The Longest Way Round: Investigation of a Slow Design Methodology for Freelance Graphic Designers

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Declaration

I hereby certify that the material submitted in this thesis towards award of the Masters in Graphic Design Practice is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfillment of the award named above.

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Abstract

The focus of this research is concerned with identifying the potential affordances of a Slow Design framework for freelance graphic designers. While the findings may be applicable to the wider international industry of graphic design, for the scope of this study the research is primarily concerned with the affordances within the location of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The context of Vancouver serves as a case study of a large North American city with a documented influx of freelance graphic designers and propensities toward social and environmental values that align with the priorities of Slow Design. Some of these values within Vancouver include a focus on sustainability in response to climate concerns, reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and healthier practices for the wellbeing of individual designers.

Through analysis of its history and literature this study identifies the main tenets of Slow Design as being concerned with wellness for individuals, societies, and the environment through slowing down design processes, outputs, and experiences of engagement. As demonstrated within other creative fields that have embraced Slow methods, including Slow Food and Slow Fashion, actions and outputs are evaluated in relation to their value, quality and sustainability. Within current literature, there is a lack of explicit references to graphic design practices in relation to Slow Design, which the study bridges through outlining suggested parallels between the two.

Given the vastness of practices within the graphic design industry, the study focuses on freelance graphic designers given the identified propensities many of them possess towards operating outside of more corporate and/or mainstream graphic design contexts. Correlations between the practices and further affordances for adoption of Slow Design amongst freelance graphic design practitioners are strongly suggested in the literature and further substantiated through a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews. The culmination of this study proposes a flexible Slow Design methodology geared towards the practices of freelance graphic designers that presents the foundational philosophy, key elements, and guiding principles of Slow Design for further adoption and implementation within freelance practices.

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Dedicated to my goat Patsy (2008–2023), a slow mover and loyal companion till the end; rest in peace.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

“The longest way round is the shortest way home” (Joyce 1922, p.360).

This seemingly paradoxical quote from Joyce’s *Ulysses* poetically captures the ethos behind the evolving theory of Slow Design; pathways to meaningful enquiry are not always linear or predictable. Slow Design, in its most simple definition, is “an approach that encourages a slower, more considered, and reflective process with the goal of positive wellbeing for individuals, societies, environments, and economies” (Fuad-Luke 2008, p.361). While time is a key consideration within Slow Design, it is not solely confined to the literal definition of slow as “a reduced speed” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023); slow in this context seeks a nonlinear and more imaginative approach to design with the goal of equipping “people to be more at ease with the increasing uncertainty and precarity of contemporary life” (Strauss 2018, p.1). These findings suggest that the reflective nature of Slow Design is concerned with helping designers to examine their practice and their own responsibilities in relation to accelerating changes in the graphic design industry landscape as well as the growing complexity and interconnectedness of contemporary global issues.

One such accelerating change within the design industry is the increase of independent or freelancing graphic designers. A 2022 survey of more than 10,000 freelance designers in 144 countries revealed that designers are continuing to reconsider their place in the industry landscape with 60% finding greater work-life balance freelancing, and just 15% of the survey respondents wanting to be employed at an agency within the next five years (Design Without Borders 2022, p.36). This same report also suggested a rise in brand activism[1], with 85% of respondents feeling that it is important to work for clients who share their values, and 40% reporting to have turned down work because of a client’s stance on social issues (p.21).

While these initial findings are global in nature, they reveal a suggested shift in the graphic design industry at large in the quantity of freelancers as well as their propensities to position their practices in ways that make positive contributions to society. In an effort to narrow the scope of research, similar parallels have been found within the city of Vancouver, British Columbia (BC), Canada, as a case study of a large North American city. According to the last available data from the University of British Columbia, there is an increasing number of independently operating graphic designers in

[1] Brand Activism: “An act which consists of business efforts centered on a brand that aims to “promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society.” (Sarkar and Kotler 2018, p.554).

the province, with only 23% of BC graphic design service establishments having formal employees (UBC Industry Overview Graphic Design 2017). According to the Government of Canada's Labour Market Information for the 2022–2024 period, employment in the graphic design sector in BC is projected to be limited due to an imbalance between demand and labour supply as the number of new positions remains moderate in relation the number of graduates from educational programmes and current levels of unemployed workers in the sector (Government of Canada, 2023). Within this region in particular, data strongly suggests an increasing trajectory of freelance practices among graphic designers, motivated by ethical as well as economic factors.

With the simultaneous growth of freelance graphic design practices and the adoption of Slow Design within other fields of design, the question of potential affordances between the two emerges. With Slow Design's history rooted in the past of many other Slow movements and methodologies, including Slow food, fashion, and architecture, some of the main tenets linking them all include: looking to the local rather than the global, considering the environmental impacts of one's actions, striving for sustainability, and valuing simplicity over largeness or complications. (Staniforth 2010, p.75). In relation to both food and clothing as globally staple commodities, the application of Slow principles through local production methods and craftsmanship for sustainable outputs are perhaps more readily understood in relation to their antitheses of fast food and fast fashion. When it comes to the field of graphic design however, in which services, processes, and outputs greatly vary, the question arises: how might graphic designers operating as freelancers apply the tenets of Slow Design to their practices?

This thesis investigates the potential of Slow Design as a meaningful framework for practicing freelance graphic designers in the context of Vancouver, Canada. While Vancouver serves to help situate the relevance of the study to a city with a documented increase of freelance graphic designers, the perspectives of a range of international freelancers, independent creatives, and Slow Design researchers are explored within the study to compare practices and establish global relevance of the subject, for affordances within Vancouver and beyond.

1.2 Research Question

What are the affordances of a Slow Design framework for freelance graphic designers in Vancouver, Canada?

1.3 Aim

To answer the research question, the aim of this thesis is to investigate whether Slow Design theory offers a meaningful approach to practice that could potentially be adopted for graphic designers operating as freelancers in Vancouver.

1.4 Objectives

The following objectives have been chosen to fully interrogate the research question and establish a valid set of findings for analysis.

1. Establish the historical context and main tenets of Slow Design theory.
2. Develop an understanding of how Slow Design is being implemented within other industries.
3. Define the terms Graphic Design and Freelance to establish the possible connections and challenges of adopting a Slow Design Methodology.
4. Investigate the current conditions of the freelance graphic design industry in Vancouver to determine if there are propensities for adopting a Slow Design framework.
5. Substantiate potential affordances of Slow Design in freelance graphic design practice.

Once each of the above objectives are achieved, the results are analysed in order to determine the applicability of Slow Design for freelance graphic designers in Vancouver and to make appropriate recommendations for areas of further study.

1.5 Rationale

The first section of this research provides the background and context for the study, citing preliminary investigations within the literature in relation to Slow Design and freelance graphic design within the context of Vancouver to draw connections and form the research question and aim. From there the objectives are identified that assist in establishing areas of investigation to fully address the research question. Section One goes on to outline the research plan that is linked to the objectives and concludes by providing the context of the study and its value to potential stakeholders. The context outlines the motivation and personal benefit of the study to the researcher as well as to potential stakeholders including other freelance practitioners, design educators and students, and those interested in a growing economic sector of the design industry.

This is followed by the literature review, which is a comprehensive study and interpretation of literature surrounding a topic that leads to the development of new insights (Aveyard cited in Bell and Waters 2018, p.125). The literature review is divided into two sections, with the first one focusing on Slow Design and an analysis of its history, philosophy, principles, and application within existing Slow practices in order to reveal potential for its adoption as a framework within other industries. Due to the fact that both the terms “graphic design” and “freelance” can encompass many different disciplines and practices, the second section of the literature review focuses on clearly defining these terms in order to establish the scope of this study. It also further defines the context and relevance of the study in relation to Vancouver to assist in establishing how Slow Design can apply to freelance graphic designers within a specific location.

The next section outlines the research methodology for the study and provides justification for the primary research approach adopted to ensure the methods are valid and results are reliable. It rationalises an Interpretivist theoretical perspective, due to the social nature of the topic, that examines Slow Design as an evolving field inextricably linked to people, to environment, and to community. This perspective informs the choice of qualitative semi-structured interviews as the most suitable method for obtaining in-depth insights from appropriate candidates who met the criteria outlined in the research design, including experience as freelance practitioners and propensities towards, or knowledge of, Slow Design.

The final two sections of the study present and analyse the primary data gathered through the interviews in order to address the research question and present all final findings in relation to the objectives of the study. Lastly, recommendations are made for potential areas of further research to explore connections and advancement of Slow Design in contexts that extend beyond the scope of this study.

1.6 Context

As a settler[2] Canadian freelancer who has operated in Vancouver and internationally, I am deeply interested in the development of good practice around ethical and social responsibility within the expanding field of freelance graphic design. After experiencing creative burnout from unsustainable working conditions in graphic design, I am invested in exploring alternative practices in which independent designers have the tools to prioritise wellness in their work on an individual level as well as societal and environmental levels. As a result of this contextual lens, the research undertaken in this thesis is of benefit to me personally as well to fellow freelance designers seeking

[2] “Being a settler means that you are non-indigenous and that you or your ancestors came and settled in a land that had been inhabited by indigenous people. This primarily refers to people of European descent; non-white settlers can be referred to as “settlers of colour.”” (City of Vancouver, 2023).

to position their careers outside of the more mainstream contexts of corporate graphic design practices. For both emerging and established freelance graphic designers, the research provides areas of consideration and valuable insights from the literature and interviews in relation to working on meaningful projects, client relationships, connection to local community, and the correlations between time, pace, and personal wellness within graphic design practices. The proposed Slow Design framework from this research is also of value for freelancers as an actionable tool kit for implementing a Slow Design approach in practice.

This study is also of relevance to design educators and students as a way of encouraging a more substantial awareness of opportunities for graphic design to impact the greater good of society. As highlighted through case studies and the historical context of Slow Design and graphic design in the literature review, designers are encouraged to find their voice as social citizens. A current trend within design education is to instill in students a sense of social responsibility and this study could offer new avenues of alternative approaches to socially responsible graphic design.

Given the identified social, environmental, and ethical values of Slow Design, other stakeholders for this research could also include a range of non-profits, community organisations, activist groups, and cultural initiatives that wish to work with graphic designers who have similar values. This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the potential of Slow Design in ensuring that graphic design collateral aligns with an organisation's ethos. The findings could facilitate the development and promotion of collaborative relationships between organisations and freelance graphic designers to create design solutions that resonate with their shared goals and priorities.

In examining the wider context, this research can also be of benefit to government officials and those interested in supporting a growing economic sector of the design industry. In consideration of how to position creative practices to meet targets in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, this study provides insights for governments to support initiatives within industries that could potentially serve as a platform within the graphic design sector to demonstrate the contributions they are making to sustainable initiatives. The findings within this study highlight a growing concern for how businesses respond to the interconnected environmental and social issues of today and presents consideration for the adoption and potential incentivisation of Slow Design within legislation and business practices.

Similarly, this research can be of benefit to industry professionals within creative sectors who desire to be forerunners in relation to achieving green/sustainability goals. According to the last available data from the Creative BC 2020/21 Impact Report, a strong and unifying theme across the entire

creative sector of the province is a “sustainability mindset” with a deepening of priorities in relation to social justice and the environment. This comes with a sense of urgency that is close to home as the province felt the effects of the global climate crisis linked to BC’s devastating wild fires and floods in 2021 (Creative BC 2021, p.7). Within this context, Slow Design offers potential in helping creative industries, including graphic design, to achieve their sustainability goals as economic development within the province of BC seeks greater purpose and interconnection through “reprioritizing equity and the environment as equal considerations” (p.7).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is to provide an overview and key points of the existing information surrounding the research topic in order to determine where the pieces of primary research need to take place to further enhance the study. Through engagement and analysis of the topic's historical background, guiding principles, case studies, and key authors, the literature review identifies a set of themes and topics surrounding Slow Design and freelance graphic design to be used as subjects for discussion within the interviews.

The literature review is divided into two primary sections. The first half focuses on Slow Design, outlining its historical background and insights from key researchers and authors in order to establish the philosophy and guiding principles that underpin the application of Slow Design within other disciplines. This information provides a preliminary framework for assessing the implementation of a Slow Design approach. This section also situates the wider global relevance of Slow Design in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to demonstrate its potential as a meaningful contribution to new solutions on an international scale.

The following half of the literature review outlines how the terms "graphic design" and "freelance" are defined within the context of this study and identifies potential connections with Slow Design. This section goes on to narrow the focus of the study by exploring the context of Vancouver and the opportunities it provides for further adoption of Slow Design by freelancers within a specific location. The Slow Design framework is then tested in relation to a graphic design case study by building on the foundations established in the first half of the review. Lastly, the literature review summarises the gaps it has identified in the existing body of literature. Notably, it highlights the limited availability of literature concerning graphic design practices in relation to Slow Design. These gaps emphasise the necessity for additional primary research to further substantiate and expand the study in relation to the practices of freelance graphic designers.

2.2 Slow Design

2.2.1 History & Precedents

In order to understand how Slow Design is being implemented across different design fields, it is first necessary to examine its origins in order to further break down and apply its associated

terminology and principles. According to Fuad-Luke (2002), Slow Design is a holistic approach to design research and practice with the goal of orientating solutions to have long-term positive impacts that balance anthropocentric needs (individual, sociocultural) with the needs of the planet. It has been said that “a few blades of grass can do more to dislodge concrete than a thousand marching feet.” (Anonymous, cited in Walker and Giard 2013, p.73). Much like blades of grass emerging through concrete, the humble beginnings of Slow Design demonstrate that many small actions can make a big impact over time. Its beginnings can be traced back to the 1989 Slow Movement, inspired by the international grassroots organisation Slow Food, that was founded in Italy to “counter the rise of fast food and fast life” (Slow Food International, 1989). Founder of the Slow Food movement Carlo Petrini suggested that people be reflective as they eat, about the sources of where their food comes from, and that food must be good (selected according to quality), clean (promoting environmental sustainability), and fair (respecting the rights of farmers) (Patrignani 2014, p.82). In examining these originating values of good, clean, and fair, three priorities are revealed within the Slow Movement of the interrelated importance of quality, sustainability, and value in relation to creation processes and outputs.

Since the 1980’s, a variety of networks, campaigns, and projects have evolved through the ever-growing organisation Slow Food International providing actionable examples of these Slow values in practice. One such illustrative initiative is the Slow Food Cooks' Alliance, a global network of chefs dedicated to preserving biodiversity through support of local small-scale producers. Their primary aim is to ensure transparency and traceability in the sourcing of food, achieved by listing producer names on their menus, thus giving due credit to their work (Slow Food Cooks' Alliance, 2021). This practice of communication by the chefs serves to inform consumers about the sustainable processes behind their food production. Consequently, it encourages customers to contemplate the value of their consumption choices, ultimately benefiting broader society. The example strongly connects to both quality and sustainability through its support of local farmers and the preservation of biodiversity. By highlighting these efforts through effective communication, the overall value of the initiative is elevated. Moreover, this approach offers customers the opportunity to support small businesses that share their values. Although this example is specific to the Slow Food Cooks' Alliance, it underscores the increasing relevance and interconnected themes found in the Slow literature and hints at how considerations of quality, sustainability, and value can be adapted to other creative fields and industries.

The small beginnings of the Slow Movement as a localised protest against fast food have since grown beyond a focus on food to embrace a wide range of interests and ideas with “more than 100,000 members worldwide applying Slow principles to any area of life over which they feel they

have lost control." (Poirier and Robinson 2014, p.687). Another example within the literature of a prominent field that is implementing Slow principles in response to accelerating modes of production is Slow Fashion. In this case, Fast Fashion is the clear antithesis, referring to low-quality throwaway clothing that is mass-produced at a low cost with a high environmental impact (Brown 2010, p.103). Slow Fashion opens up new possibilities for the application of Slow values. Unlike food, which is ultimately consumed and has a relatively short lifespan, fashion by comparison endures longer in the world as physical objects. Consequently, fashion provides opportunity for consideration of longevity and the evolution of what happens beyond a physical product's expected lifespan. For some designers, Slow Fashion takes the form of mending, repairing, and redesigning existing garments that are destined for the landfill. This introduces an element of repurposing within the Slow Design vocabulary and the concept of creating value in something that may otherwise be discarded. In the context of fashion, the process of repurposing or upcycling often results in making the garment even more desirable than the original through the added values of time, skill, and uniqueness infused into the process. (Brown 2010, p.103). For other fashion designers, Slow Design takes the form of choosing ecological and organic fabrics, ethical production methods, or even a return to culturally-specific traditions, such as designer Samant Chauhan who works directly with artisanal weavers to incorporate the centuries-old tradition of Bhagalput weaving within his collections (Brown 2010, p.57). By placing an emphasis on traditional methods, quality is not only maintained but also elevated by the dedicated time and effort invested in a sustainable manner. These examples demonstrate how Slow Design provides a platform for reimagining design processes by facilitating consideration of these key elements as evaluative mechanisms within increasingly broader and more complex industries.

The examples explored thus far from Slow Food and Slow Fashion highlight common themes stemming from the Slow Movement. These themes center on the importance of making thoughtful decisions that consider the broader implications of design outputs, particularly in relation to their quality, sustainability, and value. While these three aspects may be manifested in different ways and at different stages of production, within the context of Slow Design they all involve a change in tempo. This change may raise the subsequent value and/or quality through implementing slower, yet more sustainable ways of creating something, or by allowing space for pause and contemplation through acts of engagement and interaction.

> The word 'Slow' speaks of a different tempo, conjuring up a sense of spaciousness and possibility, and a richer, deeper experience of life. Its appeal stems from a growing awareness that the speed of contemporary life is propelling humans and the planet down a precarious, disconnected, and unsustainable path.
>
> (Pais and Strauss 2016, p.9)

This suggests that designers may find slower, more deliberate approaches appealing as an alternative to the fast pace of contemporary life. It also reflects a growing concern about how design practices impact both individuals and the environment. From the literature presented thus far, a compelling argument can be made for encouraging creative exploration of sustainable design practices. In this context, Slow Design is often closely linked to Design for Sustainability, defined by Walker and Giard (2013) as seeking alternative ways of living meaningful lives while consuming significantly less energy and materials (p.5). The next section delves deeper into the meaningful potential of Slow Design by examining its foundational philosophical values that have been articulated within the literature.

2.2.2 Philosophy of Slow Design

As more people began to explore how the values and methods of Slow Design could be applied within their respective fields, Slow Design's first formal publication *Slow Design Manifesto* was published in 2003. The manifesto ultimately reveals that the term 'Slow Design' in itself is multilayered and can refer to the process of design (methods of how something is made), the outcomes of design (the final product/results), as well as the overall philosophical approach to design which encompasses the thinking behind the actions and outcomes (Fuad-Luke 2002, p.5). The Slow Design philosophical approach acts as an umbrella that informs the underlying values, providing purpose and meaning for practicing Slow Design. In building upon Petrini's founding Slow Food values of good (selected according to quality), clean (promotes environmental sustainability), and fair (respects the rights of farmers), the *Slow Design Manifesto* calls for a repositioning of the focus of design to contribute to wellbeing within the following three spheres: individual, environmental, and sociocultural as illustrated in Figure 1.

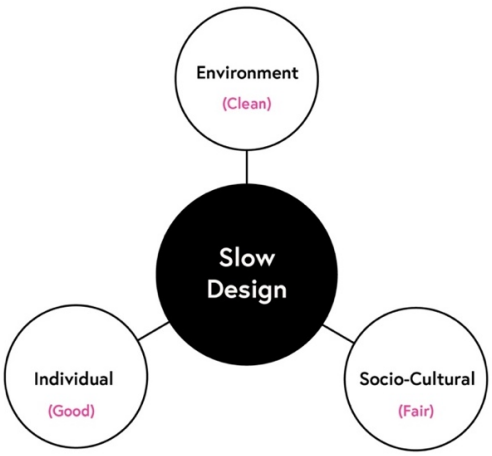


Fig. 1: The Three Spheres of Slow Design, from *Slow Design Manifesto* (Fuad-Luke 2003).

These three spheres that comprise the philosophical basis of Slow Design are significant in that they bring together values and aspects from many other preceding design movements and methodologies in order to apply them in a new way through a Slow lens. “Slow Design embraces design for need, design for society, emotion and user-centered design, inclusive design, and experiential design. Most importantly, Slow Design is a creative opportunity for designers to save themselves from the ignominious label of stylists and enablers of commercial gain.” (Fuad-Luke 2002, p.5). This viewpoint expressed by Fuad-Luke in relation to the purpose of a Slow Design approach is similarly echoed in the context of graphic design by Ambrose and Aono-Billson where they state: “design for the sake of design is empty; it needs backing of an idea with focus, and a sense of purpose for it to be truly successful.” (2011, p.15). This again illustrates within the literature similar viewpoints and philosophical positions behind Slow Design and best practices within graphic design. Fuad-Luke goes on to suggest that these viewpoints are not necessarily new, but are synthesised within the context of Slow Design to be used as interconnected benchmarks for designers to align their values with the purpose of their work. The following sections examine each philosophical sphere of Slow Design in more depth, commencing with the Individual sphere. This analysis aims to investigate areas where Slow Design has already been implemented in conjunction to the designer as an individual and explores possible connections to the context of graphic designers.

Individual Sphere

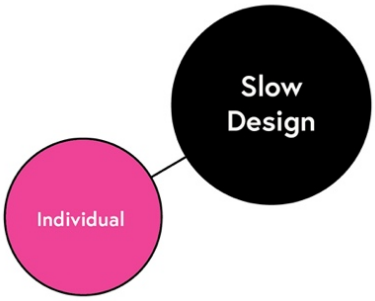


Fig. 2: The Individual Sphere of Slow Design (Arens, 2023).

In examining the Individual sphere first, the role of the graphic designer can be viewed in relation to their own wellbeing as well as their personal responsibility to the other spheres of society and the environment at large. According to Shaughnessy:

> If we believe in nothing, then our clients will have no reason to believe in us. If we demonstrate the morals of the market place then we will be treated like a commodity – and our services bought off at bargain basement prices…By standing up for yourself, by having beliefs (creative and ethical beliefs), and perhaps most importantly of all, by

> questioning what you are asked to do as a designer, you can acquire self-respect, which is the first step on the path to earning the respect of clients and other designers.
>
> (2005, p.27)

Shaughnessy believes designers need to examine their individual values in relation not only to their creative work but to their ethics at large to inform the types of design jobs they choose. Similar views are echoed by Findeli where he states:

> Design responsibility means that designers always should be conscious of the fact that, each time they engage themselves in a design project, they somehow recreate the world. As to the question of individual ethics, the matter is almost too simple: some kind of moral education must be included in the design curriculum, so that the moral consciousness of every student is increased.
>
> (2001, p.14)

This focus on the ethical practices of individuals in graphic design education and working practices reveals the potential affordances of Slow Design as a methodology for designers to help measure the moral contributions of their work. In linking back to Petrini's Slow Food value of goodness, and selecting food according to quality, there is an argument to suggest that the individual designer also needs to consider the goodness and quality of the different aspects that comprise their design practice. This assessment may encompass factors such as the choice of clients, the projects undertaken, and even the designer's lifestyle beyond their graphic design profession, incorporating Slow Design as a way of life.

> Slow Design is the spiritual, emotional and mental 'art' of living, emphasising creativity and experiences, whereas fast industrial design is the physical 'form and function' of living. Slow design should not be the sole preserve of professional designers, rather it should emerge as a more democratic process that involves cognition and emotion, information and observation, the proven and the intuitive. It should encourage a re-kindling of individual and socio-cultural imagination that has atrophied with ready-made materialism.
>
> (Fuad-Luke 2004, p.22)

This view is echoed in the literature surrounding Slow Fashion, that beyond a focus on minimising harm around the production aspects of the fashion industry, the existing model's values, perceptions, and habits of the mind ultimately need to be challenged as the root of unsustainability; "Without changing how fashion is thought about, both as a sector and a set of individual and social practices, the very issues that cause unsustainability will prove resilient." (Fletcher cited in Walker and Giard 2013, p.289). Within Slow Fashion some such examples of the changing habits around fashion and a slowing down of consumption include the Little Brown Dress (Gwilt and Risannen, 2011 p.122) and The Uniform Project (2009). In both examples, "protagonists wear the same dress

every day for a year and document this process online to demonstrate alternative ways to enjoy fashion and the creative possibilities of styling" (Fletcher 2013, p.289). While these examples may fall more under the categories of activism or protest in response to the existing fashion industry, they demonstrate a growing interest of designers and consumers in relation to systems of production and consumption and call on the actions of individuals to engage with alternative perspectives in a socially responsible way. They also illustrate connections in the language between the key elements of Slow Design (quality, sustainability, value) and the nature of projects designers take on. In these Slow Fashion examples, the value of communication is demonstrated through the desire of designers to inform audiences about pertinent and meaningful topics through sustainable practices.

The concept of socially responsible graphic design relates to designing for the common good, and while once eclipsed by the "dominant notion of design as the lubricant of consumer desire", the cultural climate has changed with the 'common good' being a concept nearly everyone gets, including big business (Shaughnessy cited in Resnick 2016, p.10). Such views are echoed by Stone, who believes socially responsible design occurs when designers use their power and skills for good, often in relation to uniting people through causes or motivating and supporting environmental consciousness and sustainability (2010, p.42). These perspectives suggest that the individual designer does not operate in a vacuum, and that through the adoption of strong personal values there is often a natural overlap with concerns relating to the following spheres of environmental and sociocultural wellbeing. The literature this far has established in terms of Slow Design that individuals need to be reflective of the meaning and values they wish to communicate through the projects, clients, and processes they engage with, as well as their personal lifestyles for a holistic approach. This strongly indicates connections within the graphic design literature that highlights the pertinence of meaningful topics and sustainable practices within the industry.

Environment Sphere

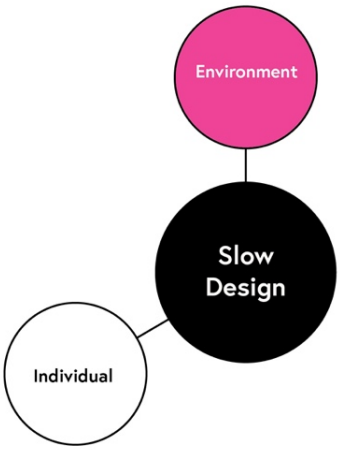


Fig. 3: The Environment Sphere of Slow Design (Arens, 2023).

