risk-taking (Dempster 2009; El-Murad and West 2003; McKinlay and Smith 2009), navigating uncertainty (Akama, Pink and Sumartojo 2018), and

the ambiguity of meanings associated with experimentation, prototyping, and unspecified futures (d'Anjou 2010; Kaethler et al. 2017). As socially oriented design matures (Manzini 2015; Wilson and Zamberlan 2015), there is growing recognition of the risks beyond those related to generating creative outputs and the potential successes or failures of products and services (Appadurai 2013; Tonkinwise 2016; Yee et al. 2017). Working *with* people who are perceived to be *at risk* from potential social exclusion associated with intersecting disadvantages (e.g. issues connected with unemployment and potential homelessness), as defined by governments or third-sector organizations, designers need to sensitively anticipate the precarious positions of others and how they are framed by specific institutional concerns associated with managing risk. But what is at stake if designers focus on prescriptive measurements of risk rather than experiences of precarity associated with disadvantage? What are the ethical and political decisions made and practices enacted by design teams in an attempt to make a difference?

In this paper we tentatively sketch approaches to anticipating and preparing for intersecting concerns associated with precarity and risk during a project with The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) aiming to address significant place-based disadvantage in Melbourne. The paper contributes a reflective account and wider understanding of how practice-based design teams devise situated, careful, and iterative approaches to attend to risk in relation to the precarious lives of others. The paper focuses on the context of a design case study with government, third-sector organizations, and young people experiencing intersecting social exclusions associated with employment, finance, and housing. Using Judith Butler's ethical and philosophical position on precarity (2004, 2009) to highlight contingent vulnerabilities in young people's lives, we discuss challenges to, and the responsibility involved, in keeping alive "complex personhood" (Gordon 2008) in design for social innovation.

Foregrounding risk as rational measurement is problematic because it limits more generative processes in design (Akama, Pink, and Sumartojo 2018). Vocabularies of risk that frequently appear in design for social innovation discourse are also limited in how they don't explicitly connect to decision-making. We argue that drawing from literature on precarity offers an alternative framing of risk. In our case study awareness of how partners perceived potential risks of new approaches remained important. This awareness compelled the design team to commit to alternative futures that partners would also recognize as viable. This approach highlights concerns made explicit and prioritized by government services, those rendered invisible, and how these priorities can inform design decisions. We suggest it is important to understand risk *in relation to precarity* to holistically appreciate the ethical and political decision-making processes involved in design for social innovation.

Managing Risk in Design for Social Innovation

Design for social innovation projects often aim to support social and transformative possibilities of potential change at scale, drawing from a long tradition of socially responsible design (Papanek 1985). Rather than emphasizing innovation that focuses on profitability or efficiency, design projects aligned with social innovation may also seek potentially disruptive alternatives committed to prioritizing social relations, sustainability, and community knowledge over abstract, capitalist gains and profits (Manzini, Baek and Zhong 2010). This can include processes of "building long-

term relationships with stakeholders in order to create networks from which design opportunities can emerge” (Hillgren, Seravalli and Emilson 2011, 169), rather than re-designing existing products or services (Armstrong et al. 2014). Also significant are activist orientations in social innovation that aim to counter corrosive social, environmental or economic models of innovation (Meroni, Fassi and Simeone 2013).

Markussen (2017) describes social innovation more specifically as a responsive approach involving a collection of different services, stating “social innovations typically happen as a result of a system error or organizational inertia to which society responds in a delayed, insufficient or erroneous manner” (ibid, 164). Here, the “locus of innovation is not within the social entrepreneur or enterprise, but within a complex system of multiple actors” (ibid, 164). This emphasis on delivery of social aims through collaboration is therefore perceived as providing valuable alternative perspectives for re-invigorating services that have become problematic, particularly in areas such as welfare (Cajaiba-Santana 2014; Mulgan 2017).

However, it is also widely recognized that working with multiple actors, particularly on participatory or co-design processes, creates additional complexity and risks associated with having individual perspectives challenged and sharing control (Huybrechts et al. 2014; Kaethler et al. 2017). Bratteteig and Wagner (2012) describe how ‘openness’ in design is purposely invoked to handle the complexity of perspectives and a commitment to not closing down options prematurely. They highlight however that working with these different perspectives can create conflict and tensions around what constitutes ‘innovation’ and which ideas are taken forward, and by whom. The risk is that grassroots, community-based approaches can be limited by more powerful agendas and people who have more control and power over decision making.