Concern for the environment was a major factor in the founding Slow Movement, as expressed in Petrini's second Slow Food value: that food should be clean in relation to its environmental impact. He believed:

> Intensive methods of production, both for plants and for animals, must be rejected. We do not need to increase production. We need to improve and "clean" it. We cannot demand more each year from the soil or from a cow, or expect a chicken to grow in half the time it would naturally do: they are not machines, they are living things, and their natural mechanism, if it breaks down, cannot be repaired like an industrial milling-machine.
>
> (2007, p.119)

This founding focus remains a key premise of Slow Design, that the well-being of humans and the earth's ecosystems are inextricably linked, and instead of increasing production, focus should be on working with existing natural cycles. This again emphasises the importance of a sustainable approach to any Slow processes. In this way, Slow Design differs from many other historical design movements because it is not solely anthropocentric, but instead recognises humankind as part of a larger biotic (living) system (Fuad-Luke 2004, p.20). Incorporated within the environmental sphere of Slow Design are concepts adopted from the fields of Ecodesign and Design for Sustainability, out of which Ezio Manzini pioneered with his typology of product lifespans. In short, Manzini proposes that product life spans tend to be longer when they are designed to have strong symbolic ties to their users and/or are subject to little or no technological innovation. For products subject to changing fashion, technological innovation, or short use-lives, priority should be given to making the products either biodegradable or easily repairable (Erlhoff and Marshall 2008, p.384). From

these principles the concept of 'endurability' is adopted within Slow Design, where "radical new commercial environments are pioneered in which objects provide conversation pieces that link consumers with manufacturers, facilitating upgrade, servicing, and repair" (Chapman 2005, p.18). This has been readily evidenced in previous examples of Slow Fashion as the lives of garments are extended through upcycling, repair, and handmade methods to promote longevity and prevent waste. Honorè accurately captures this sentiment where he states:

> In its uniqueness, its quirks and imperfections, a handmade item such as a knitted shawl carries the imprint of its creator. We sense the time and care that went into the making – and feel a deeper attachment to it as a result. In the modern world, where it is so easy, so cheap, so quick to buy things, the things that we buy have lost their worth. What value does an object have when you can buy ten more exactly the same in an instant?" (2004, p.191)

This view suggests that the more desirable something is as a result of the time, craft, and care of making it, the more likely it is to promote deeper attachment, have a longer life span, and ultimately contribute to the prevention of unnecessary waste. Walker and Giard further illustrate this concept utilising the European Parliament Council Waste Hierarchy tool as shown in Figure 4. The Waste Hierarchy demonstrates growing efforts within global waste prevention management legislation and policies (EUR-Lex, 2008) that can also be adopted as an evaluative tool for designers to benchmark sustainability in their practices.

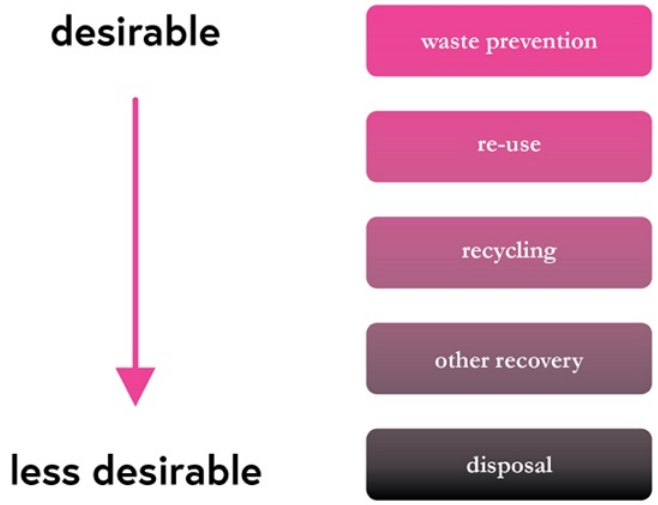


Fig. 4: The Waste Hierarchy (European Parliament Council, 2008, cited in Walker and Giard, 2013, p.109).

Different factors may impact the placement of an object within the Waste Hierarchy. If we take Honorè's example of the knitted shawl, it could fall under several categories depending on whether the materials it was made from were reused or repurposed from a previous garment, or made with ethically sourced yarn from a local farm. From this example several elements are at play that lend themselves for consideration within other design disciplines, including the impact that time and craft can have on value, how value and desirability are linked to waste prevention/sustainability, and how the consideration of materials can impact every stage of design and the resulting quality. It is worth noting the placement of recycling in the middle of the Waste Hierarchy, as a reminder that while important, it is only a small part of the wider picture. Chapman refers to concerns by many researchers who suspect that at times "recycling actually provides an ethical 'get out of jail free card' by liberating consumer conscience and, in so doing, generates even more waste" (2005, p.10). This cycle has the propensity to be perpetuated by designers when the focus is on the symptoms of the ecological crisis rather than the actual causes. In order to avoid this, creative methodologies need to go deeper in understanding the actual drivers underpinning human consumption and waste of goods to develop strategic possibilities capable of positive social change (2005, p.10). Concerns raised by Chapman are echoed as topics of interest in the graphic design literature, as expressed by and Shaughnessy (2005) and Resnick (2016), as well as in the larger graphic design community through global climate emergency campaigns such as Design Declares[3].

The environmental sphere of Slow Design philosophy helps reveal the potential affordances available when designers think outside of traditional conventions and outputs in order to reduce waste and consider the endurability of processes and products for more sustainable approaches. By moving away from the need to produce faster and more in order to stimulate market competitiveness, designers are tasked with considering the long-term ecological footprint of their designs in relation to the hierarchy of waste prevention. The environmental sphere also serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of humans and the environment and that wellbeing for one cannot be achieved without wellbeing for the other.

[3] "Design Declares is a growing group of designers, design studios, agencies and institutions here to declare a climate and ecological emergency. As part of the global declaration movement, we commit to harnessing the tools of our industry to reimagine, rebuild and heal our world" (Design Declares, 2023). "To generate commitment, accountability, and action, Design Declares asks both freelance designers and those working for a company to sign its online declaration. All signatories recognise the climate emergency and commit to the Eight Acts of Emergency that Design Declares outlines as starting points for change (Gorny, 2022).

Sociocultural Sphere

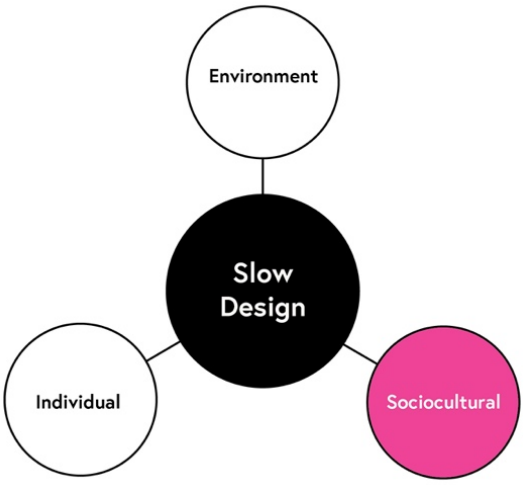


Fig. 5: The Sociocultural Sphere of Slow Design (Arens, 2023).

The third and final sphere of Slow Design philosophy completes the triad with a focus on the wellness of others in society. In its basic definition, 'sociocultural' refers to groups of people in society and their habits, traditions, and beliefs that relate to the social class and culture in which they live (Oxford English Dictionary). This focus on society is reflected in Petrini's third founding Slow Food value "fair" which he defines as follows:

> In food production, the word "fair" connotes social justice, respect for workers and their know-how, rurality and the country life, pay adequate to work, gratification in producing well, and the definitive revaluation of the small farmer, whose historical position in society has always been last.
>
> (Petrini 2007, p.135)

Immediate parallels suggest that Slow Design practitioners could adopt a number of potential approaches in relation to the sociocultural impact of their work, some of which include utilising design to support topics of social justice, respecting and engaging with communities and their collective knowledge, and a focus on supporting other small/local businesses and suppliers. Prioritising the social function of design is not a new phenomenon; a particularly important defining precedent for this sphere of Slow Design includes Victor Papanek's Social Design movement. According to Wahl, Papanek's book *Design for the Real World* was the first of its kind to openly criticise multi-national corporations' negative impacts on both human and environmental health through their design and marketing strategies (2006, p.277).

> Much recent design has satisfied only evanescent wants and desires, while the genuine needs of man have often been neglected. The economic, psychological, spiritual, social, technological, and intellectual needs of a human being are usually more difficult and less profitable to satisfy than the carefully engineered and manipulated "wants" inculcated by fad and fashion.
>
> (Papanek 1985, p.15)

From Papanek's point of view, when the genuine needs of humans are neglected within the design process everything else suffers as a result. Since Papanek's call to action, "a series of terms have emerged with a philanthropic attitude towards design, such as design for development, social design, and design thinking" (Pater 2021, p.429). While geographical context will provide nuance to what constitutes the genuine needs of a particular group of people, many potential barriers to wellness within this sphere are global in nature; "accumulating crises of climate change, racism, gender issues, fascist politics, and a massive rise in inequality demands designers to actively scrutinize their own responsibilities within these crises" (Pater 2021, p.429). In response to such crises, this sphere is often closely tied to forms of design activism, in which individuals, groups, and/or movements emerge in response to periods of rapid social change or unrest. Within the backdrop of design activism, Slow Design emerges as an approach whose aim is to activate both stakeholders and citizens within the design process (Fuad-Luke cited in Walker and Giard 2013, p.467). One such example in the Slow Design literature of this involvement of communities within design projects is the work of social design collective Butterfly Works, who codesign new programs with local makers and producers, with the ultimate goal of stimulating people to start projects themselves (Butterfly Works, 2022). Two of their initiatives include 'NairoBits', a digital design school in Kenya to train young people on the margins as web designers, and 'Tyre Trade' in Morocco that collaborates with local manufacturers to create baskets out of discarded rubber tires to be used locally as well as sold globally in design shops (Strauss and Fuad-Luke 2008, p.7). From these examples it is suggested that as part of a Slow Design methodology, the social impacts of design processes and outcomes must be considered in relation to their longevity and meeting genuine human needs. This can be manifested in many ways, from engagement with local suppliers, to more direct approaches of codesigning within communities.

As identified in the literature thus far, Slow Design was born out of the Slow Movement as designers sought to explore the interrelated importance of quality, sustainability, and value in relation to creative processes and outputs. From there three interconnected philosophical spheres were established to position the focus of Slow Design in relation to individual, environmental, and sociocultural wellness. The next phase of the literature explores how all of these variables fit together for further implementation of Slow Design approaches.

Analysis of Findings

In drawing from the findings of Slow Design and considering the viewpoints and perspectives expressed in the literature of graphic design practice, the ultimate take-away is that any sort of design creation does not happen in isolation. In order for a Slow Design approach to be facilitated, aspects from each sphere must be considered as they form an interrelated network in which focus on one cannot be implemented without impacting the others, as demonstrated in Figure 6.

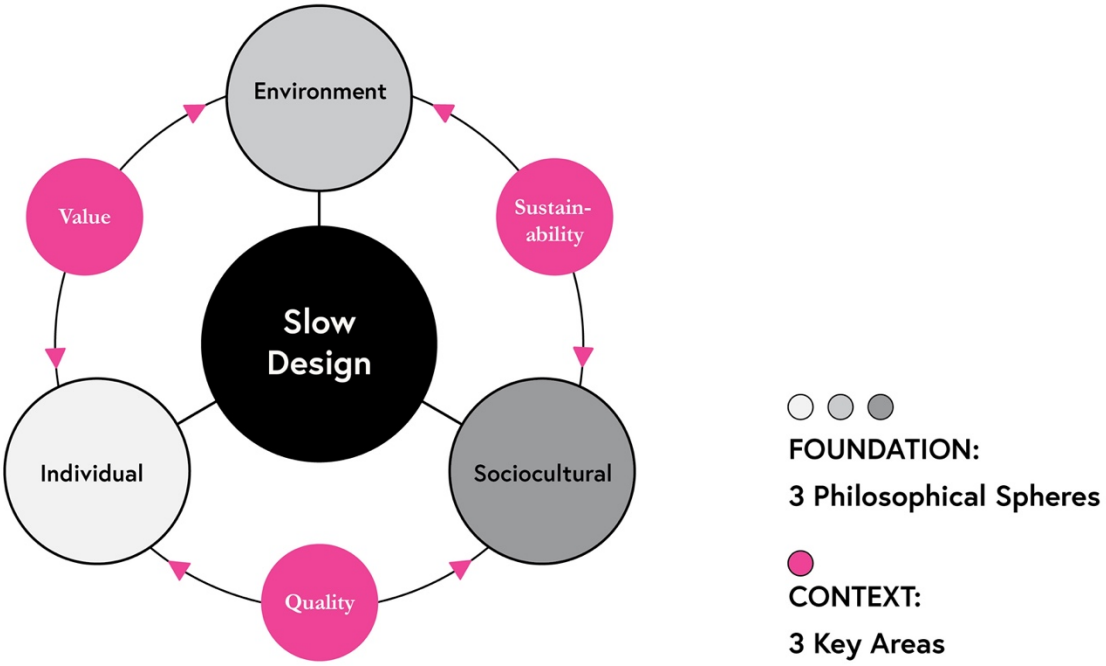


Fig. 6: The Philosophical Spheres and Key Areas of Slow Design (Arens, 2023).

The pink arrows within Figure 6 represent how the key areas of value, sustainability, and quality are not fixed in relation to the philosophical spheres, but can be moved in relation to any of them depending on the context and focus of the particular project. In summary, from the Individual sphere, designers are tasked with considering the goodness of their graphic design practice and personal values, as having defined creative and ethical beliefs to provide a foundation for the types of clients and projects with whom they choose to work. The Environmental sphere calls on graphic designers to think beyond conventional design solutions to consider the endurability and sustainability that processes and outputs can offer through time, craft, and repurposing in relation to waste prevention. And finally, the Sociocultural sphere calls graphic designers to action in response to genuine human needs, often through acts of design activism and engagement with local communities to attain deeper meaning and quality. Having established the philosophical

underpinnings and their potential implications for value, sustainability, and quality, in order to continue expanding the discourse of Slow Design, researchers and theorists developed a set of complementary guiding principles to aid in the application of Slow Design. These principles are examined in the next section as ways of benchmarking the implementation of Slow Design processes and outcomes across a variety of creative industries.

2.2.3 Guiding Principles

As the concepts and practices of Slow Design continued to evolve over time, theorists sought to further enhance and extend this approach, giving rise to the following principles. Summarised within the *Slow Design Manifesto*, theorists Strauss and Fuad-Luke proposed a rubric of the following six guiding principles: reveal, expand, engage, participate, reflect, and evolve as interrogative tools for design research and practice.

Each principle is intentionally open to encourage a myriad of understandings, interpretations, and uses (Strauss and Fuad-Luke 2008, p.3); which offers flexibility but also poses potential challenges in identifying how they can be applied and measured within design projects. This section seeks to further define, categorise, and analyse the applicational values of these Slow Design principles in order to test their global relevance and potential extendibility to other creative industries that are not yet as prevalent within the literature. Through the analysis of case studies from various design disciplines the principles are explored in a variety of contexts. The examples chosen are in no way exclusive, exhaustive, or the “correct” way of implementing the principles, but rather illustrate the potential affordances of the principles in both theory and practice.

The Slow Design Principles	
Reveal	Concerned with the transparency of information and bringing attention to materials and processes that can be easily overlooked.
Expand	Considers outputs beyond their perceived functions, attributes, and lifespans.
Engage	Processes are open-source and collaborative, relies on sharing and cooperation so that designs may continue to adapt into the future.
Participate	Encourages active participation and exchange in the design process to foster social accountability and enhance communities.
Reflect	Slow Design artifacts, environments, & experiences induce contemplation; to think beyond and consider alternative solutions.
Evolve	Looking beyond the needs and circumstances of the present day, considering design as an agent of change over time.

Fig 7. The Six Slow Design Principles (Strauss and Fuad-Luke 2008, p.3-4).

As summarized in Figure 7, the six Slow Design principles are presented here in the sequence originally proposed by Strauss and Fuad-Luke. While the literature does not prescribe a specific order for considering or implementing the principles, upon further analysis certain similarities and complimentary components emerge, lending the principles to be reordered in the following sequence to build upon each other: reveal, reflect, expand, evolve, engage, participate. In the context of this study, the principles will be analysed in this order.

Reveal

The word “reveal” is defined as making known or disclosing something that was previously unknown or kept in secret (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). As a guiding principle, this concept of revealing is important within Slow Design as it relates back to the Slow Movement’s historical roots of

activism; seeking to disrupt and provide transparency in relation to methods and processes of design and consumption that may otherwise go unquestioned or challenged. This principle is demonstrated through various means, including subtle acts, such as the earlier example of the Slow Cooks Alliance's transparent communication in their menus to highlight local suppliers and foster connection between informed consumers and small businesses. In Slow Fashion, “reveal” can take the form of heightened awareness of the design process and its impacts on resource flows, workers, communities and ecosystems (Fletcher cited in Walker and Giard 2013, p.291). One such demonstration of this is handmade clothing designer Geoffrey Small’s ‘Do Something’ collection that uses social, political, and environmental messages, not only through the way his clothing is made, but in the way in which it is presented. Models on the runway carry controversial books on ecological and ethical topics to prompt awareness and call on individuals to take personal action. Small states: “fashion is an art and must be used to raise design quality, not lower it, speak the truth about the world, not lie about it, and do its best to make life better for everyone, not just an elite few” (Brown 2010, p.121). The principle of “reveal” in these examples emphasises open communication and transparency between designers and consumers regarding ethical production processes to promote awareness and inspire positive behavioral changes in relation to global issues.

Evidence within the literature suggests that the Slow Design principles have also been adopted within the field of architecture; providing new considerations for Slow values in regards to the construction of physical spaces. In relation to “reveal”, O'Brien emphasises the significance of craft in Slow Architecture to ensure that construction methods achieve enduring beauty rather than following fleeting trends. He compares this to the Japanese concept of tarnished beauty known as Wabi Sabi, which values how slowness and beauty can intertwine through the revealing and embracing of imperfections within the design process over time (O'Brien 2004, p.17). A return to craft, often involving slower, traditional, and/or hand-made methods, is a recurring theme in Slow Design literature. For instance, sustainable furniture designer Danko employs the craft of ply-bending in his designs, a highly sustainable method of shaping plywood that has typically been viewed as utilitarian.

Fig 8. Bent plywood chair design by Peter Danko (Blake 2020)

Through the elevation of the medium by pushing the creative potential of plywood using craft methods, Danko's furniture shifts perceptions of beauty to a different and more sustainable frame of reference (Danko cited in Brower 2005, p.17). These examples suggest that the materials and methods used in design can also "reveal" the value of slowing down to consider the aesthetics and as well as added meaning that can arise from the physical attributes of designs that have been crafted either by hand or through the added care and complexity of slower, more considered small-scale production. In this context, potential inconsistencies or imperfections can be celebrated as evidence of the human touch that is not present in more industrial and fast practices.

Reflect

Of all the Slow Principles, the principle of "reflect" seems to most explicitly embody slowness in its literal sense of a reduced speed. It suggests a deliberate reduction of speed in the design process for designers to allocate time for reflection, contemplation, and even an embracing of potential mistakes or challenges in the pursuit of more innovative and thoughtful solutions. According to O'Brien:

> So much of design is about pace; about investigating and understanding the question, about following intuitive as well as logical paths of enquiry. Time is needed to make mistakes and recover from them. It is needed to allow for the reflection, awareness and contemplation that is at the heart of the design process…real inspiration is the outcome of reflection and investment over time in curiosity, open-mindedness, and refinement.
>
> (2004 p.17)

This view from O'Brien is further echoed by Strauss, that by allowing space for reflection and thinking holistically designers can "explore a fuller spectrum of stakeholders and variables, the material as well as the immaterial. It nudges them to embrace an expanded palette of spatial and temporal tools. And it challenges them not to hone their skills in service to a culture of consumption, but instead to view themselves as vital contributors to a planet in transition" (2014, p.4). These perspectives from the literature position reflection within the context of the individual designer's process, emphasising the importance of allocating time for thoughtful intentionality and consideration of the broader implications of their design solutions.

Within Slow literature, the principle "reflection" not only applies to the individual designer's process but also extends to the design outputs and their ability to slow the pace of engagement to evoke contemplation and introspection. One such example of this is information designer Niels Schrader's annual report for The Mondriaan Fund in the Netherlands. As an organisation that supports exceptional cultural projects and handles a large annual budget, the report had to "not only communicate the organisation's current activities, but also comply with public accountability and transparency requirements" (Schrader cited in Pais and Strauss 2016, p.114). As a way of making the information transparent and navigable to facilitate a slower and more engaged reading experience, Schrader designed the print publication to emulate a digital data cloud. Dynamic links between the diverse activities and responsibilities of the fund are represented by different types of "hyperlinks" that facilitate contextual searching and browsing, while dashed lines connect related keywords to allow for cross referencing throughout the report sections. (Schrader, 2009).

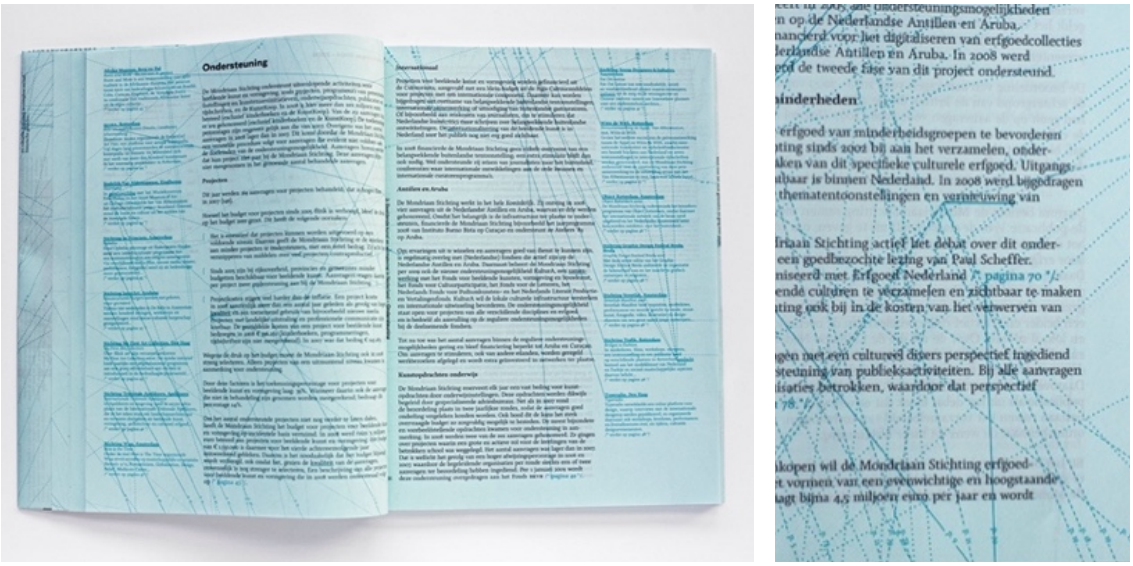


Fig 9. 2009 Annual Report for The Mondriaan Fund designed by Niels Schrader (Schrader 2009).

Shrader's choice to translate digital ways of presenting information, such as hyperlinks, into a physically printed medium demonstrates how design can be used to facilitate deeper, slower, and more considered ways of consuming information. Schrader states that "as computers continue to develop and infiltrate different areas of our lives, it will be increasingly important to cultivate uniquely human competencies like intuition, sensibility, imagination, and empathy that bring technology – as well as other aspects of our shared existence – into healthy and appropriate perspective" (Schrader cited in Pais and Strauss 2016, p.115). In this example, the decision to present information in a nontraditional format within the medium of a physically printed publication causes readers to slow down and reflect on the content in a new way, in contrast to the information overload and speed of which content is consumed online in our increasingly digital world.

Expand

The next principle to be explored is "expand", meaning to spread out or to widen (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). In the context of Slow Design, expand can be viewed as a broadening or deepening of the design process in order to think beyond the perceived lifespans, functions, or even conventional beauty standards of design solutions. While similar in nature to the principle "reflect", a key distinction between "reflect" and "expand" is that while reflection is often geared towards a more introspective process of the individual, expand is often linked to work of a more outwardly social and interactive nature. An example within the Slow Literature that suggests this aspect of "expand" is the project 'Edible Landscape – Outdoor Brewery' by socially-engaged designer Henriette Waal; a mobile mini-brewery that makes it possible to brew local and unique brews anywhere with guest brewers (Waal 2022). Through the act of making the brewing structure public and by inviting local brewers to collaborate and share their expertise, "landscape beer" is produced that is unique to the area by using the surrounding plants and water sources. The beer is then shared by the community, demonstrating how "innovative configurations of personal know-how and overlooked common goods can have both tangible and intangible value, strengthening ties in a locality while bypassing the consumer marketplace" (Strauss and Pais 2014, p.25).

Fig 10. Outdoor Brewery by Henriette Waal (Waal 2022)

This example of the Outdoor Brewery demonstrates how the principle of “expand” is utilised to engage others within the creation process to draw on local knowledge and resources to create something that is then enjoyed by the community. In both the process and output local experts and community members are involved to expand reach, knowledge, and enjoyment of the end product as something unique and outside of a capitalist framework.