Despite these worthwhile social aims, so far there have been few examples addressing the politics of specific practices of design for social innovation (see Agid 2011; Akama and Yee 2016; Komatsu et al. 2016; Mulgan 2017; Tonkinwise 2016) or specific approaches to responding to risk in social design. This limited representation includes perspectives from Europe (Hillgren, Seravalli and Emilson 2011; Manzini 2015; Meroni, Fassi and Simeone 2013) and the United States (Brown and Wyatt 2010), perceived lack of skills and longitudinal investment of time (Thorpe and Gammon 2011), and the potential instrumentalization of democratic ideologies focused on limited elite groups, lead users, and neoliberal politics (Markussen 2017). Design approaches for social innovation, including how they are understood and their subsequent application, have suffered from short-termism, been drawn from limited examples that are not always reflexively articulated (Armstrong et al. 2014), and are often applied wholesale to diverse cultures and communities (Akama and Yee 2016). Overall these challenges have been considered reductive, and lacking in culturally sensitive orientations to and discussions about practices of design, egalitarian values, and the potential for longer-term transformational outcomes.

More situated design responses for socially engaged design and innovation with specific communities (such as Clarke et al. 2016) have however responded more holistically to precarities of existence in very particular ways. This includes design for sustainable financial services for rural farmers in Myanmar to support poverty reduction (Aung Din 2017), support for an understanding of the circulation and appreciation of creative cultures under threat of

disappearance in Taiwan (Bardzell, Bardzell and Ng 2017), and design for community fire preparedness to support coordinated local responses during bush-fires in Australia (Akama and Ivanka 2010). These practice-based and well researched examples go beyond social innovation that enhances the efficiency of services or enables clients to communicate more effectively with government services. These demonstrate design research more concerned with confronting what is at stake longitudinally for those who need and want change. These examples are informed by concerns for the long-term and systemically precarious conditions of the people and communities with whom the designers worked, including attention to the politics of place, and tensions with local governments.

These practices show the inadequacy of considering risk within the confines of the design process for social innovation projects. For instance, when responding to long-term, complex social challenges, it is not sufficient to consider what risk means for commissioning clients or funding bodies in simplistic, transactional terms. Reflection on what risk means for people who use particular services and will be most affected by changes is also required. While authors such as Huybrechts et al. (2014), Bratteteig and Wagner (2012) usefully highlight the diversity of risks associated with the many actors involved in collaborative design, their positions do not reflect on the specific longitudinal risks experienced from a precarity of existence associated with disadvantage such as poverty, poor health, low income, or limited job security or environmental disaster, as discussed by Akama and Ivanka (2010). More broadly, the complexity of responding to potential risks in relation to experiences of precarity is rarely explicitly foregrounded in design for social innovation literature, in specific practice-based or design research projects.

While current social innovation literature shows a clear orientation towards planning for risk to achieve more socially oriented aims, the types of risks considered are somewhat limited. For instance, Armstrong et al. (2014) highlight how social design research may “easily embrace risk” while “remaining accountable and managing that risk” (ibid, 54). In describing the future of social innovation projects, Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulgan (2010) describe risk as a necessary but also challenging aspect of social innovation that needs to be managed by sharing, reducing, and aiming for reasonable reliability with partners. Tonkinwise (2016) further warns that specific to social design is an approach to “careful design, especially that which tries to foster resilient social sustainability” (ibid, 147). Such an approach, he argues, “must involve comprehensive risk assessment. This necessitates considering how collaborative ventures can be co-opted, be it for inequitable profitability or for violent xenophobia” (ibid, 147). Cooperative exchanges, for instance, while having the potential to benefit people, can also become harmful towards others who are not directly involved. Tonkinwise highlights the importance of design strategies that make “beneficial cooperative exchanges an explicit priority” (ibid, 148), to avoid such risks.

The current vocabulary of management and assessment (Armstrong et al. 2014; Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulgan 2010; Tonkinwise 2016), however, maintain an air of rationalist scientific measurement, often associated with eliminating and minimizing risk from an organizational and expert perspective (Appadurai 2013; Lupton 2013) in an attempt to assure an outcome (Akama, Pink and Sumartojo 2018). Furthermore, such terminology presumes risk can be a known entity, easily mapped and planned for; it assumes equality, shared histories, and cultures are desirable and achievable pre-requisites. This, however, is at odds with more situated

accounts of design for social innovation research and practice, and does not adequately address the practical, political, embodied, and conceptual negotiation between risk-taking, experimentation, accountability, and avoidance of long-term harm emerging from current literature.

Practices around managing risk reflect specific “cultural, political, and moral judgements” (Dourish and Bell 2011, 151) that are important to consider in design. The management of risk to create certainty, eliminate societal threats, and increase perceptions of safety by large organizations, such as government services, has been heavily critiqued in the social sciences, where such practices are increasingly seen as mechanisms of control (Appadurai 2013; Beck 1997; Lupton 2013). As an alternative Akama, Pink and Sumartojo (2018) describe the significance of attending to uncertainty in order to avoid rationalist notions of managing risk and allow for emergent ethical responsiveness to unfolding situations. Designers working on social innovation projects cannot, necessarily, rely on knowing what such risks are *a priori* to doing the work. It is only through engaging in action that complexities and risks may begin to emerge. Risk in the context of design for social innovation therefore requires a more nuanced stance that expands understanding on more emergent design processes.