Evolve

The principle “evolve” tends to have a more linear focus by looking to the future in relation to how artifacts, environments, and systems can mature and provide richer experiences and positive change over time (Strauss and Fuad-Luke 2008, p.7). One such example of this is designer Simon Heijdens’ ceramic dish series ‘Broken White’, in which the dishes are designed to evolve over time and use, with small cracks that slowly begin to form floral patterns that grow along with the user. Heijdens uses the principle of “evolve” to reimagine the design and use of ceramics away from static and non-evolving objects to products that are able to grow and show an evolving story between object and user (Heijdens 2004). The resulting levels of adornment on each plate or cup over time becomes a direct reflection of the relationship it has with its owner; meaning a favorite cup that is used more will have the greatest amount of decoration while others remain plain. This process “embeds new layers of experience into everyday objects, enriching their meaning well beyond mere function and convenience, and thus rendering them increasingly precious to the user over time” (Heijdens cited in Strauss and Fuad-Luke 2008, p.5)

Fig 11. Broken White, Time Based Ceramics by Simon Heijdens (Heijdens 2004)

This example from Heijdens also links with the concept of emotional durability in design; aimed at the reduction of waste through the development of products that go beyond “the habitual acquisition of newer, shinier things”, and instead aim at delivering “profound and sophisticated user experiences that penetrate the psyche over time” (Chapman 2005, p.18). From this emerges the term *poetic potential* to be embraced within the Slow principle of “evolve” as designers explore the potential for “more poetic, experiential and interactive forms of product evolution and innovation – embedding less transient, enduring values within products that may be sustained through the slow passing of time” (Chapman 2005, p.27).

Engage

While the principle “engage” is similar in its social aspect to “expand”, it brings new considerations to the Slow discourse in relation to engagement between creators and consumers in order to promote collaboration, mutual support, and the sharing of resources. This often takes the form of looking towards other local businesses, manufacturers, and creative practitioners in order to fulfill a project output beyond the scope of a single profession. In the context of Slow Fashion, this involves “a changed set of power relations between fashion creators and consumers compared with growth fashion, based on the forging of relationships and trust that is possible at smaller scales” (Fletcher cited in Walker and Giard 2013, p.291). Engagement can also take the form of collaboration with local communities in order to ensure design solutions are integrated and appropriate for specific contexts and are not imposed from the outside. Within architecture an example of this is the Rural Studio design/build program through the School of Architecture at

Auburn University, in which students explore building methods and materials with the goal of mitigating effects of poverty upon rural living conditions. Through the programme “students engage in "context-based learning" where they actually live in and become a part of the community in which they are working. Structures are made from affordable, local materials - clay, waste materials, recycled glass, scrap metal - with the students, too, living in structures reflecting the visual vernacular of the place as they learn the critical skills of planning, design, and building in a socially responsible manner” (Strauss and Fuad-Luke 2008, p.6). This example reflects the importance of understanding the unique circumstances and needs of a community as well as the available methods and materials when considering a design solution. The principle “engage” can apply to a variety of contexts within the design process and output as designers consider how to work with local communities and businesses in addition to thinking about how the resulting designs will be engaged with over time.

Participate

The sixth and final principle “participate” has similar interactive qualities to “engage” and “expand”, however it implies a more direct level of involvement by “encouraging users to become active participants in the design process, embracing ideas of conviviality and exchange to foster social accountability and enhance communities (Strauss and Fuad-Luke 2008, p.6). The concept of participatory design exists within a growing range of genres and practices, often included under the umbrella term “social design”; implying that design is inherently collaborative through involvement of teams, clients, researchers, suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, etc. (Tonkinwise cited in Resnick 2019, p.9). Within the context of Slow Design, inspiration is taken from pioneering social designer Papanek, who pushed design’s focus beyond product to an interdisciplinary culture of co-design. “Design, with its empathetic core of envisioning the other, has always thrived on exceptional insight offered by ‘outsiders’ – it’s humanist agenda is formed in part from the unique histories of displacement, emigration and exclusion” (Clarke cited in Resnick 2019, p.35). As this quote suggests, the design process can be enriched and deeper insights reached through acts of participation and the amplification of voices that may otherwise be excluded. One such example of a design studio that models participation and co-creation as a means of embracing the inherent creativity within their own community is *The Public* in Toronto, Canada. All of their projects serve a public or social cause and they offer a residency programme, workshops, and training based on mutual aid principles as a means of creative exchange and care within their community (Pater 2021, p.499). This example suggests that participation can take on many forms in respect to how designers operate and can help to remove potential barriers and prevent a hierarchical model of design that is disconnected from the community. This further reinforces the potential of design to achieve sociocultural wellness by allowing voices to be heard as active participants within the

process. While not all design processes may lend themselves to more literal forms of co-creation, this principle calls on an awareness of the designer to consider how forms of participation and exchange may factor in their work; whether in the creation phase or with the final product.

2.2.4 Toward the Formation of a Unified Slow Design Framework

With many different elements and terms now explored in relation to Slow Design including the three philosophical spheres, three key areas, and six guiding principles, it becomes possible to start compiling them into a unified framework for the purpose of guiding and facilitating a Slow approach to design. The basic definition of a framework is a structure made of joined parts in order to provide support (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023), which is exactly what this framework strives to do by providing a support for designers from which to benchmark their creative processes through the joining of these components from the Slow Literature. Figure 12 shows how all the elements can fit together within non-fixed concentric rings, expanding the possibilities for interaction between the foundation, context, and application of Slow Design.

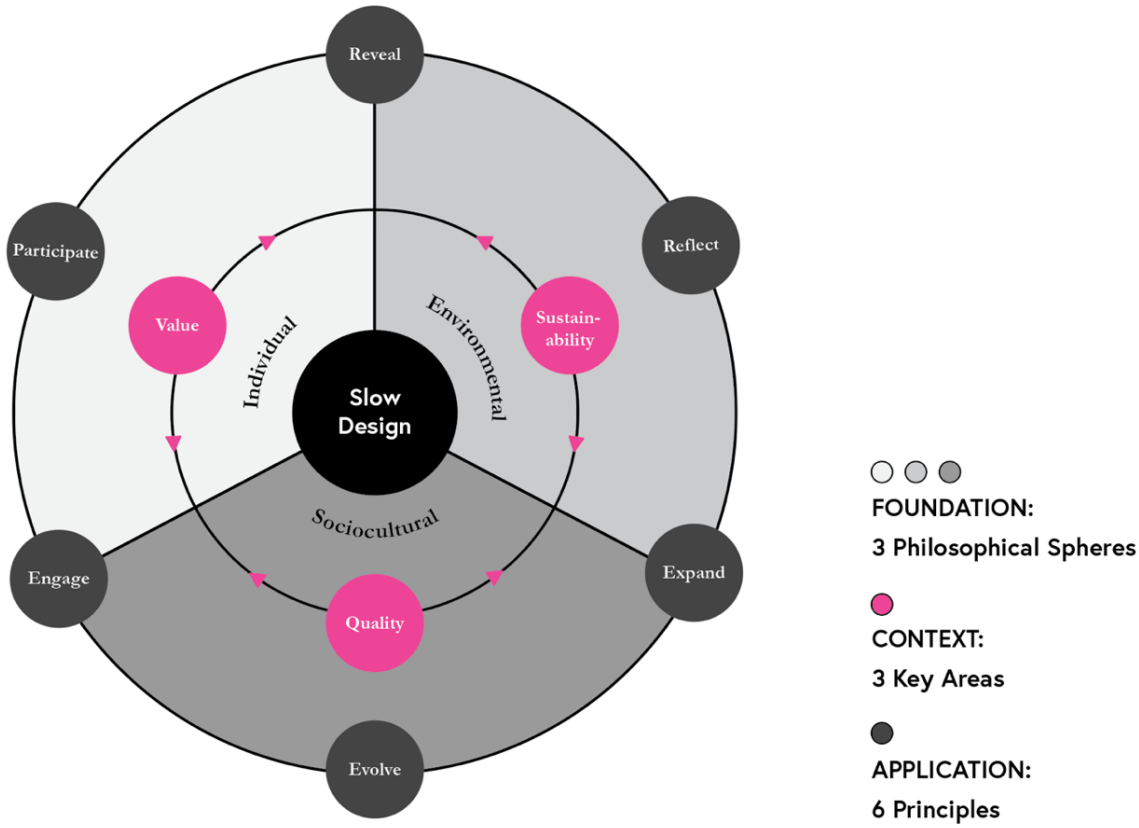


Fig 12. Slow Design Framework (Arens 2023)

An important factor within this framework is that none of the elements are fixed and can be moved in accordance with the priorities and focus of particular design projects. With this basic framework established it is possible to further explore and test how the six principles can be arranged within the framework in relation to the philosophical spheres for added layers of meaning. As the term “design” encompasses both the process (verb: to design), and the resulting product (noun: a design) (Erlhoff and Marshall 2008 p.198), the following sections further interrogate the theoretical potential of the framework through possible placements of the six principles in consideration to how design processes and products relate to the philosophical spheres.

Locating the Principles

Having established the foundational definitions of the first two principles "reveal" and "reflect" and examined relevant case studies from the literature, it becomes possible to further explore the interconnections between these principles in relation to the philosophical spheres of Slow Design within the framework. In considering processes and products, “reveal” and “reflect” have propensities towards being placed in relation to both the Individual and Environmental spheres to elicit contemplation in relation to the individual responsibility of the designer’s process, as well as to the environmental implications of the resulting products. A resulting formation of the framework could be as shown in Figure 13 that places “reveal” and “reflect” towards the intersection of the Individual and Environmental spheres.

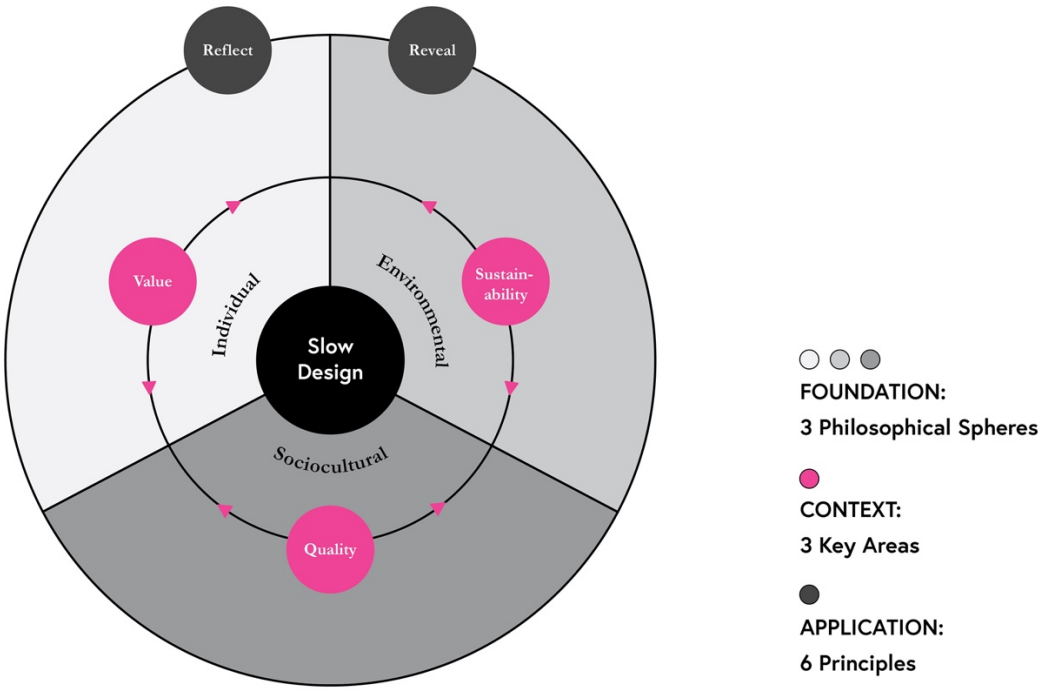


Fig 13. Situating the Slow Design Principles Part I (Arens 2023)

To further expound on the placement of these principles within the start of this potential framework formation, it is important to remember that the ultimate goal for each of the respective philosophical spheres is to achieve wellness. In this formation, “reflect” is placed in relation to the wellbeing of the individual designer to signify the eliciting of time and space to consider what may otherwise be overlooked; new energy, inspiration, and even enjoyment may emerge to explore new approaches and alternatives. This concept of individual wellness in relation to reflection is similar in sentiment to the ancient Greek philosophical concept of scholê, from which modern-day concepts of leisure have derived (Kalimtzis 2017 p.4). While a vast topic that warrants a study of its own in relation to Slow Design, in essence the philosophical roots of scholê are not concerned with the possession of free (or leisure) time just for the sake of it, but with what desires and abilities may emerge from that time, that ultimately leads one to happiness (Kalimtzis 2017 p.18). This suggests that the act of slowing down and incorporating reflection within the design process facilitates the pursuit of intellectual inquiry; and that time for leisure and enjoyment are not idle, but can actually allow the opening of the mind to consider alternatives. This concept is echoed by Sagmeister when asked about maintaining personal wellness as a graphic designer: “what soul I have left I’ve managed to keep by pausing; by stopping and thinking. In my regular day-to-day mode, I get so caught up in the minutiae that I have little time or sense to think about the larger context. Because I used to work in different cities a natural gap occurred between jobs, allowing for some reflection” (cited in Shaughnessy 2005, p.8). Sagmeister frames the importance of time for reflection within his practice for the preservation of his own soul and individual wellness. While not necessarily expressed as leisure, Sagmeister makes productive use of the gaps afforded him within his schedule to look and think beyond the minutiae details in order to consider the bigger impact of his design practice.

The placement of the principle “reveal” within the adjoining environmental sphere in this formation links with thinking about the larger environmental impacts of one’s practice and how potential products and outputs will exist into the future. According to Semaan, co-founder of the environmental and social justice non-profit *Slow Factory*, “the three most common emotions related to climate are the least helpful – anxiety, nihilism or denialism. There are so many other activities we can engage in and roles we can play that are about solutions.” (Semaan, 2023). In the face of these default positions in relation to environmental and climate concerns, Slow Design proposes the principles as ways of revealing innovative solutions and alternatives in order to move from a place of outrage to a state of action. On the heels of this, placement of following two principles “expand” and “evolve” are added to the framework, situated within the Environmental and Sociocultural spheres as shown in Figure 14.

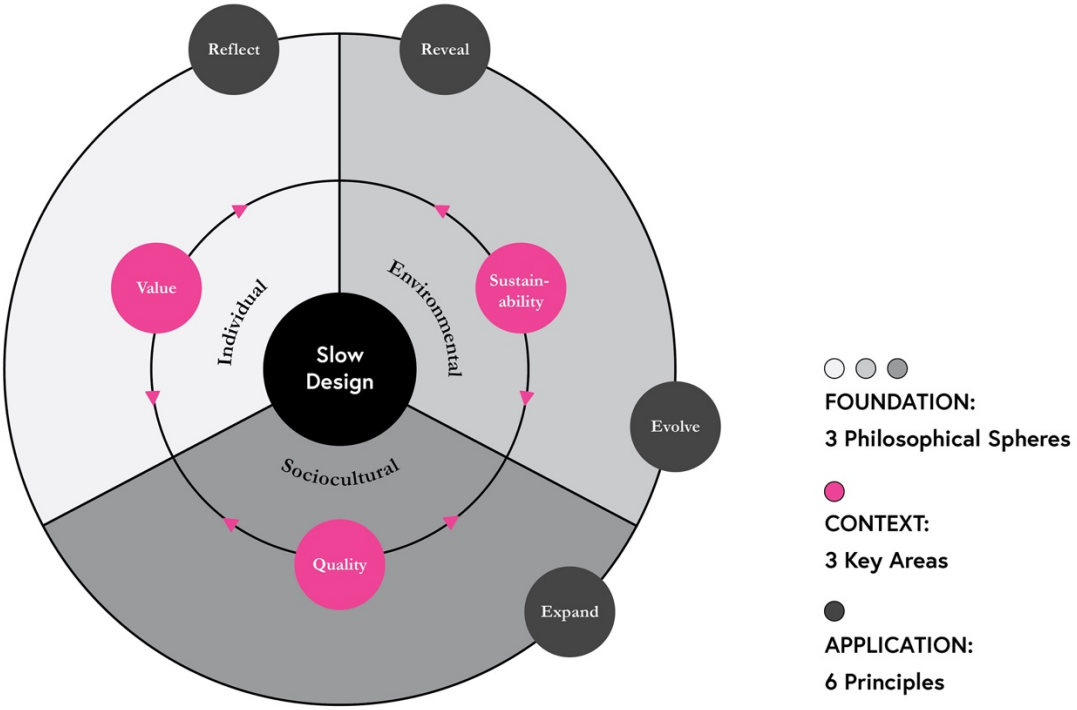


Fig 14. Situating the Slow Design Principles Part II (Arens 2023)

Both the principles “evolve” and “expand” have a particular focus on the longevity and reach of design solutions; specifically in relation to how they impact the environment and local communities. For these reasons, in this formation example they are situated at the intersection of the Environmental and Sociocultural philosophical spheres within the Slow Design framework. Within the principle of "evolve," designers have opportunity to evaluate the potential wellness impact of their designs on the environment by taking into account the enduring effects a design may have over time, coupled with an understanding of the specific needs of the demographics they want to reach. By considering both factors, designers can cultivate emotional durability in their designs, which often leads to a reduction in waste due to the increased attachment and value attributed to objects, as opposed to viewing them as disposable commodities. In relation to the principle of “expand” in the context of sociocultural wellness, as suggested in the earlier example of the Outdoor Brewery, the expanding of a design practice to involve local experts and community members can contribute to a deeper integration of knowledge, insights, and exchange in relation to both the environment and its inhabitants.

The remaining two principles “participate” and “engage” are perhaps the most human-focused of all the principles and therefore lend themselves to be situated within the Individual and Sociocultural spheres of Slow Design as shown by their placement in Figure 15.

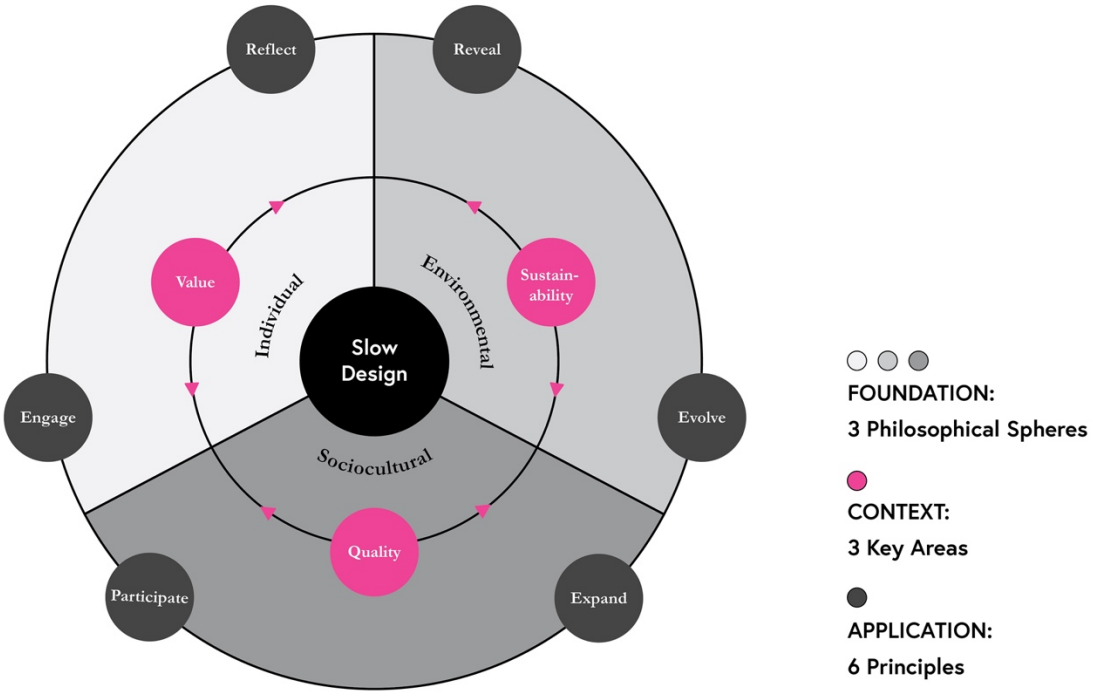


Fig 15. Situating the Slow Design Principles Part III (Arens 2023)

While both of these principles relate to the exchange between designers and others, “participate” in this example is positioned within the Sociocultural sphere given its propensity for more direct methods of social engagement within a particular community. An important focus in relation to the “participate” principle, as well as the sociocultural sphere at large, is that of *locality*, and that any designer wanting to use their skills in a socially engaged form of design “has to be grounded in a designer’s own personal environment and social circumstances. To effectively and ethically help others, only locally informed and reciprocal forms of aid can truly avoid power domination (Pater 2021, p.441). This suggests that for designers wanting to contribute in socially meaningful ways with their work, they need to consider their own local contexts and the potential needs of the communities they already operate within. The literature suggests that meaningful contributions by designers often happen in small-scale and community-based initiatives where change is possible on a more tangible scale through collaboration and exchange. The final principle “engage” when positioned within the Individual sphere highlights how the designer as an individual relates and engages with potential collaborators, colleagues, clients, manufacturers, etcetera; once again with a focus on their engagement and relationship to a local context.

This section demonstrated on a more theoretical level the potential placements and correlations between the six principles and the three philosophical spheres of Slow Design. Within these examples the three key areas of value, sustainability, and quality remained fixed, however, they could be repositioned within the framework depending on the context and focus of a particular design project. With a wide net cast thus far in relation to the history, values, principles, and application of Slow Design, the next section begins to synthesise the focus of the study; first in relation to Slow Design's contemporary global relevance, and from there in relation to graphic design specifically.

2.2.5 Situating Global Relevance for the Discipline of Slow Design

> Worldwide, there is too much extraction, too much throughput, and too much waste for slow natural processes to either provide raw materials or absorb wastes quickly enough. Our linear pattern of consumption exists nowhere in nature, and, before the Industrial Revolution, wasn't found to any extent in culture either. The desire for it may have been there, but the sheer time and effort of the handmade gave pause for thought. It was much easier to re-use than to throw out and start again.
>
> (Hagan 2004, p.14)

As the quote above suggests, the rapid rate of over production and consumption largely resulting from the Industrial Revolution is being recognised worldwide as both unnatural and unsustainable. In its most simple essence, this is the context in which Slow Design is situated: to think outside of these linear patterns of consumption so that slower and sustainable alternatives can be implemented to ensure wellness for people and the planet, now and for future generations. From a theoretical standpoint, the terminology of Slow Design can appear almost utopian; raising the question of real-world feasibility for designers. As important as strong personal values are, designers still need to earn a living from their work. This section further explores Slow Design's potential in relation to its global and economic barriers and affordances.

The literature currently suggests that Slow Design tends to operate outside of mainstream contexts and is mainly adopted by independent designers, artisans and craftspeople, or small-scale collectives. This raises the question of both feasibility and extendibility in relation to the adoption of Slow Design within other design disciplines. It has been identified in relation to fashion in particular that from a purely operational perspective, the quick response strategies of fast fashion have been known to yield significant value by exploiting lead times to capitalise on the latest market trends (Cachon, Swinney 2011, p.778). This raises an important question of value in relation to Slow Design principles and whether they hinder opportunities for profit across other design disciplines by not keeping up in the same way with trending demands. With the saying "time is money" dating

back to the 1700's[4], many designers today still face this binary as "time has always been subject to manipulation and control to optimise it for capitalism (Pater 2021, p.267). As demonstrated in the field of architecture, value is tied to interest rates and site prices; "financial backing for most projects almost always arrives with some form of time constraint attached" (O'Brien 2004, p.16). Additionally, given Slow Design's counter-cultural nature and historic roots of activism and protest against the problematic practices of corporations, questions arise as to whether Slow Design can be genuinely adopted within larger economic or industrial contexts for meaningful engagement and partnerships without falling into the category of greenwashing[5].

Despite these potential barriers to the further adoption and expansion of Slow Design, evidence suggests that the current economic and political impact of climate and global issues are influencing how businesses and individuals are operating. "Some estimate that those living in wealthy nations will have to reduce per capita climate-changing emissions by up to 97% over the next few decades if dangerous increases in global temperatures are to be avoided. The sheer scale of such reductions signifies a massive change in lifestyles - in the types of food we eat, the clothes we wear, the products we use, our modes of transportation, our frequency of travel, our recreational activities and so on (Walker and Giard 2013, p.5). These global issues are reflected in several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly #12 and #13 in relation to responsible consumption and production and climate action. These goals form part of the most inclusive and comprehensive negotiations in UN history to inspire people across sectors, geographies, and cultures to end extreme poverty, reduce inequality, and protect the planet by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals 2022).

Fig. 16: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals #12 and #13 (unfoundation.org)

In response to these global goals, Slow Design provides opportunities for designers to explore new solutions within their practices as "economic interests start to gather around such things that

[4] "Time Is Money" is an aphorism that originated in "Advice to a Young Tradesman", an essay by Benjamin Franklin that appeared in George Fisher's 1748 book, The American Instructor: or Young Man's Best Companion.

[5] Greenwashing: *(a)* To mislead (the public) or counter (public or media concerns) by falsely representing a person, company, product, etc., as being environmentally responsible; *(b)* to misrepresent (a company, its operations, etc.) as environmentally responsible. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

provide deep satisfaction of human needs while scoring positively on the environmental and sociocultural balance sheets." (Fuad-Luke 2002, p.4). It is believed that the relatively simple reason for this economic shift is because these are increasingly becoming the types of design creations that people/societies/cultures actually want to purchase. This suggests that as both companies and individuals position their values to focus on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, new products, services, and buildings that embrace Slow principles are becoming more in demand and economically viable. This also raises the question, if Slow Design approaches are demonstrating to be of benefit, are there ways of incentivising them to be sustained and further adopted across disciplines? In the context of architecture, O'Brien proposes the concept of "slow fees", in which "parts of the architect's reward comes as a commission on each re-selling of the building, sharing its rise in value, or perhaps structured as royalties levied on any savings on the regular costs of its maintenance." In this way, the architects' interest and involvement in the buildings they design would endure in time. (2004, p.19). While further research is required around the logistics and policy requirements to implement concepts such as "slow fees", it does point to the possibilities of slower and more sustained modes of economy.

In relation to feasibility, it is also important to note that according to Slow Design theorists, Slow is not necessarily the antidote to fast, but rather a much-needed partner (Strauss and Pais 2014, p.24). In other words, Slow Design is not intended as a one stop solution for complex issues, but rather a counterweight of alternative possibilities. This relates to the Latin term 'festina lente' which translates to "make haste slowly"; dating back over five hundred years to the branding of Aldo Manuzio's publishing company (Livraghi, 1999). Manuzio's logo included an anchor and a dolphin as shown in Figure 17, representing movement, intelligence, and energy intertwined with stability and peace.

Fig. 17 Manuzio's Festina Lente Logo (Livraghi, 1999)

It is interesting to note the correlation within this historic branding example that even before the formalisation of what is contemporarily considered the graphic design industry, and long before the

Slow Movement, designers were already utilising visual forms of communication to symbolise the values of a company in relation to time and pace coupled with productivity and care.

A contemporary example within the Slow Movement that reflects this concept of ‘festina lente’ includes chef Alpolinrio Zeferino’s food cart in Sao Tomé that serves fast-food made from local products. While serving typical fast-food items such as hot dogs, burgers, and sandwiches, Zeferino uses many local herbs and products so that he is supporting other local producers while also providing the opportunity for people to learn about the good things they have in Sao Tomé (Slow Food, 2017). Through this act, the positive aspects of fast-food including convenience and accessibility are leveraged in combination with the Slow Food values of locally and ethically sourced ingredients. This balance of pace relates to the nonlinear approach of Slow Design, as it draws on the affordances of traditional methods in combination with evolving technologies.

Despite the increasing awareness and valued progress of Slow Design across many disciplines, Slow Design theorist Fuad-Luke asserts that there is still much to be done as Slowness finds few commercial expressions, as consumerism by nature has a default fastness embedded within its economic, political, and social paradigms (Fuad-Luke 2004, p.39). The examples of Slow Design from various practices explored thus far suggest that Slow approaches tend to operate independently and on a smaller scale; targeting specific audiences who most likely have similar values and outlooks. The resulting value from Slow approaches is achieved not through speed and volume of outputs but rather through unique and quality offerings that have been ethically sourced and carefully crafted in order to provide bespoke solutions with longevity in mind. As already alluded to, one such design field currently not as explicitly explored in relation to Slow Design is graphic design. While certain design fields have more obvious antitheses in relation to Slow Design, such as fast versus slow food and fashion, other fields are more nuanced and complex in what constitutes slow, including architecture and graphic design. Given its evolving nature, defining graphic design can prove challenging due to its diverse range of practices and outputs. While this diversity makes graphic design a realm of abundant potential, it also presents difficulties in delineating the scope of "Slow Graphic Design" and what it entails in practice. In the words of Newark:

> Graphic design is the most universal of all the arts. It is all around us, explaining, decorating, identifying: imposing meaning on the world. It is in the streets, in everything we read, it is on our bodies. We engage with design in road signs, advertisements, magazines, cigarette packets, headache pills, the logo on our t-shirt, the washing label on our jacket.
>
> (2007, p.6)

As this quote suggests, graphic design has many functions and outputs that inform how people navigate and interact with society. Parallels begin to emerge from the literature between graphic design and other more established fields of Slow Design as demonstrated in Figure 18.

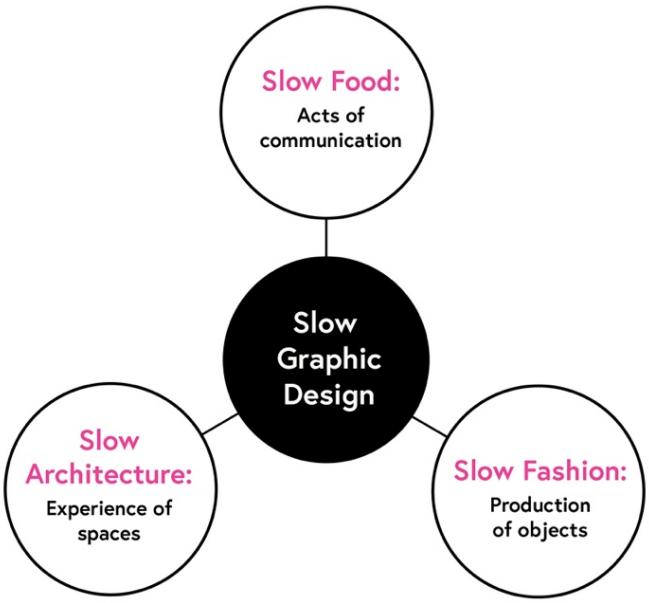


Fig 18. Correlation of Slow Fields to Inform Slow Graphic Design (Arens 2023)

As illustrated above, graphic design already has a propensity towards the adoption of Slow principles as it encompasses many of the qualities addressed in the literature surrounding the other Slow fields of food, fashion, and architecture. Acts of transparent communication were addressed in the early examples of the Slow Cooks Alliance's menus and graphic design's inherent function is a means of communication. Slow Fashion is concerned with more conscious and sustainable modes of production in relation to physical objects, and while graphic design is becoming increasingly digital, outputs of physical objects are still a large part of it as Newark demonstrates through examples of road signs, advertisements, magazines, cigarette packages, etcetera. And lastly, Slow Architecture is concerned with relationships to the experiences and longevity of spaces, just as graphic design also informs the way people navigate physical spaces through acts of explaining, decorating, and identifying. This very brief overview of graphic design demonstrates its inherent flexibility as an industry and a valuable field in which to further explore the potential links and affordances of adopting a "Slow Graphic Design" practice through the principles and knowledge established thus far. The next section of the literature review focuses on further defining and contextualising graphic design in order to continue narrowing the scope of research for this study.

2.2.6 Summary

This first half of the literature review contributed to achieving the first research objective of the study by establishing the historical context and main tenets of Slow Design that are outlined within the theory. These findings include establishing the three philosophical spheres that serve as the foundation of Slow Design and are concerned with wellness in relation to one's individual, environmental, and sociocultural context. Next this part of the literature review synthesised the following three key areas of: value, sustainability, and quality in which to measure and contextualise the application of Slow Design in relation to the philosophical spheres. This section also contributed to the second research objective of establishing an understanding of how Slow Design is being implemented within other industries by defining the six Slow Design principles and analysing their execution within relevant case studies and examples. This section complied all of these findings into a proposed Slow Design framework to be used as an evaluative tool for the application of a Slow Design process. Lastly, a gap was identified that despite the increasing awareness and valued progress of Slow Design across many disciplines, it still finds few commercial expressions, and is not as apparent in the language or adoption of other design fields including graphic design. In order to achieve the next research objectives, the second half of the literature review focuses on defining graphic design and freelance and contextualising them within Vancouver, Canada.

2.3 Graphic Design and Freelance

2.3.1 Defining Graphic Design

> Design is the method of putting form and content together. Design, just as art, has multiple definitions; there is no single definition. Design can be art. Design can be aesthetics. Design is so simple, that's why it is so complicated.
>
> (Rand, cited in Ambrose and Aono-Billson 2011, p.87)

In order to begin identifying the potential affordances of Slow Design in relation to graphic design, it is first necessary to establish the foundation of how graphic design is being defined in the context of this study. As expressed in the quote above, there are layers of complexity and ambiguity when it comes to defining design. Rather than a singular definition, graphic design acts an umbrella term that encompasses many different concepts and methods. In the broadest sense, graphic design is concerned with the "organization of text and/or images to communicate a specific message" (Erlhoff and Marshall 2008, p.198). The term graphic design has risen in popularity since its first use in 1922 by William Addison Dwiggins, a successful advertising designer, who at the time saw graphic design as primarily concerned with the preparation of artwork to be printed (Newark 2007, p.10). With the constant development of technology and image-making possibilities since Dwiggins' time,

the definition of graphic design continues to expand, encompassing an ever-growing range of processes and outputs. The Graphic Artists Guild defines a graphic designer as a "graphic artist and professional problem solver who works with the elements of typography, illustration, photography, and printing to create commercial communications tools such as brochures, advertising, signage, posters, electronic presentations and displays, book jackets, and other forms of printed, electronic, or graphic communications" (2021, p.468). As demonstrated in these definitions from the literature, graphic design utilises a range of creative methods in order to solve problems by communicating specific messages through a variety of both digital and physical collateral.

In terms of the more physical production side of graphic design, technological development within the digital age has revolutionised the processes of print production. As a consequence of this, "graphic design has developed into a multifunctional role in the production process. This demands great versatility and the need to communicate effectively with many different professionals…Often, a graphic designer manages the design process and coordinates the work undertaken by other creative disciplines as part of a job." (Ambrose and Harris 2009, p.13). As this quote suggests, often within their roles, graphic designers make decisions and recommendations not only in regards to aesthetic choices, but in relation to how the final output of a project will function in the world once physically produced. This demonstrates further potential links between graphic design and the Slow Design framework as the roles of graphic designers continue to evolve and often involve making informed decisions in collaboration with other professions for the sake of production. For the context of this study, a foundational definition of graphic design is adopted to refer to individuals working within the communicative intersections of digital and physical production methods.

While the definitions established thus far provide a basis of contextualising graphic design in relation to potential production methods and outputs, it is also essential to establish context for the philosophical underpinnings of graphic design that have potential of linking with Slow Design. As established in the literature, the three philosophical spheres of Slow Design focus on the wellbeing of individuals, the environment, and society. In light of graphic design's complicated history of being enmeshed with so many other creative fields including art, printing, typography, photography, and advertising (Triggs 2011, p.3) there emerges an ethical struggle of how graphic designers see themselves within wider society and what the underlying purposes of graphic design can and should be. Drucker and McVarish put forward that "graphic artifacts always serve a purpose and contain an agenda, no matter how neutral or natural they appear to be. Someone is addressing someone else, for some reason, through every object of designed communication and the graphic forms of design are expressions of the forces that shape our lives" (2013, p.xiv). In this way, graphic

designers are faced with the challenges of finding ways to balance making a living while staying true to their values. “Taking an ethical standpoint in relation to the commercial world, social effectiveness, and sales do of course form a part of design practice…graphic design has the power to persuade, to educate and to inform – not merely to sell washing powder and cat food!” (Ambrose and Aono-Billson 2011, p.29). From this awareness emerges groupings of graphic designers who chose to use their work for the benefit of social causes, often in the form of design work in non-professional spheres that is done for the benefit of the community (Pater 2021, p.427). Designers who choose to position themselves in this way are not a new phenomenon; a significant moment in graphic design history occurred in London in the 1960’s when graphic designer Ken Garland, along with 20 other designers, photographers, and students, published the *First Things First* manifesto. The manifesto urged designers to turn their focus, talents, and problem-solving skills to more pressing needs of society as opposed to the fast-paced and often trivial production of mainstream advertising (Design is History n.d.). The critical distinction made within Garland’s manifesto is between “design as communication (giving people necessary information) and design as persuasion (trying to get people to buy things).” (Poynor, 1999). While this distinction was made by Garland over 60 years ago, its concerns are still relevant to contemporary graphic designers as high volumes of design projects, especially those lavishly funded, still typically only serve corporate needs.

The *First Things First* manifesto serves as a pivotal moment within graphic design history that has many parallels with the Slow Movement, as both began with small groups of people expressing their social and moral concerns about specific industries and both resulted in growing movements of change. Within contemporary graphic design practice, evidence suggests that an increasing number of designers are seeking more creative freedom and alternative ways of working through freelance design practices. As identified within this section, graphic design encompasses many practices, processes, and outputs resulting in a fragmented landscape in which designers may choose to specialise or focus within a specific area (Ambrose and Harris 2009, p.12). While a broad definition of graphic design has been adopted for this study that does not exclude potential methods or mediums, the identified correlations between the practices of Slow Design and the values adopted by subsets of graphic designers narrows the definitional focus for this study towards graphic designers who prioritise the function of design as communication of necessary information over design as persuasion to buy things. This naturally positions the definitional context towards graphic designers working for socially related causes or within various cultural sectors. A further identified subset of graphic designers who have potential affordances in relation to working in these areas of graphic design are freelancers as defined in greater detail in the following section.

2.3.2 Defining the Term Freelance

> A large percentage of graphic artists/designers are self-employed, working as various types of freelancers: temporary workers, independent contractors, and freelance business owners. Some graphic artists have full-time staff jobs but also do freelance as moonlighters outside their regular work day. Others are diversified workers, with multiple sources of income from a mix of traditional employers and freelance work.
>
> (The Graphic Artists Guild (GAG) 2021, p.3)

With a foundational definition of graphic design established, this section defines the term freelance in relation to graphic design practitioners as a way of continuing to narrow the focus of research to a particular subset of designers. The GAG definition suggests that freelance can take on many forms for designers, whether it means operating their own business fulltime or taking on freelance projects in combination with other forms of employment. The etymology of the word “freelance” originates from medieval mercenaries who made themselves available to those who were willing to pay for their “free” or available lances (Fishel 2009, p.8). While not entirely different from its historical roots, the term freelance within the context of contemporary graphic design refers to designers “whose work hours are determined by the assignment and who uses his/her own workspace and materials.” (Graphic Arts Guild 2021, p.468). Freelance is a form of self-employment, usually operating under the legal entity of a sole proprietorship; meaning a business that can be controlled by an individual and is not a separate legal entity from the business owner (Fishel 2009, p.88). Another closely related term that is often considered to be synonymous with freelance is “sole trader”, which refers to someone generating their own work, often as a limited company, who may hire other freelancers as their workload increases (Ambrose et al 2020, p.19). For the context of this study, the term freelance is used as an encompassing term to refer to graphic designers who are self-employed and responsible for ascertaining their own clients and work. This includes those who choose to do so as sole traders in the form of limited companies, or as freelancers operating as sole proprietors. Despite the legal differences between these two ways of working, both generally allow graphic designers to have greater creative freedom, to work closely with their clients, and often facilitate opportunities for designers to become known for having a particular style, working with certain materials, or specialising in serving certain sectors (Ambrose et al 2020, p.18). This freedom and ability to specialise and position oneself towards working with a particular demographic makes freelance graphic designers appropriate candidates as potential adopters of a Slow Design methodology as they are responsible for developing their own systems and ways of working with clients, as well as cultivating their own set of values within the work that they choose. While in mainstream contexts graphic design is still largely associated with commerce in relation to corporate identity and advertising, the literature suggests a growth within the international scene of independent graphic designers has been taking place over the last 15 years,

often in self-directed or collaborative projects with colleagues in neighboring disciplines. These more marginal graphic design practitioners often produce work that is marked by their experimental tendencies and being more personal in nature (Erlhoff and Marshall 2008, p.199). This independent and entrepreneurial spirit of freelancers to consider alternative design practices also presents possible alignments with the Slow Design philosophy and principles. According to a 2022 report that surveyed 10,000 freelance designers in 144 countries, brand activism is on the rise, with 85% of respondents feeling that it is important to work for clients who share their values, and 40% reporting to have turned down work because of a client's stance on social issues (Design Without Borders 2022, p.21). This perspective is echoed by the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), as according to their 2021 executive summary, 88% of designer respondents said they would not accept an attractive job offer with a company whose values did not align with their own (AIGA 2021, p.13). These reports suggest a general propensity of freelance designers to situate themselves and their work towards causes that are meaningful to them.

Further evidence within recent graphic design industry reports shows that numbers of freelancing designers are increasing; some through choice and others out of necessity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to AIGA's last available data, the pandemic created a new set of first-time entrepreneurs who had no choice but to adapt, resulting in an increase of freelance and small-business owners to comprise 24% of the survey respondents in 2021, compared to 18% of respondents in 2019 (AIGA 2021, p.16). While there are many benefits for freelancers such as the aforementioned freedoms in relation to clients, projects, and location; many barriers still remain. Despite the increasing number of freelancers, many face financial precariousness as reports show that self-employed/small business owners and freelancers were most likely to have their income negatively impacted as a result of the pandemic (AIGA 2021, p.17). Another impacting result of the pandemic on the graphic design industry is the movement of internalisation and consolidation of design within agencies/consultancies as they compete for tighter budgets. This coincides with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and its impact for graphic designers through the streamlining and commoditisation of conventional design collateral such as logos, banners, brochures, posters, etcetera, through online templates and crowdsourcing sites. According to Vulpinari, as a result of this graphic designers need to "quickly climb the decisional ladder and get into the strategy-defining circle where they can practice an integrated approach of strategy and creativity, across channels and disciplines" (cited in Resnick 2016, p.23). This suggests that as technologies continue to develop and automate processes of design, the roles of graphic designers are changing, with more emphasis being placed on the uniquely human aspects of design and the nuances that cannot be replaced by machines, such as the ability to collaborate and connect with others on a personal basis. While relevant to all graphic designers, this ability is particularly

pertinent to freelance graphic designers as it has been identified that they typically face more financial uncertainty in comparison to in-house or agency designers. As a result of this, freelance designers may experience an added layer of pressure or expectation to keep up with industry changes in order to maintain a consistent inflow of clients and projects. This combination of identified factors are impacting and changing the way freelance graphic designers operate across the globe.

While many parallels and similarities may emerge in relation to freelance practices within different countries, the scope of this study cannot encompass the many nuances and unique contexts of so many different global communities. Therefore, in order to facilitate a more focused and in-depth analysis, the city of Vancouver, British Columbia (BC) Canada has been chosen as the basis for the research as a case study of a large North American city.

2.3.3 Situating Freelance Graphic Design in Vancouver, BC

The literature thus far suggests that the relationship between the designer as an individual and their physical and sociocultural environments are inextricably linked and provide essential information and context to inform their design decisions, processes, and wider impact. The following research analyses the context of freelance graphic designers within Vancouver; however, the same process of inquiry can be adapted and applied to other geographical locations as designers examine how they operate within their own environmental and sociocultural contexts. It could be hypothesised that given the increasing levels of globalisation and digital interconnectedness, many freelancers around the world may face similar experiences or contexts. Additionally, as the concept of the digital nomad[6] rises in popularity, examining one's environmental impact and having an awareness of the historical and cultural context of the places in which one operates is increasingly important.

Given the focus within Slow Design on the local and how designers as individuals relate to their environments and societies, within the context of Vancouver, Canada's history of colonialism and its residual impacts on the current challenges faced within Vancouver, and across the country, cannot be excluded from the discussion. The City of Vancouver has the third largest urban Indigenous population of any Canadian city and acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations who are the original inhabitants of the land (City of Vancouver, 2023). Unceded means that the territory Vancouver is located on was "never ceded, or given up to the

[6] Digital Nomad: a person who uses digital technologies, esp. laptops, smartphones, and wireless internet access, to work remotely while travelling and living in a variety of different places (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

Crown by the Musqueam, Squamish, or Tsleil-Waututh peoples. The term unceded acknowledges the dispossession of the land and the inherent rights that Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh hold to the territory. The term serves as a reminder that Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh have never left their territories and will always retain their jurisdiction and relationships with the territory." (City of Vancouver, 2023). While thorough covering of Canada's history and the decolonisation of design requires a much larger scope than is possible within this thesis, the following quote helps to provide some foundational context as to why it is so important for designers to critically examine how they operate in relation to their sociocultural contexts; particularly those situated within the Global North and/or of settler descent.

> Social change focused designs that exclude a community's culture, norms, or values essentially serve to erase community and replace it with a "neocolony" of the creator. These negative impacts are why neocolonialism[7] is a force for change that is fundamentally imposing rather empowering. Solutions created and problems defined in isolation from the community (and their particular social contexts) often exhibit a disconnection between the people involved and the social phenomena addressed. Consequently, designing in this way creates a high risk of cultural bias or, in this case, design neocolonialism: an influence over a population, community, or society in the absence of formal control.
>
> (Janzer and Weinstein cited in Resnick 2016, p.288)

As suggested by Janzer and Weinstein, in order for designers to create solutions that are empowering instead of imposing, their practice and intentions must be rooted in connection with, and informed by, those it is intended to benefit.

In further examining the landscape of freelance graphic design in Vancouver, according to the Government of Canada's Labour Market Information for the 2022 – 2024 period, employment for graphic designers is projected to be limited over the next three years in the province of British Columbia. The data suggests an imbalance between demand and labour supply as the number of new positions remains moderate in relation the number of graduates from educational programs and current levels of unemployed workers in the sector. This data also shows that 32% of graphic designers and illustrators in the province are currently self-employed, which is a much higher percentage compared to the self-employment average of 14% for other occupations (Government of Canada, 2023). This seems to suggest that as the graphic design industry becomes more competitive in BC due to lack of new positions, more graphic designers are seeking out alternative options of employment through freelance and self-initiated projects. The last available data from The University of British Columbia's (UBC) Industry Overview of Graphic Design echoes this,

[7] The use of economic, political, cultural, or other pressures to control or influence another country; esp. the retention of such influence over a developing country by a former colonial power (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

stating that only 23% of graphic design service establishments in BC have formal employees; creating an increasing number of independently operating graphic designers and resulting in high levels of fragmentation within the industry (UBC, 2017). These statistics seem to be consistent with the trends identified by AIGA in the previous section that as conventional/agency design positions become more limited, designers are turning to freelance, either by choice or necessity. From these findings it seems that within the increasing trajectory of the graphic design industry towards freelancing, a segmentation is simultaneously occurring posing potential challenges of isolation for designers as they become digitally removed in relation to colleagues, clients, and local environments.

With this basic context and statistical landscape of freelance graphic design defined within Vancouver, it is important to also analyse the underlying values and motivations amongst freelancers. While the collected data implies increasing levels of industry competition due to a lack of conventional agency positions, research in relation to brand activism, sustainability goals, and social design suggest a shift in the priorities of both consumers and businesses, opening up new opportunities for designers to embrace nonconventional approaches.

In light of this continually shifting cultural climate, Slow Design emerges with many possible expressions as explored in relation to various industries including food, fashion, and architecture. With the scope of the study now narrowed and defined in relation to freelance graphic designers in the context of Vancouver, the following section looks further at the proposed Slow Design framework from the previous section in order to further develop and evaluate it in relation to freelance graphic design.

2.3.4 Applying the Slow Design Framework to Graphic Design

> Design is a process that turns a brief or requirement into a finished product or design solution…The design process engages a high degree of creativity but in a way that is controlled and directed by the process so that it is channelled towards producing a viable, practical solution to the design problem, meeting or excelling the stated aims of the brief.
>
> (Ambrose and Harris 2010, p.11)

As stated above, while design is a highly creative process, it must also require a degree of direction and control in order to achieve its intended purpose. According to Hay, “the role of the designer is to work creatively within a set of constraints” and within Slow Design, constraints are often seen “to enable rather than hinder the creative process.” (2008, p.23). Such constraints could be in relation to working within a particular budget, environment, or with certain materials or software. While each

design context is unique, the goal of the proposed Slow Design framework is to help position graphic designers to ask the right questions and consider the larger impact of their practice in accordance to how they see themselves and their work in the world. While maintaining flexibility, the framework is intended to further expand the relationship and potential opportunities between Slow Design and graphic design as an evaluative tool of graphic design practices, processes, and outputs.

In order to test the potential of the framework as an actionable toolkit, the following example of a graphic design project has been selected that seems to lend itself well to the framework. In thinking about the potential of turning waste streams into creative solutions by seeking out cast-offs from other industries, Studio Eg designed a custom line of brochures for a furniture line by Ecowork by printing them on obsolete blueprints that were salvaged from local planning and architectural firms (Dougherty 2008, p.42). While a relatively simply action, through the act of repurposing discarded materials, each of the resulting brochures are completely unique with an added layer of meaning and value that would not be present had they been produced in a more conventional way with standard materials.

Fig. 19: Ecowork Furniture Brochures by Studio Eg (Dougherty 2008, p.43).

This act of consciously looking for these types of linkages between producers is known as “industrial ecology” and contributes to the ethos of Slow Design by recognising that we are all part of an interrelated network of inputs and outputs, product and waste (Dougherty 2008, p.42). Potential opportunities arise for designers to consider what underutilised outputs exist around them and how they might be transformed from waste to product. In light of this industrial ecology focused graphic design example, in which the output is a physically printed object, within the Slow Design framework its evaluation in relation to the three key areas of value, quality, and sustainability lends itself to be placed more in relation to the environmental sphere. As demonstrated in Figure 20, a potential formation of the framework could be as follows:

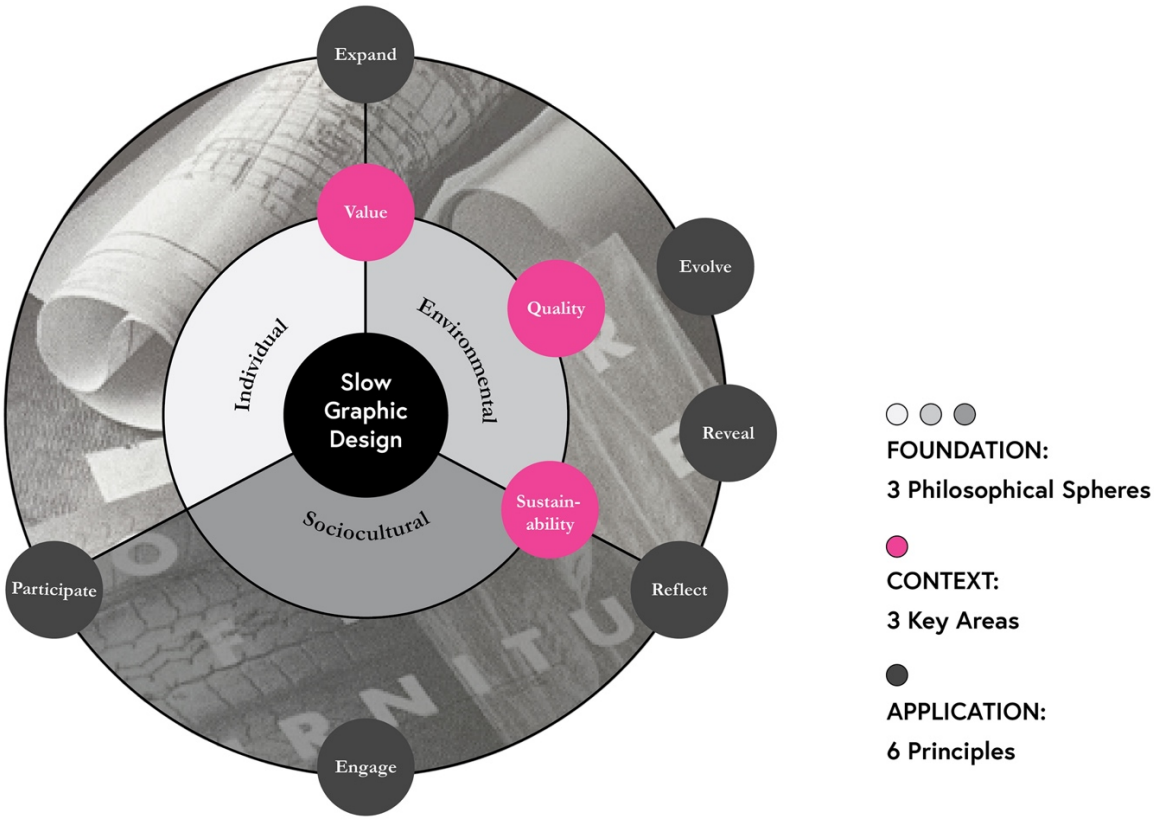


Fig. 20: Slow Graphic Design Framework Case Study (Arens, 2023).