It may also be necessary to understand what constitutes acceptable risks from multiple different perspectives, including who is in a position to be able to make decisions and take responsibility for subsequent action (Ahmed 2017). For instance, turbulent communities, often defined by different histories struggling to make sense of a possible future, are where design for social innovation can have the most relevance and impact (Manzini 2015). Hillgren, Seravalli and Emilson (2011) highlight the significant shift in designers as mediators in social innovation when working across power inflected relationships between marginalized communities and state organizations. Differences, inequalities, and power are therefore significant contributing factors since these provide a context in which people make sense of, and are indeed situated, in the ‘social’ of design (Agid 2011). So how do designers engaging in practices focused on social innovation conceptually and practically anticipate, prepare and make decisions to make room for different experiences of risk? How do designers work creatively, responsibly, and with humility, considering the precarious conditions of people who will potentially be affected, but who may not always be directly involved in design?

Precarity: An Ethical Philosophical Position

Precarity has not been frequently discussed or conceptualized with regards to design research and practice. Sociologists have described precarity in terms of specific forms of insecurity, brought about by a lack of access to predictable or secure material resources, support structures or psychological welfare (e.g. Antonucci, Hamilton and Roberts 2014; Zinn 2008). The term is not necessarily synonymous with risk, although it is used to indicate challenging conditions where aspects of people’s lives could be *at risk of loss*. In social innovation however, precarity is heightened in the move from transactional to transformational design, which seeks to create longitudinal change in sustainable and resilient ways that require particular care (Tonkinwise 2016). While precarity is often associated with essential resources (e.g. housing, food) for

securing life, what other aspects of life are *at risk of loss*? We turn to pre-eminent feminist scholar Judith Butler to provide a theoretical perspective.

Butler's position on precarity (2004, 2009), draws attention to a number of social and political sensitivities. She goes beyond aspects of life related to access to material resources, support structures, or welfare services, considering the precarity of aspects of life that can become invisible, such as dignity. Most importantly for Butler is the role of social and economic institutions such as state organizations, which are purposively "designed to minimize conditions of precarity ..." (ibid, 6) and "address those very needs, not only to make sure that housing and food are available, but that populations have the means available by which life can be secured" (ibid, 8). This can mean, however, that in the interests of securing life through providing basic care, (e.g. shelter, food, safety) precarity itself can be extended. For example, a person or family can have their basic needs met temporarily, but have no access to services or pathways out of precarious existence in more sustainable and transformative ways.

Butler argues there is tension and contradiction in recognizing the precarity of others' lives, in acting upon that vulnerability while also making the ethical commitment to not intervene in harmful ways. Systematic and organizational approaches to eliminating precarity imply what is considered worth saving and protecting. For Butler "precarity' designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support" (Butler 2004, 14). Precarity is therefore most prevalent amongst those who exist in an "induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure [...] against which states do not offer adequate protections" (ibid, 14) and whose lives "do not qualify as recognizable" (ibid, 16). Butler draws from feminist postcolonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993), to argue that it is important for those who live precariously to "translate" experiences into the "dominant" language of social institutions "not to ratify its power, but to expose and resist [...], and to find the language through which to lay claims to rights" (Butler 2009, 10) as a means to promote alternative routes of action.

In summary, Butler's position offers a conceptual reframing and sensitizing around issues of risk in highlighting how state and social organizations might focus on particular kinds of precarity while other aspects of people's lives are eroded from view. In the following section we apply this concept to an example of intensive design practice for social innovation from The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) in Melbourne, to reflect on decision-making practices in the design team.

Tackling Entrenched Place-based Disadvantage

Our example focuses on youth unemployment as one of the routes identified by government services for tackling long-term place-based disadvantage within specific areas of Melbourne. We refer specifically here to work undertaken by a multidisciplinary team from TACSI that included a designer, economist, and a sociologist. Ingrid, one of the co-authors of this essay and also the team's designer and leader, presents a narrative of her team's experience (as 'we' and 'ours' in the first person) in the following section.

Ingrid's Experience of Design-led Responses to Youth Unemployment

In late 2016, TACSI was commissioned to undertake a review of how place-based disadvantage had been addressed in a particular part of Melbourne, and to develop design-led responses to eliminate some of the conditions that were perpetuating this disadvantage. We focused on entrenched youth unemployment. Our design team understood that an essential prerequisite to taking action was an understanding of what our partners—a group of local and state government, third-sector organizations, employers, and young people—considered to be the main challenges facing unemployed youth. Gaining this understanding highlighted how attempts to address disadvantage can create additional risks for young people—risks that remain invisible to service providers. Coming into the project, our team was overwhelmed by the amount of data and reports that had previously identified the issues and highlighted the groups of people identified as ‘disadvantaged.’ As with other places that have undergone structural economic change, there was a great deal of research commissioned by government agencies and third-sector service deliverers, but little commitment to action outside existing programmatic approaches. Most work was undertaken through traditional disciplinary or departmental lenses, concentrating not on the perspectives of those experiencing disadvantage except when empathic service providers brought forward their analyses. This produced a growing discourse of blame. Employers suggested that local people “just didn’t want to work,” and service providers expressed frustration at the gap between growing needs and shrinking resources. Moreover, policy makers argued that funded outcomes were not being measured nor met.