The following chart in Figure 21 provides a further breakdown and rationale for the placements of all of the elements within this example in relation to the foundation, context, and application of the Slow Design.

Three Key Areas in relation to the Philosophical Spheres

Value:	Value is located at the intersection of the Individual and Environmental spheres as the production approach of the brochures must first be considered by the individual designers. Value of the final product becomes a natural result of the environmentally focused solution.
Quality:	Quality is placed within the Environmental sphere as a bridge between Value and Sustainability to ensure a high standard of care in the production of the brochures to ensure they achieve the desired environmental goals and are well received by conscious consumers.
Sustain-ability:	Sustainability is a main focus of this project and is located at the intersection of the Environmental and Sociocultural spheres as the act of repurposing cast-offs in partnership with other local producers is a collective effort towards environmental wellness.

Application: Slow Design Principles

Reveal:	The materials used to create the brochures reveal their unique and repurposed nature and contribute to supporting the environmental priorities of the company Ecowork through the products they make.
Reflect:	Through the act of using repurposed materials, potential customers are inspired to reflect on their own values and actions in relation to sustainability.
Expand:	Through exploring alternative materials by the individual designers at Studio Eg, the value and benefit of a simple design ask is expanded to go beyond the expected/traditional output.
Evolve:	The blueprints on which the brochures are printed on have evolved into something new. Considerations for further reuse of the brochures could be considered for further evolution and extendibility.
Engage:	Through engagement with other industries for the production of the brochures, including architectural firms and printers, connections and mutual support are facilitated between local producers and businesses.
Participate:	In the gathering of cast-offs from other companies, participation and collaboration across industries is promoted to extend awareness and feasibility of industrial ecology.

Fig. 21: Rationale for Slow Graphic Design Framework Case Study (Arens, 2023).

As demonstrated in this case study, using the Slow Design framework as an evaluative toolkit is intended to help guide the decision-making process of a design project in relation to its greater impact of processes, materials, and outputs in the context of individual, environmental, and sociocultural wellness. While a particular project may naturally lend itself more heavily to one of these key areas, as seen in the environmental focus of the brochure example, ultimately these three areas need to be considered in relation to each other and not in isolation. When looking at these three spheres, they can be viewed and evaluated in the context of quality, value, or sustainability, which are fluid and can be applied in all areas. In this example of the brochures, the production was done in a sustainable way and in the communication of doing so the value is raised and linked to the quality of execution of the final design solution. The purpose of this case study is to contribute to the Slow Design literature by building upon its established elements and proposing an actionable framework that could be applied within the context of a graphic design project. In order to substantiate the current theory and proposed framework, a further understanding of freelance graphic designers and practitioners of Slow methods is needed to provide new insights and perspectives from those working in the field.

2.3.5 Summary

This second half of the literature review aided in contributing to the third research objective by defining the terms “graphic design” and “freelance” in relation to the context of this study, and by identifying parallels within the literature between Slow values and the priority of ethical practices amongst increasing volumes of freelance graphic designers. This section also addressed research objective number four by outlining the current conditions that freelance graphic designers face within the context of the city of Vancouver. Of these conditions, concerns in relation to environmental sustainability, cultural awareness stemming from a colonial history, and an increasingly competitive graphic design industry due to lack of new job openings in the sector all point toward potential areas in which a Slow Design approach could be adopted as a flexible tool kit to offer new solutions and perspectives.

The primary gap identified within the literature review is a lack of inclusion of explicit terminology related to graphic design within the predominant Slow Design literature. In order to fulfill the fifth and final research objective of this study, which is to substantiate potential affordances between Slow Design and freelance graphic design practices, the theory outlined in the literature review will be evaluated through the method of qualitative interviews with practicing independent designers as outlined in the following research design chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical perspective, methodology, ethics, and scope of the primary research conducted for this study. Crotty (1998) states that in order to determine what kind of knowledge will be attained by social research, and why the outcomes should be taken seriously, four basic elements need to be considered within the research process: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods. Each of these elements inform and build on one another as illustrated in Figure 22.

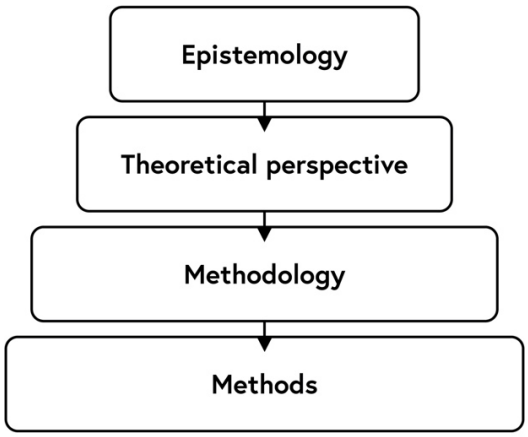


Fig. 22: The Four Foundational Elements of Social Research (Crotty 1998 p.4).

In examining the diagram from the bottom to the top, the methods category is the largest, providing the foundation of the study including the concrete techniques or procedures that will be used to gather relevant data. The implementation of the chosen method(s) is informed by the strategy or plan of action, also known as the methodology, in the section above which links to the desired outcomes (Crotty 1998, p.7). The top two categories outline the philosophical stance that underpins the chosen methodology. The theoretical perspective is concerned with addressing the context and assumptions brought to the research, while epistemology looks at the nature of knowledge itself and how it is acquired in order to provide the philosophical grounding that supports the research process as a whole. In the context of this study, all research decisions in relation to these four elements need to be based on serving the research question: what are the affordances of a Slow Design framework for freelance graphic designers in Vancouver? The following sections outline the research design adopted for this study based on Crotty's four foundational elements in order to address the research question and ensure the soundness of the research.

3.2 Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective

Epistemology is the first of Crotty's four elements of research as it is concerned with the overarching philosophical nature of knowledge; it is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know and encompasses many views including Objectivism, Constructionism, and Subjectivism (Crotty 1998, p.5). While each of these stances deal with the nature of knowledge, they each have different theoretical understandings that must be considered in order to inform an appropriate methodology for the context of this research. For more in-depth definitions of each epistemological stance see Appendix A. For this study the Constructivist stance has been chosen as it suggests that meaning is not discovered but rather constructed through conscious engagement. According to Crotty (1998), a constructivist viewpoint is neither 'subjective' nor 'objective' because meaning is not created/imposed but rather *constructed*, therefore asserting there is already something present to work with. He goes on to explain that within this view, knowledge is contingent on "being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p.49). This constructivist context fits with the phenomena of Slow Design as an evolving discipline that allows itself to be revised and adapted to new disciplines in which meaning is constructed from the interplay between humans and Slow Design.

Positivism and Interpretivism

Closely integrated with the epistemological stance is the theoretical perspective that will support and inform the chosen research methodology. The two main paradigms of research used to categorise the theoretical perspective are positivism and interpretivism that serve to capture broad notions about different research styles and their underlying assumptions (Denscombe 2017, p.8). The positivist paradigm is generally focused on facts, figures, and observable data that should be objective and quantifiable with any interpretation of their meanings strictly separated (Kvale 1996, p.62). Due to this scientific and detached approach of the researcher, positivism tends to be associated with quantitative approaches (Denscombe 2017, p.8), which will be further defined in the methodology section.

In contrast to positivism, interpretivism is concerned with uncovering "insights into people's beliefs and their lived experiences through the use of qualitative data" (Denscombe 2017, p.8). Within this paradigm, it attempts to understand and explain human and social reality by looking for "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty 1998, p.67). Due to the social nature of this thesis through the investigation of a phenomenon that has occurred and evolved over time and is inextricably linked to people, to environment, and to community, Slow

Design's constant shift and development relates to the realities within the world at a given time and therefore lends itself much more readily to an interpretivist point of view.

3.3 Research Methodology

As alluded to in the Theoretical Perspective section, there are two distinct research methodologies that provide frameworks for collecting data: quantitative and qualitative. Hakim describes qualitative research as being "concerned with individuals' own accounts of their attitudes, motivations and behaviour", with a focus on exploring smaller numbers of instances or examples which are seen as being interesting or illuminating and aim to achieve 'depth' rather than 'breadth' (2000, p.34). In contrast, quantitative research is aimed at hypothesis testing, where researchers collect facts and ask 'how many' or 'how much'. Therefore, quantitative tends to favour research with large quantities to obtain results that are statistically reliable (Denscombe 2017, p.6).

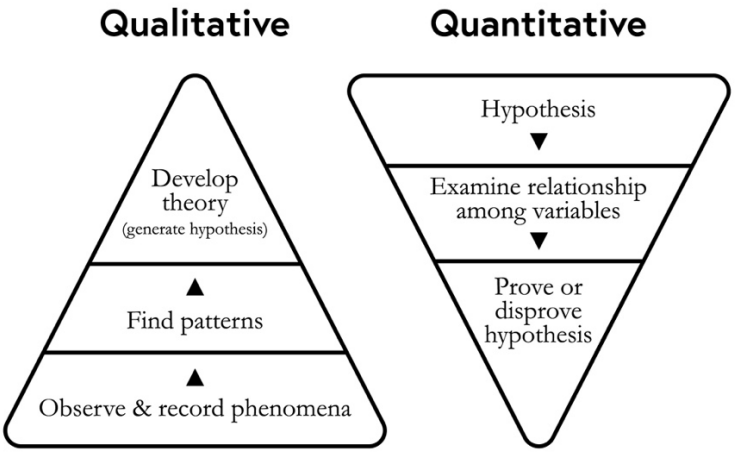


Fig. 23: A Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods. (Bazen et al 2021 p.243).

As illustrated in Figure 23 comparing the structure of qualitative and quantitative methods, the qualitative approach relies on "observation and recording of phenomena to develop a theory or generate a hypothesis based on patterns or themes" (Bazen et al 2021 p.243). Based on this comparison, a qualitative methodology is the appropriate choice for this study given its social nature and focus on the role of designers within the evolving discipline of Slow Design.

To further define the adopted qualitative methodology for this research, it will be carried out within a phenomenological vein. According to Creswell (2014) a phenomenological study is suited to research that seeks to understand and ascribe meaning to several individuals' lived experiences of

a concept or phenomena. This is an applicable type of methodology for this study as it has to do with analysing the insights and experiences of designers in relation to the phenomenon of Slow Design. This aids in understanding how Slow Design has evolved and been adopted based on real world experience and how people have engaged and interpreted it within their own disciplines. By comparing and analysing the perspectives provided by various designers, it is possible to identify potential themes, practices, and approaches that may be used for the further consideration for the adoption of Slow Design within freelance graphic design practices.

3.4 Research Methods

Crotty defines research methods as the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to a research question (1998 p.3). A number of methods were reviewed in the context of the thesis being a constructivist phenomenologist point of view in order to identify the most relevant ones for a study of this kind. According to Bell and Waters (2018) adopting a method should be based on its ability to provide the type of information required to complete the research (p.25). Appendix B (p.106) outlines in more detail the particular methods that were considered but ultimately not chosen for this study. Based on the following criteria, semi-structured interviews were identified as the most suitable method for this study given the scope and timeframe allowed for the research.

Interviews

Due to the social nature of this research in relation to the adoption of Slow Design as an evolving phenomenon, interviews were deemed the most suitable research method as a means of obtaining novel information and perspectives from experts well-versed in Slow Design and/or independent creative practices. According to May there are four types of interviews used within social research: the structured interview, the semi-structured interview, the unstructured interview, and the group interview" (2001 p.121). For the purpose of this research the semi-structured interview was the selected research method based on the reasoning behind the following advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of Semi-structured Interviews

According to May, "interviews yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes, and feelings" (2001 p.120). This is an important component as the research seeks to evaluate the affordances of Slow Design as well as determine if designers are perhaps already utilising them under different terminology. A main advantage of semi-structured interviews in particular is that while the questions are predetermined, the interviewer is freer to ask

for clarification and elaboration on the answers given, thus entering into a dialogue with the interviewee (May 2001, p.144). These types of interviews are said to allow people to answer more on their own terms than the structured interview, while still maintaining a more foundational consistency for comparability over that of the unstructured interview (May 2001, p.144). While group interviews allow investigation for researchers to explore group norms and dynamics around issues and topics, typical group interviews involve between eight to twelve people (May 2001 p.148). Given the more individual nature of freelance designers and the relatively small pool of designers who explicitly use the language of "Slow" in their practice, it was deemed that group interviews were not as relevant or feasible for this research.

Disadvantages of Semi-structured Interviews

While semi-structured interviews allow the questions to be more tailored to individuals and their unique areas of expertise, this creates potential challenges in comparing and analysing the resulting data as the questions are not all identical. According to Denscombe, consistency is hard to achieve for semi-structured and unstructured interviews because "the data collected are, to an extent, affected by the specific context and the specific individuals involved" (2017 p.221). To combat this, the interview questions in this study will be grouped into general themes so that even though the wording and interviewing context may differ for each respondent, there is still overlap within the themes and contexts for comparison. A disadvantage of interviews in general is that they can be highly subjective and therefore present the danger of bias (Bell and Waters 2018, p.210). In order to avoid bias as much as possible codes of ethical protocol will be observed in the interview process as further specified in section 3.6.

3.5 Interview Sample and Respondent Profiles

The following diagram (Figure 24) outlines the criteria devised for the selection of potential interview respondents based on their abilities to meaningfully contribute to the topics of this study. These factors for consideration include: backgrounds in graphic design, propensities towards (or knowledge of) Slow Design, experience operating independent and/or freelance practices, and geographical considerations. From those that agreed to participate in interviews, two are from Canada and three offer perspectives outside of the Canadian viewpoint. A further list of freelance graphic design practitioners was also considered, however, given the high response rate of those first contacted and the time limitations for the conduction of the interviews the secondary list was not contacted.

Identified Potential Interview Candidates	Made Contact	Agreed to Interview	Conducted Interview
Sarah Hay	●	●	●
Zephyra Vun	●	●	●
Peter Maybury	●	●	●
Ruben Pater	●	●	●
Niels Schrader	●	●	●
Brian O'Brien	●		
Carolyn F. Strauss	Initially considered for their expertise in Slow Design but ultimately were not contacted as their insights and perspectives are already extensively covered in the existing literature. Instead, individuals with experience in graphic design and freelance practices were prioritised.		
Alastair Fuad-Luke			

Criteria Legend:

- Graphic Design Experience
- Freelancer or Independent Practitioner (is/was)
- Located in Vancouver and/or Canada
- International Perspective
- Use (or familiarity) of Slow Terminology in Practice

Fig. 24: Identifying Criteria and Potential Interviewees

While all of the identified candidates have different design and educational backgrounds, Figure 24 demonstrates their validity for interviewing based on the main focuses and criteria of the study. The following section provides more details to support the justification of their selection for this research. See Appendix C for extended profiles of each interview respondent.

Respondent 1: Sarah Catherine Hay

Sarah Hay was identified as the first interview candidate as she is an interdisciplinary designer and researcher operating in Vancouver with a thorough knowledge of Slow Design having written her own thesis on it in 2008. Hay holds a Master's Degree in Applied Arts in Design from Emily Carr University and a Bachelor of Industrial Design from Carleton University. She has over 10 years of experience as a freelancer and founded her own practice called Slow & Steady Design; making her a key voice for this study as someone with extensive experience working as a freelancer in the context of Vancouver. More recently, Hay joined the BC Public Sector as a service design lead that is guiding and facilitating a cross-government effort to accommodate Indigenous language names across systems and services, including identity records and signage. This experience working within the Canadian government adds an additional layer of relevance to Hay's perspectives for this study in relation to the wider context of Slow Design and potential avenues of adoption within the public sector.

Respondent 2: Zephyra Vun

Zephyra Vun is an architect by education, and an independent visual artist/creator by choice from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. While not operating in Vancouver, Vun offers perspectives from a broader Canadian context to this study as an independent creator who founded her own practice anARCHI design in 2012 after graduating from the University of Manitoba with a Master of Architecture degree. Vun has a unique practice in which she implements concepts of Slow Flow within her process and a philosophy centred around analogue processes, humanised craftsmanship, and advocating for the importance of mental and physical health in today's digital age. Vun's multidisciplinary approach and philosophy in relation to Slow modes of creation bring a unique perspective to the study. Having worked previously in graphic design and now as a fine artist, Vun's perspectives contribute to understanding the application of Slow values within the broader community of creative practitioners.

Respondent 3: Peter Maybury

Peter Maybury is an artist, graphic designer, musician, writer, filmmaker, and educator based in Dublin, Ireland. Maybury contributes to an international perspective of this study as someone who has operated his own freelance graphic design practice for over 25 years and has designed publications for clients in Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, UK, US, Italy and Canada. While Maybury does not identify with the label of a "Slow Designer", Maybury is familiar with the Slow Movement and has a natural propensity towards working outside of mainstream and corporate contexts; often producing work centred around the arts and culturally related projects. Maybury holds a Masters in Graphic Design from Central St. Martins College of Art & Design and his perspectives as a well-

seasoned freelance graphic designer with extensive knowledge of publication design contribute valuable insights to this study.

Respondent 4: Ruben Pater

Ruben Pater is an Amsterdam-based designer, educator, and writer with a propensity towards the intersections of graphic design, journalism, and activism. His recent book CAPS LOCK (Valiz, 2021) uses clear language and visual examples to show how graphic design and capitalism have become inextricably linked. Pater's perspectives on the role graphic design plays in perpetuating capitalism provides valuable insight for this study. While not directly familiar with Slow Design, Pater's work has many parallels to the values and concerns explored within the Slow Design literature as his book features examples of radical design collectives that work towards alternatives between design, community and reciprocity. Pater completed his Master's in Graphic Design from the Sandberg institute in Amsterdam and has experience as an independent practitioner having started his own practice under the name 'Untold Stories' that consists of self-initiated and collaborative graphic design and journalism projects.

Respondent 5: Niels Schrader

Niels Schrader is a concept-driven information designer and educator with a background in Communication Design from the University of Applied Sciences in Düsseldorf, and a Master's of Design from the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. While also not necessarily identifying as a "Slow Designer", Schrader is knowledgeable of the Slow Movement and has published writing on the importance of slowing down in an age of information overload. He considers communication to be an interactive process that requires participation through questioning and his projects frequently challenge the audience to experience the very means of communication by providing insights into the complex methods of information exchange. Schrader has extensive experience operating as a freelance graphic designer with a focus on editorial work in the cultural sector having designed for Uwe Loesch and Irma Boom. Since 2005 Schrader has run his own independent design studio called Mind Design. He brings a unique and international perspective to this study that weaves together his views on the relevance of slowing down in relation to the design and processing of information.

Interview Theme Design

While the questions for semi-structured interviews may vary slightly for the unique context of each candidate, Figure 25 outlines the basic question design for the study based on key themes and the desired purposes of the information gathered.

Theme	Probe Questions	Purpose
Individual Practice/ Freelance Graphic Design	• How did you get started in design and how did it lead to what you are currently doing? • Could you elaborate on what it was about graphic design that drew you in and what you hoped to achieve through it? • What have been the biggest barriers operating independently outside of the more corporate graphic design world? • As someone who has done an in-depth study on the relationship between graphic design and capitalism, how have your approaches working as a designer evolved as a result of this?	• The purpose of these questions is to help identify and compare any trends or themes between respondents in relation to their motivations and/or key turning points within their design practices that may suggest propensities of the types of designers to adopt Slow Design. Some are more general and some are tailored in relation to graphic design or the practices of specific respondents.
Slow Design	• How did you first discover or hear of Slow Design? • What do you perceive as potential challenges or barriers to adopting Slow Design? • Does a particular project that you've worked on come to mind that you felt really embodied the Slow Design principles/methodology?	• These questions vary based on candidate's existing knowledge of Slow Design. The purpose is to gain a better understanding of how designers are currently interpreting Slow principles in their practices and to gain a balanced view of potential affordances and challenges.
Clients/ Collaboration	• What types of clients do you primarily work with and do you look for specific clients aligning with your values, or do they tend to seek you out? • How do you balance operating as a freelancer while also building a network of collaboration? • What does creative community look like within your independent practice? • Do you have criteria or a selection process for working with third parties?	• These questions are intended to help situate how designers operate in their sociocultural contexts in relation to other creatives, clients, and third parties. The goal of this information is to help situate opportunities for Slow Design to be adopted in relation to the wider social impacts of graphic design practices.
Lifestyle/Values	• In the bigger picture, do you feel slow design has helped your own wellbeing and creative desires beyond design as a job? • Do you have strategies in place to help balance your own personal wellness in line with your work?	• These questions aim to explore the relevance and affordances of Slow Design in relation to the individual sphere and how graphic designers situate themselves holistically.

Fig. 25: Question Design

3.6 Ethics

According to Kvale, an interview inquiry is a moral enterprise because the personal interaction in the interview affects the interviewee and the knowledge they produce affects our understanding of the human situation (1996, p.109). In light of this, a set of ethical guidelines are needed in order to ensure the research is conducted in accordance with standard research protocol. While ethical codes and theories seldom provide definitive answers to the normative choices to be made during a research project, they do offer guidelines that can be judged and adopted accordingly based on their relevance to the context of the research (Kvale 1996, p.110). For the context of this study, a set of ethical guidelines were designed in order to ensure a standard research protocol as summarised in Figure 26.

Ethical Guideline Design	
1: Invitation to Participate	• Confirmation to participate was received in written form via email from all confirmed participants.
2: Obtain Consent	• Permission was obtained to record the audio from interviews in order to provide accurate documentation.
3: Provide Themes	• Broad topics for discussion provided pre-interview to give candidates time to reflect.
4: Invitation for Revisions	• Following the interview, candidates invited to make any revisions to their transcripts.
5: Provide Final Transcript	• Final version of thesis provided upon completion to achieve transparency of the research.

Fig. 26: Ethical Guideline Design

The first stage of ethical protocol was to obtain informed consent from each of the participants to ensure that everyone who took part in the research did so of their own free will. See Appendix D for a sample letter of the initial contact made with potential interviewees. The default position on

obtaining consent for participation in a study is that it should be obtained in writing (Denscombe 2017 p.28), therefore, confirmation was received in written form via email from all of the confirmed participants. An explanation was sent to inform them of the overall purpose of the study, why they were deemed suitable for the interview, and permission was obtained to record the audio from their interviews. The audio recordings and subsequently typed transcriptions of the interviews help to provide more accurate documentation of the interviews that are not reliant on the limited and selective memory of the interviewer (Kvale 1996, p.161). Themes for discussion were also supplied in advance of the interview to give candidates time to consider broader themes of discussion in order to provide meaningful answers.

After the interviews were conducted, the next stage of ethical protocol conducted was to send a copy of the interview transcription to each of the participants for their approval before being included in the final thesis. The reason for this is a matter of courtesy for the interviewees to ensure they are not left feeling that they have been represented unfairly or inaccurately as the interviews are a form of record of their experiences and opinions (Gillam 2005, p.14). The importance of this is echoed by Denscombe that since a transcription requires the talk of the interview to be 'tidied up' in order to be understandable to the reader, it can inevitably lose some authenticity in the process (2017 p.309). Therefore, in order to ensure the facts discussed within the interview are correct and confidentiality is maintained where desired by participants, the transcript should be checked and given approval by participants before being published. One of the interviewees from this study carried out some changes before sending back the approved transcript. As the final stage of ethical protocol, a transcript of the full thesis will be provided to each candidate upon completion to achieve transparency of the research in relation to their contributions within the study.

3.7 Scope

The early stages of this research was concerned with establishing the potential affordances of a Slow Design framework for freelance graphic designers in general. However, in order to narrow the scope in relation to a geographical context, the city of Vancouver, Canada was chosen. Given that Slow Design is a relatively new and small field within the design literature it was deemed that consideration of the perspectives from internationally practicing graphic designers would need to be considered within the research to maintain a wider scope of relevance. In order to achieve this, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the appropriate research method as surveys or focus groups would not be achievable due to limited sample sizes and the timeline limitations for the research. According to Kvale, researchers should "interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (1996 p.101). Kvale goes on to say that a general impression from current interview studies is quality over quantity; and that many studies would profit from having

fewer interviews in the study, while taking more time to prepare and analyse the interviews (1996 p.103). In light of this, five designers were selected for interviews based on their different backgrounds and practices to provide sufficient perspectives and information around the topics of Slow Design and freelance/independent design practices in Canada and Europe. A practicing Slow Architect was also initially identified but was unable to interview within the allotted timeline. Of the five interviews, three were interviewed by online video calls due to location differences, one was interviewed in person, and one provided answers via email due to personal preference. As a result, in order to cover the full scope of research from broad to narrow, designers were interviewed who were familiar with Slow Design in general, as well as designers operating within Canada, and finally within the context of Vancouver specifically.

3.8 Summary

This section established the research design for the context of this study based on the structure of Crotty's Four Foundational Elements of Social Research as summarised in Figure 27.