Our design approach first presented existing research and data in a visually-rich format that highlighted different points of view, which made it more accessible to a range of stakeholders. Second, our team conducted interviews, rapid ethnography, and generative research to integrate and synthesize different points of view from across the system. This led to the development of a series of proposal prototypes that could inform more coordinated responses than had previously been considered.

In the course of the work our team found that the existing service space was crowded but unable to effectively respond to the issues. For example, there were around 4,000 young people in the region who were unemployed in early 2017 (Labour Markets Strategy Group 2017), with around 1,000 of these having been unemployed for one year or more. There were around 180 programs across the region that in some way related to or focused on assisting young people to prepare for, access, or sustain education and employment. Yet the young people our design team spent time with spoke of barriers that were not part of the service response (such as lack of access to transport). Further, young people identified many limitations of the services, including the short time they had to access support, the many times they had to tell their stories, the constant merry-go-round of referrals without anyone addressing real or deep needs, and the inaccessibility of services resulting from a lack of physical access to service sites or a lack of knowledge about the availability of services. Figure 1, below, outlines a range of issues identified by young people in the course of the design research. Often, people experienced many of these issues with the various services involved in their lives.



Figure 1 The design team identified a number of issues associated with access to employment for young people.

What the young people effectively identified were broad systemic flaws in the service ecosystem due to a lack of understanding of their wider needs. An approach that drew in the young people for further co-design or asked them to participate in a service design response would only be transformative if there were simultaneous opportunities to examine and re-design barriers, such as funding for services, how to avoid being sucked into the already crowded service system, and how services could bridge the divide between the young people and employers.

Our team felt we had a responsibility to examine the nature of employment in the region. Using the perspectives of jobseekers, employers, and service providers, we worked to determine why the myriad of previously tried solutions had not shifted outcomes in particular areas and for certain cohorts of people. Again, what our team found was a complex picture.

On the one hand, even though there were around 20,000 people unemployed in the region and the unemployment rate was double or more than the national average, many employers were unable to fill entry-level jobs. We explored the nature of these jobs, their accessibility, the hiring processes involved, and what prospects they offered people. Every one of these levels of

exploration held design challenges that needed to be resolved if there were to be positive outcomes for both jobseekers and employers. The following quotes from interviews illustrate different points of view in relation to each stakeholder group:

“I want to work. I actually have a job—but I can’t get there because I don’t have a license. It’s five kilometers away, but to get my child to childcare, and then to the job I have to catch a bus. There’s only two buses from here—the first is too early to get the baby up and ready, and the second is too late for me to get to work. And then it would take me an hour to get there. I have to go in to (the city) first and then back out, to get to a job that’s just five kilometers down the road.” (Jobseeker)

“There is no shortage of entry-level jobs in some industries—it’s about explaining what those jobs are, what they look like and what could come from those jobs. There are some people that see twenty dollars an hour and go I don’t know whether I’m necessarily going to be better off doing that job for twenty dollars an hour when I’ve got all those extra costs to get to work so I’ve got travel costs and childcare and this and that and so am I going to actually be better off at the end of the week than I was when I was on unemployment benefits?” (Service Provider)

“We offer safe jobs, with training, opportunities for going up the line, work that is not standard and not brain numbing, we are generous in terms of pay. But still we can’t find people—I can’t help but conclude that people in this region don’t want to work. And yet there’s so much noise about youth unemployment—I just don’t get it. Somewhere someone has got things wrong.” (Employer)



Employers

“People don’t want to work”

“I have jobs but I can’t find anyone willing to work”

“There are plenty of entry level jobs - but they don’t seem to be attractive to local people”

Entry-Level Jobseekers

Lack of transport options

Dealing with complex issues (eg. addiction, trauma etc)

Lack of role models & relationship networks connecting people to employers & modelling employment

Language & cultural barriers

Visa Restrictions & work rights

Figure 2 Illustration of different perspectives highlighting the gulf between the needs and perceptions of jobseekers and employers.

When we examined the complex issues faced by many of the jobseekers we spoke to, we were left with further ethical and design challenges. For example, even if we were to design effective responses that helped people access, achieve, and sustain employment, what transformative potential did particular jobs provide in their lives? More specifically, were we going to design responses that moved people from a precarity based on joblessness, to a precarity based on employment which did not provide any prospects for economic security, especially if the jobs were informal, had poor conditions, or involved precarious contractual obligations with no guarantee of regular work?

These questions were vital. They were not about discouraging us from acting. Nor were they just about determining whether our interventions would be different enough from current services to create outcomes for people who were accustomed to services failing them. Asking these questions was required to confront the politics of *who* was able and *prepared* to ‘take risks’ to do something differently to develop possible approaches for longer-term change. Taking on

an entry-level employment opportunity, understandably, involved weighing possible risks to determine if it might be a reasonable decision not to take a twenty dollar per hour job if the costs outweighed the benefits for the person or their dependents. We were left with the question: what risks were employers and service providers prepared to take to respond more sensitively to disadvantaged jobseekers?

In this context, our role was to develop the foundations for understanding the issues more holistically, through giving voice to experiences of contingent precarity and multiple perspectives from young people. This involved not only mapping the different challenges they faced in gaining employment, such as access to transport and care responsibilities, but also looking for the connections between issues and how they were experienced by individuals. We then needed to identify 'sites' for multiple experimentation to begin designing responses that considered the interactions of young people across different services rather than tackling a limited aspect of one organization or departmental delivery. In effect, we challenged the notion that more quick fixes, such as re-designing employability skills or career advice, would make longitudinal change. We were compelled to do this through our commitment and engagement with young people that highlighted how their precarious circumstances were sustained through invisible complexities of which service providers and employers were unaware, and as a result, unable to deliver necessary responses. We were, however, cautious that government agencies and third-sector organizations highlighted that responding to complex social issues required planning large-scale interventions. From our experiences we were also aware that such responses could be expensive, slow, and challenging in complex contexts such as the ones we faced. It was clear from the data analysis that any kind of transformational response required a more action-oriented approach that enabled all those involved to see and experience different alternatives. While there was a great deal of data about *what* needed to change, there was much less clarity about *how* this could change. Responses therefore needed to start from the basis that we (the group of stakeholders) needed to learn together about what potentially could work for the young people. In effect, what we felt was needed was a prototyping approach rather than default 'planning' responses on which government agencies and third-sector organizations often rely (see Table 1).

Planning	Designing
Managing the detail of implementation	Understanding the system, experience and impact
Process: -Specify problems/opportunities -Formulate alternatives -Evaluate effects -Compare alternatives -Select a plan	Process: - Frame challenge and name assumptions - Test Assumptions through Design Research -Ideate -Prototype -Select -Implement -Learn
Look for the 'best option' and execute at least in pilot form	Deep understanding, test, fail early and often, in order to improve chances of succeeding

Table 1: Different orientations between taking a planning approach, familiar to many of the service providers and employers, and a design approach, which was less familiar territory to stakeholders. Managing risk in this context required understanding a planning mindset and moving stakeholders towards a more experimental design mindset by drawing attention to the precarious lives of the young people.

Prototyping offered our design team opportunities for deeper learning and confidence building about potential alternatives to existing service provision, as responses could be iterated and refined quickly rather than requiring protracted piloting of potential solutions. We believed this to be preferable in meeting the needs of the young people, in that as a design team we were able to sense check how a particular service may or may not support their specific needs. To develop proposals for the prototypes, we translated young people’s insights, statistical data, and existing evidence of what was and wasn’t working into design challenges. We consolidated these into a series of corresponding, interconnected, provisional prototypes envisioned to work across different parts of the system. Doing so kept in mind a specific young person’s history and needs and the different forms of associated disadvantage they may be experiencing (e.g. access to limited support networks, mental health issues, confidence and self-esteem, limited access to secure finance and history of debt, and limited mobility and independence. See Figure 1 for more specific detail).

For instance, access to transport to attend job searches, interviews, and places of work was a consistent issue for many young people. Many did not have licenses, nor resources for independent or familial travel such as a car, motorbike or pedal bike, and many areas where jobs were located did not have good transport links. A community transport initiative was proposed and endorsed by numbers of employers as a way to offer more tailored approaches, including designing suitable timetables, routes, and suitable costs, and thereby better linking young people to jobs in the region. While this could speak to one of the challenge areas, if young people had children or adult care responsibilities, mental health issues, problems with addiction or language

and cultural barriers, then transport alone would not be enough to support them in finding and keeping employment. In many ways, there were enough services in the region to offer the necessary additional support, but they were often disjointed, and hard to navigate and access.

A commissioning framework to join up services across different sectors was proposed, which could help identify and respond to issues faced by young jobseekers. A transport initiative and commissioning framework would only be of value however if there were quality jobs available and those responsible for hiring were aware of the complex issues associated with disadvantage. While employers and service providers had focused on gaining employment as a generic step towards tackling disadvantage, they had not considered the wider complexities of employment experienced by young people. Nor had they considered the implications of the difference between a 'job' and a 'quality job' or whether or not a young person who had experienced disadvantage could actually use employment as a pathway out of intergenerational disadvantage. By bringing issues of quality to the fore, this challenged employers and service providers to think of the negative impacts of zero hour contracts without assurances of adequate training and longer-term prospects. But changes such as these would only be relevant if industries were performing well and actively recruiting, and if job seekers were more easily connected to and made more comfortable with employers through extended social networks, and career support was person-centered and concerned with young people's needs and longer-term aspirations. The prototypes that emerged therefore included particular cross-sectoral sites for potential experimentation; employment focused community transport, a commissioning framework to join up services across different sectors, changes in hiring processes linking disadvantaged young people to quality jobs, a platform to connect job seekers with employers through extending social networks, person-centered career support, and a campaign for building a positive future for local manufacturing.