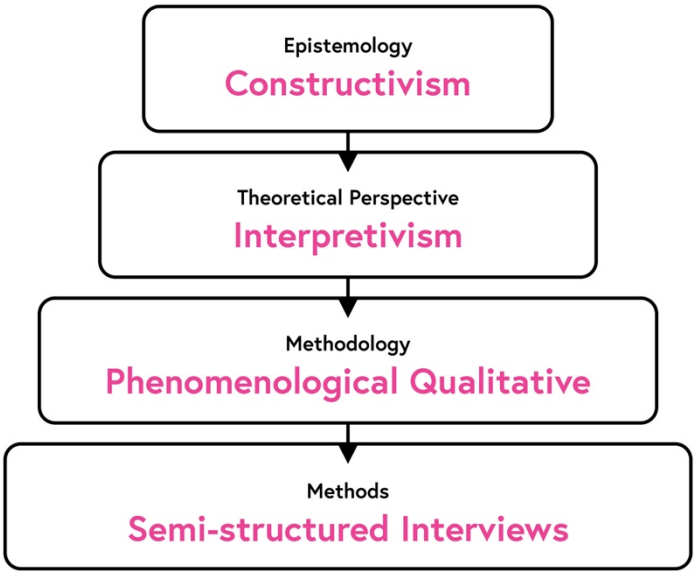


Fig. 27: Summary of Research Design; based on The Four Foundational Elements of Social Research (Crotty 1998 p.4).

Due to the evolving nature of the field of Slow Design, a constructivist epistemological stance was deemed the most applicable as the research seeks to substantiate the theory through the viewpoints and perspectives of creative practitioners. In accordance with this, the theoretical perspective adopted for this study is interpretivism as it focuses on trying to understand and explain human and social reality by looking at interpretations as opposed to scientific facts or data. Based on this, the chosen methodology is qualitative, carried out in the form of semi-structured interviews

as the research method. This was deemed the most relevant method for this study as a way of gaining in-depth insights from appropriate candidates through questions that can be adapted to their individual experiences and areas of expertise.

The interviewee respondent profiles provided rationale to demonstrate the selected candidates' relevance to this study and to highlight their areas of expertise in relation to the three key focuses of the study including: freelance experience, Slow Design, and Vancouver. This section outlined the ethical considerations and steps taken within the gathering of primary data to ensure the validity of the research in line with best practices. Lastly, the scope was narrowed to five interviewees operating within Canada and Europe. The findings and analysis of the interviews are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Presentation & Analysis of Primary Data

4.1 Introduction

The research gathered in this study thus far has provided a theoretical basis and understanding in relation to the application of Slow Design and its potential connections and affordances for freelance graphic designers in the context of Vancouver and beyond. In order to evaluate these findings through practice and not just theory the research method of semi-structured interviews has been deemed the most appropriate method, as outlined in the previous section, in order to gain the unique perspectives of designers operating in areas related to the research topic. The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse the data gathered from the conducted interviews in order to cross reference it with the information established in the literature review to test the validity of theory and gain a fuller understanding of the potential of Slow Design in practice for freelance graphic designers.

4.2 Research Method - Interviews

Complete interview transcripts for all candidates are provided in Appendices E through I. Given the multifaceted nature of Slow Design, as well as the interdisciplinary characteristics of those interviewed, the interview findings are grouped and presented in the following sections under the categories of the Slow Design philosophical spheres: Individual, Environmental, and Sociocultural in order to encompass a wide range of potential applications and perspectives from the respondents.

Throughout the presented interview findings, key words and phrases from each respondent that relate to the Slow Design principles are emphasised in **bold**. This highlighting is intended to draw attention to potential connections between the perspectives, values, and language of each respondent and the key elements that have been established in the Slow Design framework. The aim of this is to further substantiate the framework's applicability and to illustrate how designers may already be incorporating Slow principles into their practice, even if they do not explicitly identify with the Slow Design terminology.

4.2.1 Interview 1: Key Findings from Sarah Hay

Interview type: Online video call | Date: 04/08/2023 | Duration: 43min | Appendix E

As someone already familiar with Slow Design and having operated as a freelance graphic designer in Vancouver, Hay's interview provided a wealth of information in relation to all the major themes within this research.

Individual *(values, practice, lifestyle)*

In relation to Hay's design practice as an individual, her propensities towards the adoption of Slow Design emerged from the desire to move away from approaches that are unhealthy in relation to both the expectations and rigor on the designer as an individual (as she experienced in design school), as well practices that promote the mass production of things. This tension between being a design enthusiast while also deeply concerned with environmental sustainability and ecology is what led Hay on the path towards researching Slow Design. This starts to suggest an affinity between designers with a counter-cultural nature and Slow Design as a way for designers to reposition themselves outside of the more mainstream and capitalist models of design. Hay makes the connection between speed and destruction, in relation to environmental pollution as a result of modes of production, as well as the decisions designers make when they are hurried and the potential consequences when not given enough space for **reflection** and consideration. In Hay's words:

> Forced time pressure is what Slow Design tries to push back against. But I'd also say there's a process piece to it as well, that you're more careful and mindful if you're thinking like a Slow Designer. Then often the outcomes of Slow Design can be to reduce impact on the environment, like regenerative design, as well as to try and influence the slowing down of activities, behavior, and interactions. So, the outcome of Slow Design can be any one of those.
>
> (Hay, Appendix E p.113)

What Hay speaks of here aligns with the findings in the literature review that Slow Design has an inherent flexibility and is inextricably linked to people and the environment in consideration of physical outputs as well as individual processes. According to Hay, two of the major compounding emergencies that are at the forefront of poverty in Vancouver are climate and housing concerns; and that Slow Design presents both opportunities and challenges in relation to these. On one hand Slow Design can be an act of resistance against capitalism and unsustainable strains on the environment, while on the other hand the adoption of Slower practices can also be a type of luxury that not everyone can afford when it comes down to paying the bills. This is a balance individual designers must find within their practices so that an application of Slow can be a "conscious, hyper-awareness of our situation, and living in a way that is joyful but also faces reality." (Hay, Appendix E p.114).

In relation to Hay's freelance practice, while not actively operating as a freelancer during the time of the interview, Hay identified both benefits and challenges that similarly align to the opportunities and barriers she identified earlier in relation to adopting Slow Design. Financial viability is a similar concern as freelance practices can often lack security including benefits and pensions. However, the benefits identified by Hay can include flexibility in relation to scheduling, low overhead costs, the ability to choose meaningful projects, and the opportunity to work in a multidisciplinary context. For Hay this included teaching, facilitating participatory design workshops, and hosting various public design events as part of a collective called Vancouver Design Nerds. In relation to this Hay states:

> The designers from that group have been a really important piece to my practice in terms of staying engaged and leading to paid work as well. So being embedded in a community of my own interests, and then having the Emily Carr teaching community, and having my Slow and Steady practice were all supporting and informing each other, and I would bring pieces from them all to each other.
>
> (Hay, Appendix E p.117)

All of these elements suggest that integrating **participation** in one's community as an individual designer can foster collaborative opportunities and provide a creative space for envisioning impactful projects. Hay's examples illustrate that maintaining ownership and control over one's choice of collaborators can also facilitate the creation of work that resonates with one's interests. In Hay's words: "I called my practice Slow and Steady Design, and that in a way I think set myself up for client-designer expectations…A lot of my clients were working in the green building and sustainable community space and I find that industry very interesting as it holds a lot of potential for climate change reduction strategies" (Hay, Appendix E p.116). Much like the examples explored within the literature surrounding examples of Slow food and fashion, through engagement with meaningful projects, the work ultimately becomes a platform for communicating with wider society to encourage collective **reflection** on established ways of doing things.

Environmental *(physical space, context, sustainability)*

Within the context of her local environment in Vancouver, Hay speaks to the **evolution** of Slow Design in relation to place-based practices with a focus on connecting to the land and that there is still a huge gap in design practices around reconciliation and social justice. Without necessarily the label of Slow Design, Hay mentions that there has been progress within design research and practice in Vancouver but that it "needs to bring those pieces into the fold more, to really try to decentre a lot of whiteness and Eurocentricity in design" (Hay, Appendix E p.114). Hay's perspective links the importance of self-awareness of the individual designer to understand both the environmental and sociocultural contexts in which they are operating and to identify personal

blind spots; particularly in relation to colonialism within design practice as well as racism, supremacy, and privilege.

Hay also speaks to the importance of the natural environment to fuel her practice by eliciting **reflection** and imagination. “There’s definitely a pattern there in relation to water, and I find when I’m on the ocean especially, you feel like you can let your imagination think about the planet because you’re connected” (Hay, Appendix E p.113). This perspective of connecting the importance of time spent physically in nature to fuel one’s design practice is not as explicit within the explored literature of this study, however, it draws parallels with many of the principles of Slow Design, reinforcing in practice how designers might utilise time in nature to reflect on ways to **expand** and **evolve** their practice in sustainable ways.

Sociocultural *(clients, collaboration, community)*

As identified in the literature regarding Vancouver as an unceded territory, sociocultural concerns and demographics are intertwined with the region’s colonial past. Within the interview Hay shares about two projects she has worked with that have particular focuses on slow and intentional collaboration and connection with Indigenous communities within the province. From these examples, while not explicitly framed as Slow Design, certain practices and themes arise that lend themselves to be considered as examples in alignment with a Slow Design methodology.

The first project Hay speaks of is through her position as a service design lead within the BC Public Sector. This project is in support of one of the government’s reconciliation commitments, which is to introduce and enable indigenous language names across government systems and records including person names, place names, and business names into identification signage. As Hay notes about the project, within the province of BC alone, “there’s over 200 distinct nations and over 30 languages that are documented and spoken and are being revived. It’s really complex because they have different orthography and different writing systems as well, so a lot of our current data systems are not designed to accommodate beyond the Roman Latin alphabet” (Hay, Appendix E p.113). This project demonstrates a long term and slow process of rethinking systems of communication that are of great sociocultural importance in relation to Canada’s colonial past and historical government-sponsored attempts of destroying Aboriginal cultures and languages through residential schools”[8] (City of Vancouver 2023). Hay makes the connection between Slow Design and service design as they both involve a holistic approach and the invitation to zoom out and see how all of the pieces fit together for the imagining of long-term impactful change.

[8] “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) concluded that residential schools were “a systematic, government-sponsored attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages and to assimilate Aboriginal peoples so that they no longer existed as distinct peoples.” The TRC characterized this intent as “cultural genocide.”” (City of Vancouver, 2023).

The second project Hay speaks of in the interview as an example of a slow, deliberate, and powerful project for those involved is the Avenues of Change project for which she was a researcher. **Engagement** is a key focus of the project through embodied learning and hands-on making to arrive at creative solutions together as a community. The project engaged directly with families in the Squamish community of BC, including Squamish Nation families, to look at ways of building in new supports to help kids transition into the school system from kindergarten. Key terms Hay uses to describe the project include creative, respectful, and reciprocal, in order to ensure safety and trust throughout the project. This echoes the views cited in the literature of Janzer and Weinstein that the only way for designers to create solutions that are empowering instead of imposing is to be rooted in connection with, and informed by, those the project is intended to benefit (cited in Resnick 2016, p.288).

4.2.2 Interview 2: Key Findings from Zephyra Vun

Interview type: Online video call | Date: 16/08/2023 | Duration: 34min | Appendix F

With a background in architecture, experience in graphic design, and an independent art practice centred around Slow flow processes, Vun's interview brought further insights to the study through a multidisciplinary lens and broader Canadian context.

Individual *(values, practice, lifestyle)*

In examining Vun's journey as an independent creative practitioner, a prominent theme that emerged within the interview included a desire to push back against the mainstream and ever-increasing digitisation of architectural, as well as fine art, practices. This desire for upholding creativity and more analogue processes informs a lot Vun's practice and the reasons behind establishing her independent practice in which she could make things by hand that resonated and were valued by her clients for their physical qualities. These insights are in alignment with many of the Slow Design case studies identified within the literature. In particular, parallels can be drawn with the Slow Fashion examples, in which the hand production methods influence and **reveal** both the value and quality of the final outputs. This once again reinforces the identified affordances and opportunities within a freelance practice of being able to choose the types of clients and projects one works with and support the notions of value, quality, and sustainability that Slow Design upholds.

Vun also acknowledges the challenges inherent in this type of practice that goes against society's hyper-fixation on productivity, deadlines, and the need for external attainment. These pressures are notably engrained particularly in the context of Western culture and capitalist societies. The importance of having strong personal values, allowing space for **reflection** to think about things differently, and building your practice around your own conceptual framework came up in the interview. These have strong links to findings in the literature, aligning notably with Shaughnessy's perspectives which emphasise the need for graphic designers to cultivate strong creative and ethical beliefs to avoid having their practices treated like commodities to be "bought off at bargain basement prices" (2005, p.27). Vun's perspectives and approach to her creative practice also echo perspectives in the Slow literature in relation to choosing work that aligns with topics and issues of personal importance and value.

> Over the last four years I've really been sinking into my personal authenticity, who I am and what my core values are. I've done a lot of values work, which I think is surprisingly really important…when you have this foundational list of things that you believe in, naturally you're emitting that into the world and that stuff's coming to you. So in terms of my practice, I think especially recently, people have been seeking me out. I've definitely been way more selective, so people will ask me to do things and if it doesn't resonate with me then I say, "no".
>
> (Vun, Appendix F p.123)

This integration of core values that Vun speaks of harkens back to earlier themes explored in the literature, including adoption of Slow Design beyond the context of a profession and more as a way of living that emphasises creativity, experiences, and a rekindling of "individual and socio-cultural imagination that has atrophied with ready-made materialism" (Fuad-Luke 2004, p.22). Vun speaks of her practice as integrative and holistic and that it is just as much about creative flow as it is about bodily connection and individual wellness. In her own words: "connection to the body and to the self is at the core of what slowing down is. Because by moving fast there's no time to even feel. Therefore, my position as a group fitness instructor is something that inevitably seeps into my life and creative practice" (Vun, Appendix F p.126).

Environmental *(physical space, context, sustainability)*

In Vun's interview, the significance of the physical work environment emerged as a key point of discussion. While the environmental aspect of Slow Design is often associated with the natural world, Vun's perspective brings in an additional layer of consideration to the study by emphasising the importance of built environments. This perspective aligns with Vun's architectural background and resonates with some of the literature exploring Slow Architecture, which highlights the role of physical spaces in facilitating a slower pace.

For Vun, creating a conducive environment for her creative work is essential for fostering a "slow flow" process. She stresses the value and importance of a peaceful and distraction-free workspace that is accessible and open. Vun makes the point that even corporations are increasingly recognising the importance of such environments, as reflected in practices like standing desks and lunchtime walks. These seemingly small actions can contribute more to slow practices than one might initially think (Vun, Appendix F p.127).

Sociocultural *(clients, collaboration, community)*
Vun acknowledged that a large part of her artistic practice can be quite isolating as it requires the ability to reach states of individual flow that are free of distraction. However, other aspects of her career counterbalance this and are very community-based including facilitating flow workshops, offering mentorship to emerging artists, public speaking, and teaching fitness classes. This interdisciplinary nature seems to be an emerging theme in relation to independent creatives as they explore career-building alternatives to reflect their skills and facilitate the types of work they are passionate about. As part of Vun's flow workshops she **engages** the community through low-barrier techniques and minimal supplies that encourage a meditative approach combined with foundational artistic skills and exercises, providing opportunity for collective slowing down.

4.2.3 Interview 3: Key Findings from Peter Maybury

Interview type: In person | Date: 17/08/2023 | Duration: 65min | Appendix G

Maybury's interview was the only one conducted in person and therefore facilitated a more robust exchange through the discussion of physical examples of Maybury's publication designs throughout the interview. While Maybury does not necessarily identify with the term "Slow designer", he acknowledges that there seems to be alignments between Slow values and his freelance graphic design practice as outlined in the following findings.

Individual *(values, practice, lifestyle)*
From the early days of Maybury's graphic design education, he was interested in its communicative possibilities and believed that much could be achieved through content, form, and meaning, and that as a designer there is responsibility behind what are you are saying (Appendix G, p.). In order to work in areas that are meaningful and facilitate his interests, operating as a freelancer is foundational to Maybury's design practice; in his own words:

> I thought for a while that I should expand as a business, but I realised no, what's actually really fundamental to how I practice is that it's freelance you know, politically to be

> outside of anything corporate or anything industry based, and to have direct engagement with the people with whom I worked.
>
> (Maybury, Appendix G p.137)

This propensity Maybury demonstrates towards working outside of mainstream/corporate contexts is a reoccurring theme in both the Slow Design and graphic design literature, especially in relation to the growing number of freelance practitioners seeking meaningful alternatives. Another key alignment Maybury's freelance practice highlights is direct engagement with the people he is working with and being conscious of how his work is culturally situated. He frames this throughout the interview in relation to the term "emic."[9]

> Something significant for me is this word emic; it's about where you are situated in relation to your research – when you are within the culture that you're investigating and you're conscious that your research is affecting the process and the results…This is important as the graphic designer is most often outside the culture or the research, and their role is even understood as external and transparent.
>
> (Maybury, Appendix F p.134)

This perspective on the role of the graphic designer in connection to one's environment and culture aligns closely with several Slow principles, notably **expand** and **engage**. It **expands** the role of a graphic designer from that of a detached outsider imposing solutions to that of an actively **engaged** participant operating within the culture, contributing as a visual communicator. In the context of graphic design, this interpretation implies that "emic" can encompass both the culture of a designer's physical environment as well as the cultures associated with their areas of interest. In the examples Maybury discusses, he refers to the book he co-edited and designed titled *Throw Away – Dublin Nightclub Flyers*. Since he was a part of that culture and was there making the flyers and going to the places in the timeline of the book (1990's), that establishes the ground and base knowledge of the culture needed to facilitate the design of the book "as a gesture of trust" between Marybury and his co-editor. He asserts that whatever you are interested in, you can develop a practice out of or around those things, and that it really comes down to "who you are, what you're doing in the world, and how you relate to that" (Appendix G, p.141). This perspective helps to link examples from a graphic design context with the identified spheres and principles of Slow Design in relation to the interconnected importance of one's surrounding cultures and environments and that they can inform one's individual practice and vice versa.

A final noteworthy insight related to Maybury's individual practice is his acknowledgement of the difficulties, particularly financial, when operating outside of more heavily funded/mainstream

[9] In contrast to the etic approach, an emic approach is a way of studying or describing a language or culture from the point of view of the people who use the language or live in the culture (Oxford English Dictionary).

industries. This emerges as a consistent theme throughout the conducted interviews thus far and reinforces the need for changes within the capitalist market rather than its perpetuation. Maybury acknowledges the difficulty of breaking the cycle as people still need to make a living, but also highlights that other ways are possible and can be encouraged through awakening in people the tendencies and interests they already possess around which to build their independent practice (Appendix G p.129). Maybury's perspective seems to suggest that the pursuit of an independent/Slow practice does not have to be all or nothing, but can instead be a living and **evolving** way of bringing awareness and intention to the values one perpetuates through design.

Environmental *(physical space, context, sustainability)*

The thought process behind Maybury's work is a reoccurring theme within his interview as he uses examples from his practice to demonstrate how he utilises limitations as opportunities to push communicative boundaries. Whether working on projects with large or small budgets, Maybury treats them equally as serious enquiries, which naturally tends to be a slower process as they are more concerned with lasting value. This links to themes explored in the Slow Design literature in relation to the interconnectedness of quality and value and that when things are made thoughtfully with longevity in mind, they often result in more sustainable end results. In relation to his editorial design process Maybury states:

> This way of working just takes longer – it is serious enquiry into communicative modes; and you gain a bit of confidence and you fight back against the rush of the clients because you become really conscious as well (particularly with paper) you become really conscious of it and the industry and the energy that goes into making these things, and you want to make things that last. It's a difficult thing to straddle, but I think the idea that you just don't make books because of their carbon impact is nonsense because we consume all the time and all our electronic data far outstrips this; but I do think it makes you more conscious of your choices, and about making a book which lasts.
>
> (Maybury, Appendix G p.137)

In relation to one of his book designs, Maybury uses the term "poetic object" to describe the way in which the substrate and materials of the book were strategically selected to reflect the meaning of the text (Appendix G p.132). This concept seems to closely echo Chapman's views explored in the literature in relation to the "poetic potential" of products to embed enduring values over the passing of time. The emerging parallel between these two perspectives is that through investing time, care, and thought into the design of an object, it is infused with quality and value which lends itself to longevity and sustainability through continued appreciation over time.

Maybury further demonstrates this concept of pushing the communicative value and longevity of graphic design methods through his approach to catalogue design. He makes the point that

catalogues for art galleries typically serve as part of the currency of institutions in order to give them status, but ultimately become outdated by documenting exhibits that are fixed in time and do not accomplish much else. In order to push against this, Maybury uses it as an opportunity to make publications that have more value through layers of complexity to facilitate different ways of **engagement**.

> I'm always trying to invest value and complexity into whatever it is I do. Then this idea of the multi-valency and multiple views of things I think contributes to that because it's not a single message. So much of what we receive is this single message perspective, an account. Which doesn't wear well other than a timepiece. Whereas, when you make these things that are more complex, they allow you as a reader to enter into them and form your own opinions.
>
> (Maybury, Appendix G p.138)

This example of Maybury's approach to exhibition catalogue design demonstrates how through added layers of thoughtfully designed complexity, the final output can facilitate slower modes of **engagement** for readers, as well as **expand** the expected lifespan and function of a traditional catalogue through investment in its value and communicative experience. While Maybury addresses that not everything has to be "ostensibly the green agenda", you can still make small changes through the awareness of your presence on earth and what bearing that has on the things you create (Appendix G p.141).

Sociocultural *(clients, collaboration, community)*

Maybury asserts that how you work with and relate to people is a really fundamental component of a graphic design practice and that there are many potential ways of working with both clients and other creative practitioners beyond the conventional realm of what is considered to be collaboration. In relation to working with other professionals and producers, Maybury makes the point that it is important for graphic designers to adopt a discursive relationship in order to draw on the expertise of others;

> There's a lot of hierarchy, and I think maybe Slow Design is about dissolving some of those. The idea of the service provider – I think that's all wrong. I think it's all flat. And if you think about it as flat, then you get all of these values and insights from these experts that you can't get on the internet and it's really, really specific…it's tacit knowledge, it's intuition, sagacity. It's all sorts of different things that are all mixed up. And again, I think if you're in a fast design culture there's no space for those things to happen.
>
> (Maybury, Appendix G p.141)

Maybury's view helps to dismantle the hierarchical view of the graphic designer as the instructing outsider and instead encourages a more **expansive** and **participatory** practice that draws on the values and insights of others to ultimately make the work better. This perspective has similar

sentiments to the early foundational Slow Food values articulated by Petrini concerning sociocultural wellness, emphasising respect for workers and their know-how, pay adequate to work, and gratification in producing well (2007, p.135). In the interview Maybury further describes this aspect of his graphic design practice through the idea of "mutual constituency" that allows for the overlapping of interests and concerns to create something new that is greater than the sum of the parts, and is never imposing at the expense of anything else (Appendix G p.130).

4.2.4 Interview 4: Key Findings from Ruben Pater

Interview type: Written email | Date: 28/08/2023 | Appendix H

Pater opted to answer interview questions via email, therefore for the sake of length considerations, his questions were primarily tailored towards topics covered within his publications that present possible alignments with Slow Design.

Individual *(physical space, context, sustainability)*
In relation to Pater's individual practice, he frames it as a slow process of learning and practicing design that over time **evolved** the development of his political sensitivity and interest in history. He notes a particular interest in philosophy and the punk and hip-hop movements that inspired him to bring together art and politics in new forms. This once again reflects a counter-cultural propensity of designers that lends itself to Slow Design by seeking to push the communicative potential of graphic design as a meaningful medium outside of more mainstream and capitalistic practices. Pater makes the point that when graphic designers talk about politics and activism, it tends to be reduced to slogans and posters. However, he asserts that what actually should matter is how socially aware one's practice is, as reflected in his following questions:

> Do you work with local printers, or cheap bulk printers abroad? Do you pay your interns? Do you use open-source software? Do you refuse to work for fossil fuel, the fast fashion industry, and real estate companies? Do you work locally in your neighbourhood or do you work with foreign companies? This is where I try to make my practice more socially relevant and ecologically responsible.
>
> (Pater, Appendix H p.142)

A key finding within this quote from Pater is the distinction that the medium of graphic design has the ability to not only embrace methods of Slow Design within its own production practices, but that it also plays a role in not supporting/perpetuating the work of other unsustainable industries. This further reinforces the flexible potential of a Slow Design framework for freelance graphic designers to **expand** their view of how to situate their practices in socially and ecologically responsible ways.

Environmental *(physical space, context, sustainability)*

In relation to environmental concerns, Pater asserts that "it starts with the realisation that infinite growth is simply not possible on finite planet earth. So every design, every object we put out into the world, uses valuable resources which are running out" (Pater, Appendix H p.142). From this the choice of resources, as well as choosing whether to design or produce something in the first place becomes an essential step in considering the wellbeing of the planet. Pater relates this to designing fewer new objects and instead focusing on fixing, mending, and repairing which relates to concepts explored in the literature surrounding the Waste Hierarchy and utilising potential cast-offs from other industries within graphic design practices. This perspective further reinforces the importance of the Slow Design principle **evolve** as graphic designers evaluate how their designed outputs will last and/or be further repurposed in the future.

Sociocultural *(clients, collaboration, community)*

In relation to the potential of graphic design to contribute to greater societal good, Pater refers to the concept of commons and how that can be implemented within a design practice through the sharing of intellectual property, such as publications and designs, as well as the potential of starting a commons-based studio practice/workspace that can be run as a cooperative.

> The concept of commons may seem abstract but it refers to all things we have common access to and cannot be privately owned. Think about rivers, beaches or forests, but also libraries. Since I do not own any property, I focus on the intellectual property I produce; my books, my designs, and most of my work is publicly accessible or can be used with a Creative Commons license.
>
> (Pater, Appendix H p.143)

These practices demonstrate concepts of accessibility to prevent the gatekeeping[10] of graphic design education and resources and to encourage active **engagement** and **participation** within practices through "commons" access. This idea of commons suggests new terminology and considerations for possible implementation methods of concepts explored in the Slow Design literature in relation to ways of operating outside of exploitative systems. The concept of commons aligns with the Slow Design principles of **expand**, **engage**, and **participate** as it extends the potential of graphic design assets, education, and resources to the wider community. However, much like any natural resource, such as rivers, a commons practice must be respected and maintained otherwise it runs the risk of also becoming exploited.

[10] Gatekeep: to monitor or select (information); to control (access to something). To restrict or discourage others' participation in, enjoyment of, or identification with (something, esp. an activity or interest which one shares) (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

4.2.5 Interview 5: Key Findings from Niels Schrader

Interview type: Online video call | Date: 20/09/2023 | Duration: 44min | Appendix I

Schrader's interview brought further considerations to the study with a particular focus on the impacts of speed and technology in relation to the practices of independent graphic designers. Having extensive experience as a freelancer, information designer, and educator, Schrader brings a further multidisciplinary and international perspective to the study.

Individual *(values, practice, lifestyle)*

In terms of Schrader's individual design practice, like many of the other interviewees, he does not necessarily use the term "Slow Design" as a particular label or terminology to describe his work. However, through his real-life experience as an information designer he started thinking about ways of slowing things down through the realisation that things might become unmanageable through continual acceleration. Schrader makes the point that while technological advancements can be positive, they should also be **reflected** upon critically to avoid giving away agency.

> I think computers are still good and you can use these technologies, but the problem arises when you merge thinking and reasoning with speed. At a certain point it can become overtaking, where thinking and reasoning don't count anymore; and I think that's the point we have to look out for…It's sort of externalising your brain and I believe that's where we don't want to go because it's also giving away agency. And I guess this sort of **reflection**, which is probably more ethical reflection, has not really been on the agenda of big corporations. Because they, of course, have an incentive to make money. And that's, I think, where this sort of critique should come, and in particular I believe that's where the Slow Movement has an incredible and valuable point.
>
> (Schrader, Appendix I p.145)

Schrader's point of view emphasises the responsibility of the individual designer to critically **reflect** on what is perpetuated through the tools and technologies of their practice. This relates to the findings established in the literature review in relation to graphic design as an industry that is continually adapting in relation to evolving technologies. With computers becoming one of the primary tools of the contemporary graphic designer, Schrader highlights that computers promote acceleration and that by leaving decision-making to processes of the computer it is a giving away of agency, responsibility, and accountability of the designer as many algorithmic decision-making processes are biased (Appendix I p.146). This adds a new layer of consideration for freelance graphic designers in relation to the implementation of Slow principles to combat ethical concerns while still harnessing the practical affordances of technology. This seems to echo concepts explored in the Slow literature of 'festina lente' (make haste slowly); and that the maintaining of

uniquely human cognitive abilities such as reflection, reasoning, and empathy are key in order to counter-balance a lack of agency through technological acceleration. Schrader further summarises this sentiment in the following statement:

> I think the essence is looking at Slow Design from the perspective of technology and asking what technology does in the context of acceleration. Because we are using technology as tools, hence what do tools do to us? And how do we respond cognitively? Because that is our centre of attention, and in this process, are there moments where we have to interfere and allow for slowing down?
>
> (Schrader, Appendix I p.152)

Schrader makes the point that capitalism frequently fuels technological acceleration, where the allure of the new is perpetuated through marketing, often at the expense of genuinely helping people. Consequently, there is a need to strike a balance and reconsider the aims and applications of technological advancements. Schrader contends that individuals and designers should play a more significant role in making these decisions, rather than leaving them to the big corporations.

Environmental *(physical space, context, sustainability)*

The topic of environmental concerns, while not a primary focus of the interview, did arise in relation to the value of projects that Schrader chooses to take on as part of his freelance practice. Schrader asserts that there comes a point when designers must ask themselves what they want to achieve in life and it comes down to "what the real causes are that you want to spend your time on" (Appendix I p.152). Schrader asserts that in relation to his practice:

> One of my major things is education and also having an impact on certain topics that are very close to me; environmental as well as justice causes. And eventually you start to wrap your practice around that…What I find very exciting about this new generation is that the consciousness is already there. I think that you guys are already a step ahead and that should be celebrated.
>
> (Schrader, Appendix I p.152)

This perspective from Schrader once again reflects similar alignments between the topics and values of the projects chosen by designers who have propensities towards the identified focus areas of Slow Design. Schrader also observes the increasing levels of consciousness in relation to global issues within the new generation of designers and students with whom he works (Appendix I p.151). This is also a trend in the literature surrounding a focus on social responsibility within graphic design education and further suggests how Slow Design could help facilitate a framework for new approaches.

Sociocultural *(clients, collaboration, community)*

The collaborative nature of design is a consistent theme throughout Schrader's interview, emphasising that collaboration should go both ways; "it's very dangerous to think of working as only one directional. So whenever there's opportunities for you to think of your clients, it's good to also push work their way" (Appendix I p.149). This view seems to fit with the circular and interconnected nature of the Slow Design framework and also has similar sentiments identified in Maybury's interview in terms of removing the hierarchy between designer and service provider/client for a more mutually constituent working relationship. Schrader goes on to express that it can be a slow process of building your reputation through the type of work you are doing that will naturally attract a certain type of client (Appendix I p.147) Similarly to the other interviewees, the topic of income and the inherent instability of operating a freelance practice was addressed. For Schrader, in order to combat some of the instability he emphasised the importance of having good clients and maintaining a healthy network of connections who are trustworthy and can provide support when downtimes occur. Similarly to the other respondents, Schrader is also an educator which helps facilitate time for a more relaxed decision-making process within his freelance practice because he knows that his rent is paid (Appendix I p.149) This contributes to the emerging theme in both the literature and interviews that Slow Design and freelance practices are inherently flexible and do not have to be all or nothing in order to make meaningful contributions.

A final key consideration from Schrader's interview that provides areas of **reflection** for the wider graphic design community is in relation to the context of design awards. Schrader explains:

> I stopped taking part in these sorts of competitions for prizes because it's just not enough. It's interesting in the context of Slow because it's really not sustainable or long term, it's just a sort of repeating cycle of the same thing year after year…It's a type of system that propels a feeling that you have to perform.
>
> (Schrader, Appendix I p.150)

While Schrader also asserts that this is more of a personal choice, it brings awareness to another avenue in which Slow Design can facilitate a re-examining of practices and what they perpetuate. If graphic designers are individually considering the impacts of what they perpetuate and produce it sparks consideration of how the larger design community celebrates and supports longer term impacts. This begs the question of how might notions of success within graphic design be **expanded** and celebrated in more sustainable and innovative ways.

4.3 Analysis and Summary

The primary goal of the semi-structured interviews was to help substantiate connections made in the theory between Slow Design and freelance graphic design in relation to practicing designers. As presented in this section, each candidate had a wealth of unique considerations and insights in relation to potential applications of Slow methods with relevance to the Individual, Environmental, and Sociocultural spheres. Each interviewee tended to gravitate more strongly towards specific themes from the study as demonstrated through the highlighting in bold of references to the Slow Design principles throughout the findings. The diagram on the following page (Figure 28) charts these mentions in relation to the interviewees and the three Slow Design philosophical spheres in order to identify potential patterns and tendencies.

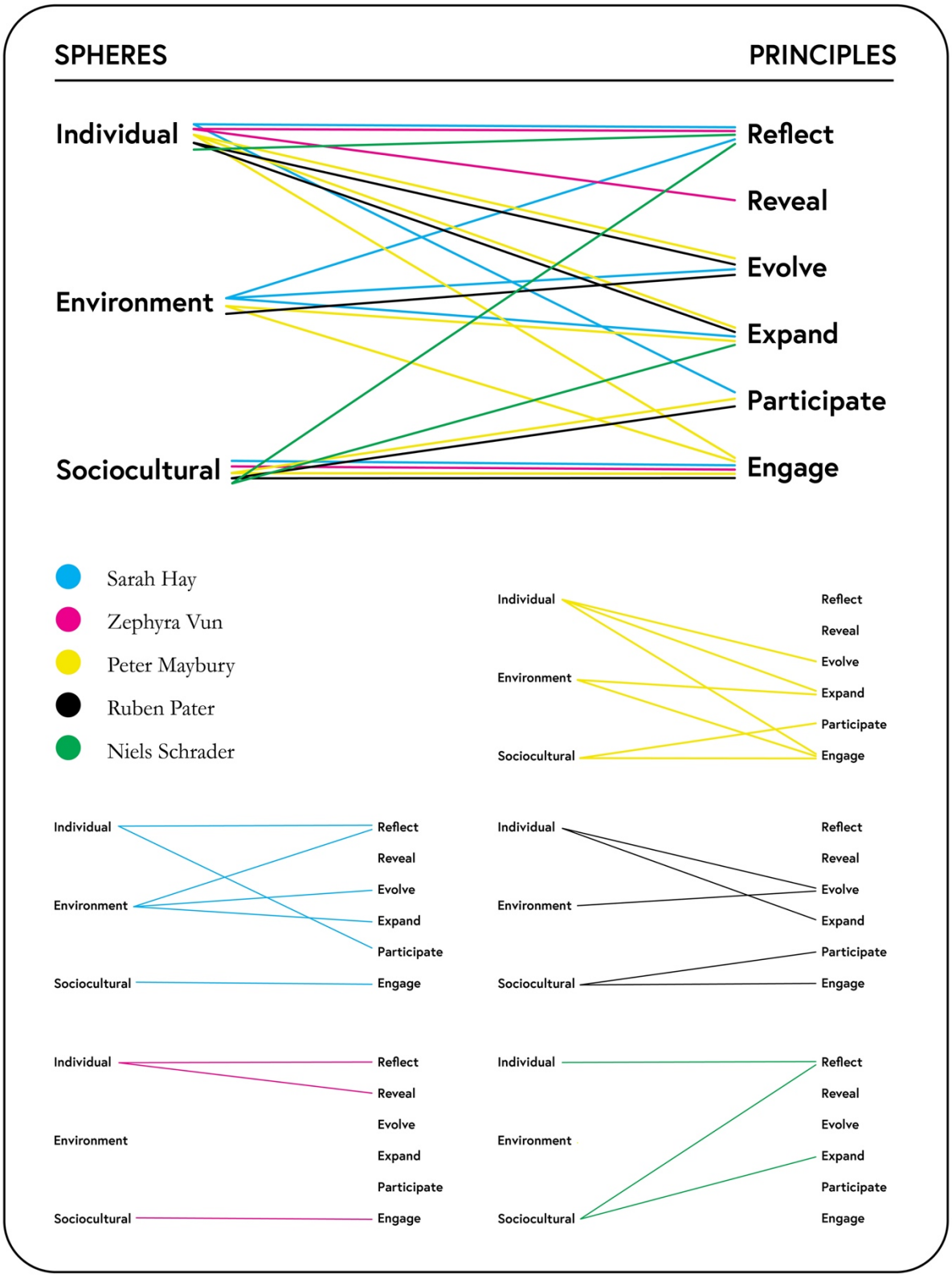


Fig. 28: Patterns of Slow Design Principles from Interviews

From Hay's interview it is possible to identify a strong focus stemming from the Environmental sphere, suggesting that the primary issues currently being faced in Vancouver are inextricably linked to the context of land and place; presenting considerations for adoption of Slow principles in relation to long term and big-picture societal change to combat the compounding issues around reconciliation, social justice, and climate concerns within Vancouver.

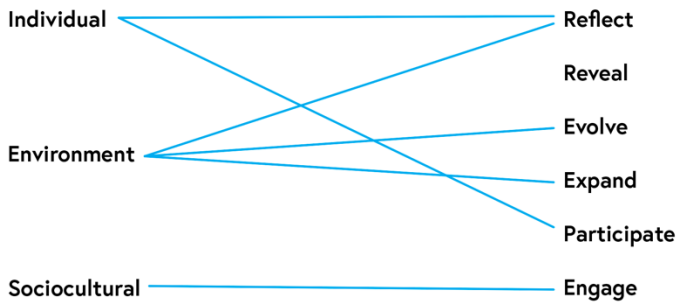


Fig. 29: Chart of Slow Design Principles from Hay's Interview

Vun's interview provided insights with a more synthesised focus on the importance of one's individual wellness to facilitate mindful Slow Flow approaches to practice. An emphasis on quality and value of outputs emerged through intentional choices of analogue and handcrafted production methods to connect and engage with audiences and clients.

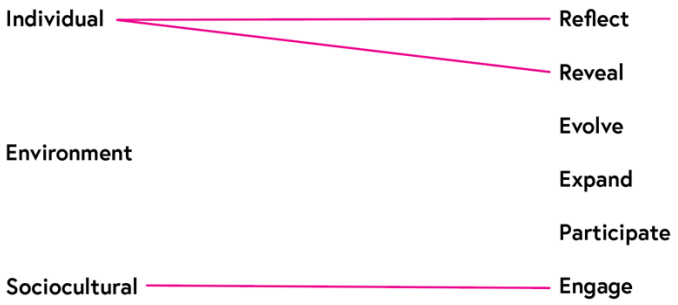


Fig. 30: Chart of Slow Design Principles from Vun's Interview

Maybury's interview contained a fairly balanced consideration of all three philosophical spheres, with a slightly larger focus on the Individual. This focus highlights the importance of situating one's practice within the culture of their research, framed within the emic perspective. Thoughtful approaches to design longevity and sustainability were highlighted as demonstrated through Maybury's editorial examples. And lastly, a key insight on the dismantling of hierarchies within

design culture emerged to allow space for input and expertise that may not be feasible in fast-paced design practices.

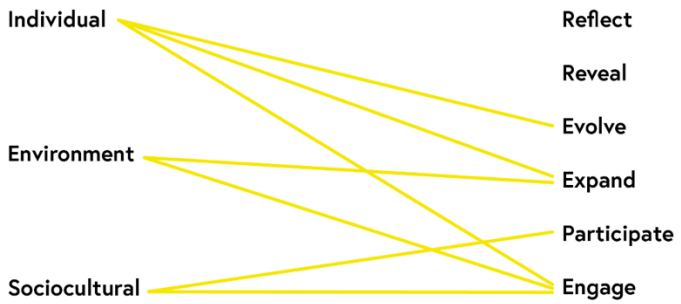


Fig. 31: Chart of Slow Design Principles from Maybury's Interview

Pater's interview contributed many tangible considerations to the study in relation to slowing down environmental impacts of graphic design practices that are linked to Individual and Sociocultural contexts. These insights include a spectrum of considerations, ranging from immediate concerns such as the utilisation of local manufacturers and fair compensation for interns to broader considerations of systemic change through the adoption of a commons-based model for mutual support within the design community outside of a capitalist framework.

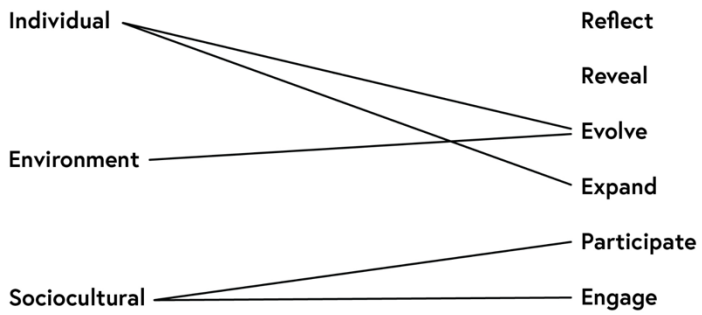


Fig. 32: Chart of Slow Design Principles from Pater's Interview

From Schrader's interview a particular focus emerged on balancing uniquely human qualities with the pace of technological advancement in order to maintain agency and responsibility of design decision making processes. Schrader's approach to using design tools and software in a slower and more conscious way, with a focus on well-being for both the individual and society, presents strong correlations to the Individual and Sociocultural spheres.

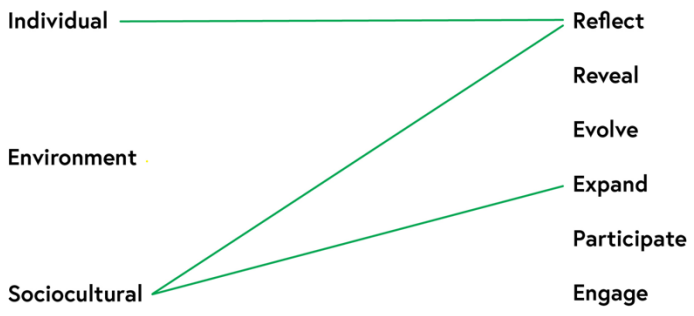


Fig. 33: Chart of Slow Design Principles from Schrader's Interview

This charted interpretation of the interview data helps showcase the unique viewpoints of each respondent. It reinforces the inherent flexibility of the Slow Design framework by demonstrating how different interpretations and applications of its principles relate to the Slow Design spheres. A notable consistency that emerges in four out of the five interviews is the connection between the Sociocultural sphere and the principle "engage." This helps support the findings from the literature that Slow Design is an inherently social methodology with a focus on how one's practice can make a positive impact through engagement within community; even through small steps and actions.

A final key finding that emerged within all of the interviews was recognition of challenges stemming from inconsistent workloads and financial instability in both freelance and Slow Design practices. As a response to these challenges, freelancers tend to adopt multidisciplinary practices. All of the interviewed candidates identified working in different areas to supplement their freelance practices with teaching and education being the most common additions. This seems to suggest that despite the increasing numbers of freelancers and their propensities towards adopting Slow methods, more systematic and behavioural change is needed to make such practices a viable and sustainable reality.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

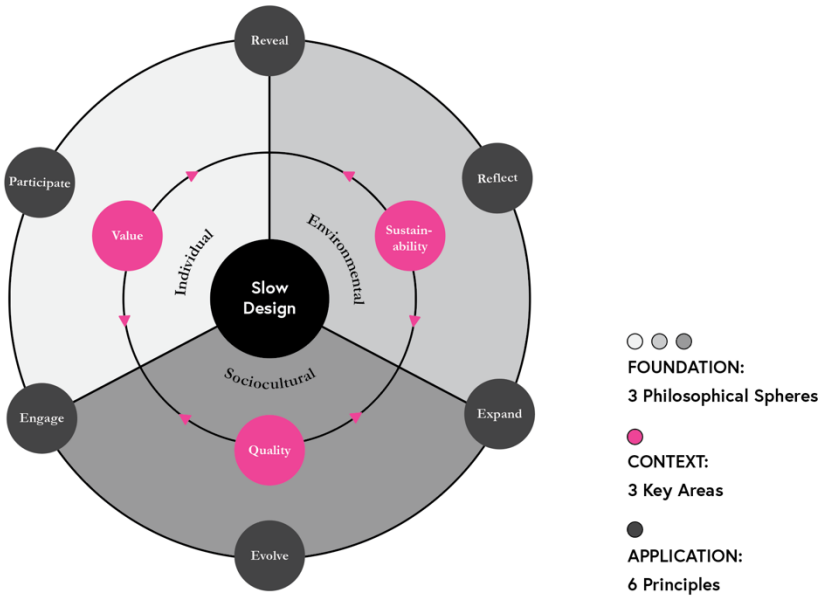
This thesis is concerned with establishing the affordances for freelance graphic designers operating within Vancouver of adopting a Slow Design methodology. This chapter draws on all of the information presented within the study, from both the literature review and primary research interviews, in order to present final conclusions based on the key findings. These conclusions are presented in relation to the five research objectives that were established at the onset of the study to give an overview of the most significant points.

5.2 Conclusions

Establish the historical context and main tenets of Slow Design theory.

Conclusions

The literature review identified that Slow Design emerged from the Slow Food movement in the 1980's and adopted specific focuses around value, sustainability and quality stemming from a desire to slow down the destructive tendencies of industries and corporations for people and the planet. As concepts of Slow Design rose in popularity, initially evidenced through the fields of Slow Fashion and Slow Architecture, its surrounding literature became more formalised through establishment of the three philosophical spheres: Individual, Environmental, and Sociocultural. With the goal of wellness for these areas serving as the foundation of Slow Design, the following six guiding principles were established: reflect, reveal, expand, evolve, engage, and participate. These principles serve as a flexible and open toolkit for designers to utilise when considering the larger impacts of their actions in relation to the foundational spheres of Slow Design. With all of the formal tenets of Slow Design established, this study compiled them into a circular framework to visually demonstrate their interconnected and flexible nature in order to help facilitate further considerations for their adoption in graphic design practices.



Slow Design Framework (Arens, 2023)

The conclusions drawn from this initial research objective established Slow Design as an evolving and adaptable approach to design processes and outputs, leading to the next research objective of identifying its tangible applications across other design fields.

Develop an understanding of how Slow Design is being implemented within other industries.

Conclusions

The literature demonstrated how the core areas of Slow Design, as outlined in the framework, provide a consistent foundation that can be applied to a variety of other industries. This was evidenced through examples of product and editorial designs, fashion, architecture, and socially-engaged initiatives. The take-aways from these examples identified that Slow Design principles can be implemented through acts of communication, the production of objects, and the experience of spaces. All of these identified areas suggest strong parallels to processes and outputs within graphic design practices as further outlined in the following objective.

Define "graphic design" and "freelance" to establish possible affordances and challenges of adopting a Slow Design methodology.

Conclusions

The definitions in the literature identified freelance graphic designers as independently operating visual communicators, often working with a variety of mediums and outputs. Cited studies

highlighted globally increasing numbers of freelancers with focuses on addressing ethical and environmental concerns within their practices. The literature and interviews suggested parallels between widespread motivations of freelancers and the values of Slow Design as both emphasise the desire to operate outside of mainstream consumerist contexts that perpetuate wasteful practices. The Slow Design framework demonstrates alignments with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the areas of responsible consumption and production, as well as climate action. This alignment helps to validate Slow Design as a pertinent methodology for freelancers to evaluate the impacts of their graphic design practices.

As alluded to in the literature and further substantiated within the interviews, financial viability is the primary barrier to the adoption of Slow principles amongst freelancers who already face higher levels of work load instability. Going against societal norms and established systems that prioritise profit over people and the planet can be a demanding endeavor for designers seeking to sustain themselves outside of mainstream industries. The literature suggests that further systemic change is required for wider adoption and feasibility of Slow related practices.

Investigate the current conditions of the freelance graphic design industry in Vancouver to determine if there are propensities toward adopting a Slow Design framework.

Conclusions

Within the context of Vancouver, industry reports revealed increasing levels of freelance graphic designers and a simultaneous shortage of more conventional design positions; suggesting both opportunities and challenges as graphic designers seek meaningful employment alternatives and opportunities within their individual practices. The research indicated that the primary compounding issues within Vancouver include climate and housing concerns and the need for a greater focus on reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities. In relation to these, Slow Design's focus on the interconnected impacts of design practices on environments and communities presents opportunities for freelancers to align their practices around these areas.

Substantiate potential affordances of Slow Design in freelance graphic design practice.

Conclusions

While the Slow Design literature identified many positive affordances, the primary research interviews added a balanced perspective, validating potential advantages within graphic design while also identifying real-life challenges and limitations. Insights from the interviews suggested that adopting Slow approaches can be challenging, and in some cases, a privilege that not

everyone can afford to facilitate. Despite these challenges, the overall sentiments from the interviews substantiated the values of Slow Design for freelancers, particularly in relation to affirming that many small actions can collectively lead to significant change and that Slow approaches are adaptable and do not require an all-or-nothing commitment to foster a meaningful graphic design practice.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the fact that Slow Design is still a relatively new and evolving field, there are still many topics and areas that merit further research. This chapter highlights potential avenues for further studies that were acknowledged or briefly touched upon within the research but that ultimately extend beyond the allotted scope of this thesis.

One area for future research could be further analysis and exploration of the Slow Design framework complied in this study in relation to more graphic design case studies spanning different projects and methods. The scope of this thesis outlined the basic tenets and tested its relevance in the literature through a single graphic design case study. This foundation could be further explored in relation to other projects and/or working environments, such as its potential for adoption within graphic design studios and agencies.

Within the context of Vancouver, and Canada at large, a gap was identified within Hay's interview that further research is needed to "decentre a lot of the whiteness and Eurocentricity in design" (p.114). This could include further study around the connections and affordances between Slow Design, Seventh Generation Theory, and ecological thinking in relation to topics and practices of reconciliation, decolonisation, and social justice.

Given the multidisciplinary practices of the interviewed candidates of this research, further study could also be undertaken into exploring specific connections between Slow Design practices and other creative positions and industries including fine arts, Service Design, and Information Design.

Finally, considering the pressing global climate concerns and the imperative of sustainability, further research is of relevance on regenerative practices as a subset of Slow Design in relation to graphic design. Additionally, exploring methods to incentivise the adoption of Slow practices in broader industry contexts is another area where supporting research could be beneficial.

5.4 Summary

In referring back to the opening quote of this thesis from Joyce that “the longest way round is the shortest way home”, it becomes evident that Slow Design is in fact the longer route. However, this study has contributed a few steps on the journey for freelance graphic designers seeking to make meaningful contributions through their practices as the industry gains momentum towards more sustainable and purposeful approaches.

The research identified that potential exists in both theory and practice for freelance graphic designers in Vancouver and beyond to adopt Slow Design as a meaningful and functional methodology for both situating and evaluating their work. Actionable affordances include considerations of design longevity, use of sustainable materials, working with local producers, mindful practices in relation to accelerating technologies, and engagement with local cultures for informed and relevant solutions.

The historical evolution of Slow Design contributes to the notion that collective small actions can lead to significant change. This research suggests that freelance graphic designers have the potential to play a pivotal role in driving positive change within the field for individuals, societies, and the environment. In the words of designer Thomas Lommée, "the next big thing will be a lot of small things," or perhaps, we should rephrase it as "a lot of **Slow** things."

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Appendix A – Epistemological Stance Definitions

Objectivism

Objectivist epistemology holds the stance that "meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness." (Crotty 1998, p.8). This is why it is "objective", by suggesting that meaning exists on its own and is recognized by human beings through study and discovery; implying that objective truth can be discovered if approached in the right way.

Constructivism

Constructivist epistemology is in complete contrast to Objectivism by rejecting the view of human knowledge and objective truth waiting to be discovered. Instead, Constructivism asserts that meaning and truth come into existence through "engagement with the realities in our world" (Crotty 1998, p.8). This is why it is "constructive", by suggesting that meaning is constructed as opposed to being discovered.