The aim is that these will be tested together to develop more holistic responses to the issues identified by young job seekers, employers and service providers. We recognize that these will not address every challenge in depth, and that more challenges will emerge through experimentation across the prototypes. Prototyping and testing are, however, not without perceived risks from the service providers, policy makers, and funders, who are much more familiar with singular sector planning approaches (e.g. either just from welfare, mental health or employment services). These tend to focus on pilot trials, evaluation, and scaling of ideas. It is still too early to say whether the conditions have been created to implement the prototypes, but what has become clear is that developing them across multiple interconnected sites is itself considered 'risky'—not from the perspective of those impacted by the issues, but from the perspective of those charged with addressing the issues. Prototypes have been designed to be situated in spaces that do not neatly fit into any one organization or any one area of responsibility. The prototypes also involve an admission that 'experts' might not immediately 'know' answers but must try out ideas through new partnerships. This has created perceived uncertainties and risks by highlighting the necessity of new collaborative partnerships that require working together to understand rather than automatically assume what will be successful for the young people. As a design team, we have found ourselves increasingly advocating for better outcomes for the young people with whom we have worked. At the same time, we have also needed to create the foundations for leading a diverse group of stakeholders into the territory of uncertainty and

ambiguity, by keeping alive specific experiences of young people and highlighting how small adjustments to existing services could perpetuate the same limited, marginalizing responses. We frequently found ourselves in a position of needing to negotiate between planning and prototyping through articulating how risks could be perceived differently by calling forth the complexities of disadvantage in specific young people's lives.

Anticipating Precarity and Risk in Design for Social Innovation

In calling forth Butler's position on precarity as a reflective lens to understand decision-making practices in design for social innovation, we have provided a preliminary sketch of the iterative ethical judgements and action involved in grappling with some of the complexities of young people's lives and the wider socio-economic structures that frame experiences and perceptions of disadvantage. In our final discussion, three commitments are highlighted to draw attention to decision-making that goes beyond what is considered *at risk* as represented by service providers or quantitative data. Rather, the commitments suggest approaches for designers drawing together neglected perspectives relevant for working towards sustainable change. These commitments include finding approaches to, understanding, and drawing attention to the broad holistic picture of service provision; responding to young people's intersecting needs and concerns; and identifying multiple intersecting sites of intervention in order to show how alternative action could be taken across different organizations.

While these commitments go some way to illustrate the value of being mindful of and working through issues associated with precarity, they also suggest particular tensions and complexities in acts of translation that operate through specific institutional structures and sociopolitical agendas inherently impacting the potential role of design to enable substantive change. In this final section we further discuss how these approaches to holistically understanding intersecting needs and identifying multiple sites of experimentation helped to generate culturally situated judgements and responses to precarity. These approaches were also engendered and constrained through acts of translation in relation to *different perceptions of risk*.

Understanding Holistically

Acquisition of knowledge and information can often be seen to limit and indeed help manage risk (Lupton 2013; Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulgan 2010). Designers working with multiple stakeholders will often navigate very different kinds of knowledge in complex, generative and open ways. The purpose of this is to both enable creative risk through opening up, while being mindful of potential ways this can impact and challenge people involved sometimes in uncomfortable ways (Akama, Pink and Sumartojo 2018; Huybrechts et al. 2014; Kaethler et al. 2017; Bratteteig and Wagner 2012). In our example, TACSI compiled a myriad of different types of information, including data, evidence, and personal experience from people involved in and affected by employment services. Yet the knowledge constructed through this existing data, despite its proliferation, had not been enough to make a difference for those young people involved. Neither was the information enough to define a suitable way forward or inform alternative approaches for action. Reports were produced from a particular departmental lens and were therefore limited in their point of view to other possible factors contributing to young people's

access to employment. When perspectives from employers and service users were placed in dialogue, much more complex insights emerged. Situated knowledges and personal experiences of delivering and using particular services were therefore more substantial for the design team in suggesting inadequacies not identified in more formal demographic or statistical analyses, highlighting how “certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support” (Butler 2004, 14). Critical questioning and awareness of gaps, imbalances, and limitations of data further helped to reorient the design team at different points during the process, where attempts to address the lack of alternative perspectives were purposely drawn together.

For example, government services focused on unemployment as the main site for tackling disadvantage without recognizing this in itself could perpetuate other forms of insecure employment. The service ecosystem to address unemployment was therefore based on assumptions that employment was a significant step. As a result, responses overlapped and worked towards the same agenda without recognizing wider issues of insecurity associated with the specificity of work available to young people, and potential wider sociocultural, economic and health issues that could impact people’s ability to work. The design team drew attention to these issues as they were considered to be most precarious, at risk of being lost in the broad landscape of data that represented narrow perspectives. Through illustrating and synthesizing such inadequacies and the wider holistic experience of access to jobs and services for jobseekers, the design team sought to broaden the scope of inquiry.

Responding to Intersecting Needs

Agid (2011) describes how particular service provision for those who have a diversity of needs can sometimes limit representation to a single defined problem. Invoking the notion of “complex personhood” (Gordon 2008), Agid describes the significance of social design that attends to the nuances of actual people’s lives, intersecting needs and concerns, including longer-term desires that may appear incidental, but underline possible routes for transformative change. In the case study we present, services designed to address specific kinds of precarity associated with employment are based on a limited view of what is deemed important. Employers’ assigning blame based on limited perception (e.g. as stated in Figure 2, local people “just didn’t want to work”) however masked wider issues associated with long-term experiences of disadvantage. It was therefore important for designers to proceed critically, engaging with and remaining open to other contributing factors and wider societal limitations. This was achieved by actively and consistently questioning how organizations, including employers, were addressing the particular employment needs of young people. This presented an ethical and moral dilemma for the design team: either designing for short-term goals of getting people into employment, or tackling particular routes to quality sustainable employment. The design team felt the former would not make a difference, and would continue to perpetuate limited perspectives derived from data. The latter required a much wider framing of the issues, bringing experiences of young people to the fore to understand their lives through existing historical, economic, cultural, and social infrastructures and constraints.

Butler’s use of translation “to find the language through which to lay claims to rights” (2009, 10) to promote alternative modes of action, here, highlights the significance of *who* is involved in

design work within social innovation teams. Although the unemployed young people participating in this first phase of the project were not necessarily positioned as agents to enact change, their experiences guided the development of prototypes. The next stage of the project will involve young people in testing and refining the prototypes. They may not be the same young people due to the extended time lag between the design research and the testing phase. Although engaging young people for an extended period of time could have been a valuable long-term strategy, it was clear young people experiencing disadvantage were also dealing with time and resource constraints associated with care-giving, gendered attitudes to work, language barriers, chronic illness, and trauma, to name but a few (e.g. see Figure 1). These challenges significantly impacted their ability to engage in and sustain particular forms of translation work in suggesting alternative futures. Further, the reality of the contractual nature of the design work undertaken meant that the precarity of funding significantly limited the ability to engage young people in participatory processes over a long period of time.

It is critical to understand what 'participation' actually requires if it is to exist across the design process. Engaging people in the long-term participatory processes required to shift structures or systems also requires significant long-term resourcing. This is an ongoing concern across participatory design practice that seeks to involve partners in equitable long-term decision-making about their futures (Light and Akama 2014). Unfortunately, the reality of many socially innovative design processes is that resourcing is not guaranteed for the long term and is subject to shifts over time (Armstrong et al. 2014; Thorpe and Gammon 2011). This case study project started with enough resources for the design research, but required additional resources for the development of more action-oriented prototypes.

Young people's involvement in the process therefore needed to be designed with sensitivity to their specific experiences and the constraints on time and resources. It was problematic to ask those who would benefit significantly from change to take responsibility for acts of translation to make themselves heard and act collectively, without the necessary supportive infrastructures and resources to do so. Rather, the interdisciplinary team took responsibility for translating experiences into a more visual and action-oriented language through design. Design here served to promote accessibility across different understandings, making available multiple perspectives, while at the same time scoping alternative interconnected directions for action mindful of past shortcomings. Designers therefore took on the responsibility of bringing together differing perspectives, translating across power-differentiated positions. This presented uncomfortable yet necessary positions of power in this process, negotiated through the ethical strains of holding on and feeling accountable to young people's experiences while speaking on their behalf, without their actual presence. The key role of the design team was therefore to sensitively make 'real' the precarious experiences of young people and their access to existing services to stakeholders who were considerably distanced from both the sites of intervention and the complex lives of unemployed young people. Awareness of these uncomfortable and sometimes awkward, yet necessary, positions was important for enabling negotiation across different perspectives. To make the translation work meaningful for stakeholders, and to make a difference for young people, the design team needed to constantly move between the organizational planning mindset of service providers and prototyping for more

provisional alternative action, while bringing forth detail from the specificity of young people's lives and potential risks associated with disadvantage that was originally masked from view.

Identifying Multiple Sites of Intervention

Butler (2009) highlights the significance of translation in adopting the dominant language of institutions in order to find a way to claim the right for future alternative action. Ahmed (2017) further discusses how her intersectional feminist position, focused on taking action, leads to a more in-depth understanding of complex issues when working towards more equitable futures. She argues that staking a claim to action can also risk being perceived as too oppositional, where views are disregarded and relationships that might enable action are damaged. In our case study the different prototypes proposed by the design team created this point of tension in suggesting multiple sites of intervention across multiple service providers. The design team approached the process to transform unemployment provision by committing to the long-term impacts of their decisions for young people. TACSI were keen to promote holistic understandings of service provision and intersecting needs that could best respond to the complexity of challenges to be addressed, but this was also in conflict with how service providers perceived young people and challenged their prior perceptions of how the problem of unemployment should be addressed. Prototypes here were therefore not positioned as finalized entities to evaluate success or failure in the same way as a planning approach might suggest. Rather prototypes were seen as integral parts of a process needing refinement and testing. Prototypes were presented as highlighting further uncertainty, challenges, and early failures that could provide valuable learning as a way for finding a language for future action. This did not however mean that creative risk was limited or that designers were able to know or manage the risks involved so as to remove them. Rather, multiple opportunities for intervention across service providers were identified as a means of responding to young people's complex lives, and keeping this at the core of the prototype designs.

Additional acts of translation, drawing from holistic understandings and responding to intersecting needs, were enacted through design alternatives as a starting point to lay claim to future provisional possibilities rather than probabilities (Akama, Pink and Sumartojo 2018). As yet, testing of the prototypes has not been resourced, but multiple sites were suggested to avoid a 'quick fix' comprised of singular and temporary solutions. Complex challenges required a "moral maturity" (D'Anjou 2010, 104) in accepting potential uncertainty of outcome. This approach was considered responsive in dealing with complex societal issues so as not to overstretch, overstate, or over-promise on potential transformative effects (Thorpe and Gammon 2011, 224). Fundamental change was needed and this was addressed through interrelated prototypes (Wilson and Zamberlan 2015) to raise further issues and matters of concern (Hillgren, Seravalli and Emilson 2011), rather than seek to resolve the problem of disadvantage as it was framed by experts. Risks could not be shared between stakeholders in straightforward ways as perhaps proposed by Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulgan (2010). This was due to the importance of recognizing specific situated differences, project set-up, issues of resourcing and respecting time commitments for those who would be most affected. Risk therefore needed to be considered much more in *relation to precarity* and understood as a much more diverse set of cultural concerns

between young people, service providers and the design team's perceptions as they emerged in and through the design process.

Conclusion

As design for social innovation practices are adopted and as the field matures, more critical and political perspectives on how designers work with complex societal issues and concerns are needed. In this paper we articulated how issues of risk and precarity might be anticipated and negotiated in design for social innovation by creating an outline and sketch of practitioner perspectives drawn from a project focused on alleviating perceived entrenched place-based disadvantage. Existing vocabularies associated with risk in social innovation on the management of risk in design (Armstrong et al. 2014; Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulgan 2010; Tonkinwise 2016) can suggest limiting probabilities rather than opening possibilities (Akama, Pink and Sumartojo 2018; Appadurai 2013). And while additional sociocultural perspectives (e.g. Beck 1998; Lupton 2013; Zinn 2008) or potential creative frameworks (Dempster 2009) could highlight more nuanced aspects of risk, we employed Butler's ethical philosophical position on *precarity* as a lens to explore how risk in design for social innovation could shape practice. This position has highlighted specific tensions, contradictions, and strategies leveraged by a design team seeking to transform the lives of others in more sustainable ways.

For social innovation to fulfill transformative ends avoiding potential instrumentalization of democratic ideologies and neoliberal politics (Markussen 2017), anticipating and preparing to navigate *risk in relation to precarity* offers potential inroads to approach the situated sociopolitical and economic challenges of social innovation. Our case study underlines the importance in confronting ongoing challenges to accessing resources and time constraints in making claims about design and social innovation's transformative potential (Armstrong et al. 2014; Thorpe and Gammon 2011). Understanding what was considered precarious by organizations, and what precarious aspects of life were invisible, was important for highlighting how multidisciplinary design approaches can support holistic understandings of complexity and intersecting needs, suggesting multiple interagency sites of intervention. TACSI's example also showed how understanding and negotiating risk in relation to precarity within design for social innovation required greater attention to issues of difference and translation. In particular, the case study highlighted who had agency and power to take and share risks within the context of social innovation, where projects are commissioned and stakeholders are distanced from potential sites requiring change. Such design spaces are inherently uncomfortable and place ethical strain on designers, as they strive to understand and distribute agency to those living precarious lives. What was initially experienced by the team as invisible was a lack of recognition of other forms of precarity associated with the lives of unemployed young people, often perpetuated by the very existence of systems put in place to reduce financial insecurity. Although it is still unclear how this will be realized in the future, the design team perceived multiple sites for intervention using multiple prototypes, as a viable alternative to the singular sector 'planning' mindset. Avoiding singular perspectives, responding to intersecting needs as complex personhood, translation through design, and working towards multiple sites of intervention helped draw together wider

sociocultural, political, and economic concerns in taking steps towards understanding generative and accountable risk-taking in relation to precarity in design for social innovation.

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