Subjectivism

Subjectivist epistemology asserts that meaning does not come from the interplay between subject and object, but instead "is imposed on the object by the subject." (Crotty 1998, p.9). This is why it is "subjective" because the meaning ascribed to an object can come from anything and nothing, as long as the object itself makes no contribution to the generation of its meaning.

Appendix B – Considered Research Methods

Method: Survey Questionnaire

According to Bell and Waters (2018), a typical survey example asks the same set of questions to a selected group or category of individuals, with the aim of obtaining information and findings that are representative of the population as a whole (p.31).

Advantages:

Surveys are beneficial for comparing and analysing answers to the same questions amongst numbers of individuals in order to demonstrate that certain features exist in particular categories. This is helpful for providing answers to the questions 'What?', 'Where?', 'When?' and 'How?' The main emphasis of surveys is fact-finding, and if it is well structured and piloted, it can be a relatively cheap and quick way of obtaining information (Bell and Waters 2018, p.32).

Disadvantages:

Surveys can rarely prove causal relationships, such as answers to 'Why?' questions, and typically require large numbers of respondents in order to compare answers. Additionally, Bell and Waters assert that great care has to be taken when conducting surveys to ensure that the sample population is truly representative. "If you decide to carry out a survey, you will need to consider what characteristics of the total population need to be represented to enable you to say with a fair amount of confidence that your sample is reasonably representative. These characteristics may include age, education, postcode, ethnic group, political affiliation, income, and so on, depending on the purpose of your research" (2018, p.31).

Rationale for Selection or Non-selection:

Given these identified characteristics of surveys, they were not deemed feasible for this study due to the relatively limited sample size of identified graphic designers with knowledge and/or a propensity towards the topic of Slow Design. Additionally, this study is more concerned with causal information in relation to respondent's perspectives and opinions as opposed to obtaining fact-based information.

Method: Case Study

A case study approach can be effective for individual researchers as it provides an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in more depth. Case studies require researchers to "identify an 'instance', which could be the introduction of a new way of working, the way an organization adapts to a new role, or any innovation or stage of development in an institution" (Bell and Waters

2018, p.29). Case studies involve the systematic collection of information and can encompass a number of methods, although observation and interviews are most frequently used.

Advantages:

Case studies allow for a more focused and in-depth study of a particular aspect of research.

Disadvantages:

In relation to case studies, some question the value of studying single events/examples as it is difficult for researchers to cross-check information. Other potential disadvantages include the danger of distorted results through selective reporting (Bell and Waters 2018, p.29).

Rationale for Selection or Non-selection:

While smaller-scale case studies of Slow Design examples were included in the literature review of this study, a larger in-depth case study for the primary research was not deemed appropriate due to the limited scope of perspectives the approach provides.

Method: Experiment

Experiments are concerned with measurable phenomena and may allow conclusions to be drawn about cause and effect (Bell and Waters 2018, p.33).

Advantages:

Experiments are often repeatable which can help to validate research outcomes, enhance credibility of findings, and result in measurable data from which to draw more objective conclusions.

Disadvantages:

Experiments tend to be more extensive and take more time in order to address all potential ethical issues associated with experimental research and to ensure no harm will occur to participants as a result of the research (Bell and Waters 2018, p.33).

Rationale for Selection or Non-selection:

While it is ultimately dependent on the type of study, experiments are often deemed quantitative due of their focus on testing/identifying measurable phenomena. Given the qualitative focus of this research based on the thoughts and experiences of people in relation to Slow Design and freelance practices, an experiment was not selected as an appropriate method to gain the desired type of information for this study.

Appendix C – Extended Interview Respondent Profiles

Sarah Catherine Hay

Sarah Hay is an interdisciplinary designer and researcher living on the unceded territories of xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Sə̓lílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations (now known as the city of Vancouver). Hay holds a master's degree in applied arts in design from Emily Carr University and a Bachelor of Industrial Design from Carleton University. Having written a thesis on Slow Design in 2008, Hay is deeply knowledgeable about the subject and has spent the last 10-plus years as the founder and lead designer of Slow & Steady Design, as well as a part-time instructor at Emily Carr University and Simon Fraser University teaching courses on sustainable design, civic engagement and professional practice. In the past year Hay joined the BC Public Sector as a service design lead that is guiding and facilitating a cross-government effort to accommodate Indigenous language names across systems and services, including identity records and signage. This work involves mapping system and service dependencies across ministries and jurisdictions, developing technical and policy guidance, and consulting with Indigenous Peoples to understand service priorities and co-develop solutions. Hay also continues to be an active member and co-director of the Vancouver Design Nerds Society, a network of collaborating artists and designers founded in 2004 whose mission is to facilitate, promote and create opportunities for generative dialogue, co-creation and community building.

Sources for profile information:
https://www.sfu.ca/continuing-studies/instructors/e-h/sarah-hay.html
https://www.slowandsteady.co/profile/

Zephyra Vun

Zephyra Vun is an architect by education, and a visual artist/creator by choice from Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canada). She founded her independent practice anARCHI design in 2012, a year after graduating from the University of Manitoba with a Masters of Architecture degree. The venture initially began as an architectural consulting business whose philosophy centred around analogue processes and upholding humanised craftsmanship in design, which has since morphed organically into a visual arts practice. She has exhibited her artwork both locally and internationally and is dedicated to creating slow flow experiences through her visual art, writing, and fitness classes. She applies her unique set of skills to inspire flow states in herself and in others, passionately advocating for their exceptional importance to our mental and physical health in today's digital age. Vun's quest for deeper connection is foundational to the way she leads her life, and therefore, to the art she

puts out into the world. She creates art that stimulates going inward and wholeheartedly believes in a creative process to match; one that involves tapping into intuition and bodily participation.

Sources for profile information:
https://www.anarchi-design.com/bio
https://www.artavita.com/artists/21310-zephyra-vun-anarchi-design

Peter Maybury

Peter Maybury is an artist, graphic designer, musician, writer, filmmaker, and educator based in Dublin, Ireland. Since completing a Masters in Graphic Design from Central St. Martins College of Art & Design in 1992, Maybury has collaborated extensively with creative practitioners and institutions, editors, and curators, on more than 150 individual artists publications, and over 50 group show publications for clients in Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, UK, US, Italy and Canada. Operating his own freelance practice for over 25 years, Maybury's work centres around the arts and culturally related projects, producing books, catalogues, identities, websites, publishing, curation, works for exhibition, video and sound recordings that have been featured in key design publications including Blueprint, Creative Review, and Emigre magazines. Maybury lectures in Visual Communication at TU Dublin School of Art & Design and is an External Examiner for the MA in Graphic Design programme at Bath Spa University. He recently published and co-edited *Throw Away*, a comprehensive survey book of nightclub flyers from Dublin in the 1990s.

Sources for profile information:
https://www.petermaybury.com/index#/profile/
https://www.tudublin.ie/explore/faculties-and-schools/arts-humanities/art-and-design/people/academic-staff/peter-maybury.php

Ruben Pater

Ruben Pater is an Amsterdam-based designer, educator, and writer. He completed his masters in graphic design from the Sandberg institute in Amsterdam in 2012. After working for a decade in various graphic design and advertising studios he started his own practice under the name 'Untold Stories' that consists of self-initiated and collaborative projects to produce critical work between graphic design, journalism, and activism. He is currently a tutor at the Royal Academy of Art in the Hague for the BA Graphic Design and the MA Non Linear Narrative programmes. His first book The Politics of Design (BIS publishers, 2016) has been an inspirational source book for design students, tutors, and visual communicators worldwide. His most recent book CAPS LOCK (Valiz, 2021) uses clear language and visual examples to show how graphic design and capitalism have

come to be inextricably linked. The book also features examples of radical design collectives, that work towards alternatives between design, community and reciprocity.

Sources for profile information:
https://framerframed.nl/en/mensen/ruben-pater/
https://www.designacademy.nl/p/research-and-debate/dae-lecture-series/dae-lecture-series-ruben-pater
https://valiz.nl/en/publications/caps-lock

Niels Schrader

Niels Schrader is a concept-driven information designer with a fascination for numbers and data. He is founder of the Amsterdam-based design studio Mind Design and member of the AGI – Alliance Graphique Internationale. He graduated in communication design at the University of Applied Sciences in Düsseldorf and further completed his academic studies in the master programme of Design at the Sandberg Institute Amsterdam. From 2013 to 2021 he was head of the Graphic Design department, along with Roosje Klap, at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague where he is currently head of the Non Linear Narrative master programme. Before setting up his own studio in Amsterdam in 2005, Schrader worked as a freelance designer for Uwe Loesch and Irma Boom. He considers communication to be an interactive process that requires participation through questioning. Schrader's projects frequently challenge the audience to experience the very means of communication by providing insights into the complex methods of information exchange.

Sources for profile information:
https://dutchartinstitute.eu/page/1321/niels-schrader
http://www.minddesign.info/about.html

Appendix D – Sample Letter of Initial Contact with Potential Interviewees

Dear_____,

My name is Darby and I wanted to share how inspired I am by your work_____.

I am reaching out because I am currently doing my MA in Graphic Design Practice at the Technological University of Dublin and am writing my thesis on Slow Design. The research is specifically in relation to the potential affordances of Slow Design principles for freelance graphic designers.

Given your knowledge of_____ and your expertise in _____, I wondered if you would consider doing an interview with me as part of my research? I would love to learn more about if/how you utilise a Slow Design approach in your design practice.

Thank you so much for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Darby Arens

Appendix E – Interview with Sarah Hay

Date: 04/08/2023
Time: 5pm IST
Duration: 43min
Location: Virtual meeting between Dublin and Vancouver
Interviewee Title: Service Designer at BC Public Sector

Can you tell me a bit about your background in design; how you got started and how it led to what you are currently doing?

Absolutely. Going way back to finishing up high school and wondering what I would do after, I remember an orientation session from a university that came into our grade 13 class and introduced industrial design. I was like: that sounds amazing! But it was funny because I thought I might design a phone that would go into everyone's home; I really latched on to the possibility that I could design a piece of technology that would be in everyone's home for them to interact with. I already had the art and math and science courses that were the prerequisites to get into the design programmes, so I applied for some architecture programmes as well and in the end chose to go into the industrial design programme. Since I had this background and interest in art and science and math, it happened that that was my entry point into formal design education. I went into my undergrad at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, and it was pretty intense and hardcore, lots of all-nighters and quite competitive, and I'd say unhealthy in terms of the expectations and rigor. I'm so grateful for learning the process, but in those four or five years I realized that I didn't want to make stuff; I had a really difficult relationship with learning about mass production and sustainability and ecology and realizing I didn't actually want to design a phone that goes in everyone's homes as it will just end up in the landfill. So, some existential crises came out of that as I became a design enthusiast but also felt resistant to it at the same time. And so, I ended up coming out to Vancouver for a co-op contract doing software and user interface design. That got me out here and I fell in love with the West Coast and the art and the green design of buildings, as well as the art and ecology communities that were here and really took a deep dive into sustainable design and ecological design and got involved with Emily Carr as a researcher, things just kept opening up in terms of the master's programme that was formed and I was invited to apply for the first year. It was very small and very special and that's where the Slow Design research came through.

That brings me to my next question, how did you first discover slow design and what prompted you to write your thesis on it?

There was a key moment for me in relation to slow design when I was out on a sailboat with a friend who was a farmer and wild crafter and we were having really good conversation. You know the kind when you're in your mid-twenties, and you're just having these thirsty conversations about what the world should be and could be and it was like this epiphany, that probably other people have had, but I was like: what if everything just slowed down? This would solve so many problems around pollution and speed, and thinking a lot about the connection between speed and destruction and pollution and thinking that if everything just slowed down a little bit, we could like survive for longer. And there's the Slow Food Movement, and slow cities, and there was literature and ideas popping up, so that was the moment for me on the sailboat. There's definitely a pattern there in relation to water, and I find that when I'm on the ocean especially, you feel like you can let your imagination think about like the planet because you're connected and I feel that more on the water than on the land. So, I proposed that as my thesis research topic to Louise St. Pierre and Randy Lee Cutler, two professors at Emily Carr. Because it was the first year of the program, I asked to have two supervisors, and they said yes, which wouldn't fly anymore, but because it was so small, I was really lucky to have that opportunity.

If you were describing Slow Design to someone who had never heard of it before, how would you describe it?

Yeah, it goes back to the idea: imagine if everyone just slowed down, what that might do and how the Earth would appreciate it; linking it to pollution and destruction and hubris; like the mistakes and things that happen from the decisions we make when we're hurried. Often these have consequences and impacts to the earth that you don't think about because you're on a time crunch or you have to do it now. So that forced time pressure is what slow design tries to push back against. But I'd also say there's a process piece to it as well, that you're more careful and mindful if you're thinking like a slow designer. Then often the outcomes of slow design can be to reduce impact on the environment, like regenerative design, as well as to try and influence the slowing down of activities, behavior, and interactions. So, the outcome of slow design can try to be both of those. The creation of the raft in my research was about practicing a process of slow design, but then also the invitation was to have people out to experience a forced slowness, and to just float and have conversation and not be tempted by any capitalist purchases or consumption like needing gas.

Since writing your thesis on Slow Design in 2008, have you noticed any changes in people's perceptions, awareness, or adoption of slow design?

I feel like at Emily Carr anyway, the design research community that I'm closest to, the evolution of slow design I would say are place-based practices. And really trying to bring the practice back to the land and connecting in that way, as a lot has happened culturally in the last 14 years. For me as I can speak personally, so many blind spots around colonialism in our practice and racism and supremacy and the sort of privilege of slow design, and even though it has that embedded Seventh Generation theory and ecological thinking there is still a huge gap and missing piece around reconciliation and social justice. So even without necessarily calling it slow design, I would say it has evolved, and needs to bring those pieces into the fold more, to really try to decentre a lot of the whiteness and Eurocentricity in design. And that's a long evolution I would say, but it definitely is a big part of where it needs to progress. Again, kind of like that awakening that I had in undergrad about how we can't mass produce everything because there's a fundamental problem with this. There's been a few of those with design research and practice where we are missing a whole big piece to this puzzle.

What do you perceive as potential challenges or barriers to more of an adoption of slow design within the context of Vancouver and how designers are operating?

Two huge barriers come to mind, the urgency of our compounding emergencies and conundrums that we are in relating to climate and housing, just to name two, that are in the forefront of poverty in Vancouver. So slow design definitely comes up against that urgency that we need to alter our course right now. It's such a huge scale, so I would say that is a barrier, but connected to that are the realities of needing to sustain and pay your bills, and the personal sustainability where slow design is often kind of luxurious in a way. It's so nuanced because it can be luxurious, but can also be an act of resistance as well. So, there's those kinds of barriers or obstacles, I would say to a wider adoption of embracing the slow life and slow practices. Then capitalism goes up against it in a big way. There's two teachers, or mentors, who are a partnership of Carmen Spagnola and Ruben Anderson, and I used to do a lot of collaboration with Ruben who is one of the founders of the Vancouver Design Nerds. They have this practice called the “small and delicious life” that looks at sort of bridging the idea of living well in the collapsing times. I would say that is an amazing application of slow, conscious, hyper-awareness of our situation, and kind of living in a way that is joyful but also faces reality. It's a niche space and I think there will be a time in the near future where everyone's like: we need to learn more of that.

Segueing to your current position as a service designer with the BC Public Sector, has your knowledge of slow design impacted your role there? And do you see ways of slow design being incentivized by the government?

Well, that's easy, I would say because bureaucracy in government is inherently slow. Because there's so many people involved and so many checks and balances and the amount of feedback and iterations. You know like we say in design school, it's all about cycles of iteration and getting feedback and that is so entrenched in the culture, at least in the division and branch that I'm in, that you can't move fast. Because there's so many steps to get to a finished document or a policy piece, it's so incremental that you have to slow down and kind of be okay with that pace. So that's probably how I ended up here in many ways of service design, as I would say it is inherently slow as well because it's so holistic and really invites us to zoom out and see all of the pieces together. And so there is definitely an unspoken, maybe it hasn't been written about yet, connection between slow design and service design, especially in government. It is very slow, but it's good and I'm okay with it, especially when I remind myself why everything takes so long, specifically in the last 5% of the project. For example, I've been working on an engagement strategy for probably a month and a half now, and we're working towards a check point with the Assistant Deputy Minister to sign off on it but that's still three weeks away. Then that's just the plan, so when there's so many people involved and everyone's working on multiple things progress is made at different paces.

From your previous experience working as a freelancer, do you feel like elements of your individual practice have helped influence your current position and what made you want to move away from freelancing?

My freelance practice also included part time sessional teaching at Emily Carr and Simon Fraser University so it was an amazing combination for a time. But as I started thinking more about the economy and my age, I started to hypothesise what it would be like to get a full-time secure job with benefits and a pension; this was 14 years after writing my thesis. I had co-taught with a woman who was a leader in service design and digital government and had done work in London, New York, Ontario and BC and I was really inspired by the impact and possibility around social justice and change that can happen that has the potential for interaction and impact in people's lives. It was like thinking back to my early design days of wanting to design something that impacts people's lives like phones in their home, except now it's designing how everyone interacts with digital services instead. So, linking back to your question about freelancing, it was a life choice to make the change, I decided to try it for a year to see how it feels and I'm now a little over halfway through that year. I'll briefly describe the project that I'm working on, as it is in support of one of the government's reconciliation commitments, which is to introduce and enable and accommodate indigenous language names across government systems and records. So person names, place names, and business names into identification signage. In BC, which might be interesting to put

into the research if this makes it in, is that there's over 200 distinct nations and over 30 languages that are documented and spoken and are being revived. It's really complex because they have different orthography and different writing systems as well, so a lot of our data systems and the way that they talk to each other are not set up to accommodate characters beyond the Roman Latin alphabet. So it is like I landed in such an awesome, crunchy and complex, long term, slow project space with a lot of government leadership support so it's really fascinating.

That's a really interesting and impactful project; do you find that the slow aspect can hinder the progress? What are some of the pros and cons that you have experienced?

Yeah, sometimes for example, that kind of shift from being a freelancer and consultant and being more nimble to now being in the government and accountable, I suppose to the colonial institution. Part of me would love to just consult and collaborate with people in my personal network to prototype a birth certificate of what it might look like with their name on it. And I'm not allowed to do that because there's their protocols and processes that slow it down. Since it is research for the government it has to be done through certain channels and has to be reviewed and signed off on by corporate communications and the directors. So there's good reason for that, but those are the places where it's sometimes fast and sometimes like finding the right speed. That's also a big part of slow design: Festina lente ("make haste slowly"), finding the right tempo. Sometimes you want to slow things down, and then sometimes we've done all the foundational pieces and now we can actually move quite quickly. It's really about finding an ease and flow of speed, and sailing comes in a lot as an analogy as it feels like you're going fast, but you're actually not going that fast.

Going back to your time as a freelancer, what were the types of clients you primarily worked with? Did you look for specific clients aligning with your values, or did they tend to seek you out?

I called my practice Slow and Steady Design, and that in a way I think set myself up for client-designer expectations. Having it just be me as a sole proprietor meant that it was very connected to my way of life, such as scheduling in the summer and having that flexibility built into my proposals and estimates. A lot of my clients were working in the green building and sustainable community space and I find that industry very interesting as it holds a lot of potential for climate change reduction strategies; there's so much embodied energy in buildings and there's so many buildings being built that impact how we live in them, so there's many different aspects to my interest in sustainable design. So for me then when I started my practice, it was when I was a new mom, so being able to do communication and graphic design with just my sketchbook and laptop and Adobe

was very low overhead, and I could contribute to that space in a way that's very flexible to my timing and availability. So that was, again, kind of practical of where I was in life as to the kind of work I was doing. And I would say that the collective that I've been a part of for a long time - the Vancouver Design Nerds, we used to host quite frequent and consistent public design and collaboration events. We would develop our own projects, but over time, and as we grew up, we started offering our facilitation services to organizations. So it was a networking opportunity that also started to generate income and other opportunities for us, so that wove into my freelance practice as well as hosting and facilitating these co-design, or participatory design, workshops. But they started out as us just doing it for fun, like on Friday night, having a potluck and drinking wine and imagining fun projects.

Were you all freelancers then that joined together?

It was a mix, very interdisciplinary, so there were engineers, architects, artists and food scientists, so a very interesting mix of people. I would say we weren't all freelancing, but all had entrepreneurial spirits. But the designers from that group have been a really important piece to my practice in terms of staying engaged and leading to paid work as well. So being embedded in a community of our own interests, and then the Emily Carr teaching community, and having my own Slow and Steady practice were all supporting and informing each other, and I would bring pieces from them all to each other. Then after a few years I felt it was worth trying something new, but I would say that it worked really, really well for my thirties.

In the bigger picture, do you feel slow design has helped your own wellbeing and creative desires beyond design as a job?

Absolutely, one hundred percent, but I would also say it's hard to try and practice it. I've got two boys and full-time work so slowing down is challenging at this point in my life. That's why I was really happy to hear from you actually, to try to remember to keep bringing it in and finding pockets and ways of slowing down; whether it's stretching or breathing or meditating, or even chopping vegetables. Whatever way to embrace that mindfulness practice, but it is honestly challenging. It makes me think a bit of biking up a hill, it's slow and you're working hard to achieve momentum without the use of burning fossil fuels, so it's of benefit to yourself and others, then once you get to the top you can coast for a bit and embrace the speed you worked hard to earn within your slow practice.

Does a particular project that you've worked on come to mind that you felt really embodied the slow design principles/methodology; in relation to graphic design or a project in general?

I would say one of the most impactful projects I've worked on that was slow and really deliberate and powerful for everyone who was involved was the Avenues of Change project that I was one of the researchers for with the Health Design Lab at Emily Carr. It was funded by the United Way Lower Mainland, and it we were brought on to engage directly with families in Squamish including Squamish Nation families and what was so beautiful about that project for us was that we were able to bring in the making aspect into our research. In this way, trying to redefine what ethnographic research might be through making and playful activities, but still had rigour in the way we were able to synthesis and report back from the findings. It was one of the best and rewarding projects that I had the chance to work on, and I wasn't necessarily involved in the graphic design part, but the way that the reports were published and the presentation of everything was done well because there were so many designers working as researchers on the project. I feel that the project helped me land in the team I am a part of now because it was about trying to find approaches that are creative and respectful and reciprocal with Indigenous communities, which is such a sacred opportunity that I don't take lightly. To try and create those spaces for myself, to try and do it well, and to embrace all of the learning. So that is the project that is really close to my heart that we did a few years ago now.

What kinds of making did you do as part of the project?

So the strategy was that our team would kind of balloon in to existing programming that was being run specifically for new parents and their young ones, and the research was trying to look at ways to build in new supports to help young kids transition into the school system into kindergarten. A lot of it was thinking about how we could invite ourselves, or be invited to those spaces, so we would bring in clipboards and a lot of collage-type activities. We made a giant dream catcher that had little tags to ask prompting questions to the parents, such as "what do you hope for your children?", "Where are the places that you go with your children right now?", "What's blocking you from getting there?" Trying to get into those conversations around trust and understanding why existing services aren't being used. Really understanding the safety and trust aspects of those between the families who are most in need and the service providers who are unsure why people aren't attending, so figuring out those disconnects. So in short answer, it was a lot of collage activities; cutting and pasting. In one of the activities we had a landscape artboard and there were cut-out shapes of balloons and rocks, to serve as metaphors for what is uplifting for you that's up in the sky, and then

what are the boulders or things that are weighing you down. Then everyone has a chance to share in a circle after to hear about them, so it was a way of embodied learning instead of coming straight at the question, and finding ways to make and help create and think through together. Researcher Liz Sanders, who wrote the Convivial Toolbox, is one of the leading scholars around hands on making as research and the science behind new thought pathways that come to us through making and in dialogue.

Thank you so much for your time Sarah, I'll definitely look more into the work of Sanders.

Appendix F – Interview with Zephyra Vun

Date: 16/08/2023
Time: 4pm IST
Duration: 34min
Location: Virtual meeting between Dublin and Winnipeg
Interviewee Title: Visual Artist

Can you tell me a bit about your background in design; how you got started and how it led to what you are currently doing?

For sure. It's a bit of a long-winded story so I'll try to keep it condensed, but I have an architecture background. From a very young age I always enjoyed making with my hands, drawing, painting, my mum was an artist too and I used to make little models out of leftover Smarty boxes and things like that. So fast forward to when I went into architecture; I got my masters over six consecutive years. This was back in 2005, so 2005 to 2011 was my undergrad and graduate programs. I actually graduated from my master's right around the time when there was a shift occurring within the faculty, and I think within a lot of design professions, where things were shifting from handmaking and drawing to AutoCAD, Vectorworks, etcetera, and I was very rebellious against those classes. I did all of my thesis drawings by hand contrary to the vast majority of my peers who just used AutoCAD; which was probably the smarter move because it was done a lot faster, and to each their own, but one of the biggest things that I enjoyed about my grad studies was this idea of building your conceptual framework, learning how to think about things differently, and how to communicate and express that in creative ways - not just CAD monkeying. So essentially, I graduated with a master's of architecture and didn't really know what to do with it because even though I did AutoCAD I didn't feel confident on it, nor did I want to do it. In fact, I remember going firm to firm in Winnipeg with my portfolio and one of the architects who interviewed me said "you clearly are very artistic, you know how to creatively express ideas, but do you know how to spec a bathroom?" And I was like "no", and that was an eye opener for me to ask: do I actually want to do this and is architecture something that fits my principles and my values of what I think design and creativity is? So, in 2012, which was a year after I graduated, I started my own business which to this day is called anARCHI design. It's spelt with a lowercase "a" and "n", and capital "ARCHI" to symbolize diminishing the self-entitlement of architecture. And my whole thing was that I would do smaller architectural work, however I had to be very careful, because in Manitoba you're not allowed to even call yourself an architect unless you do the exams and work as an intern. So even using the words "architecture service" was iffy in my business registration, but regardless, my whole thing

was upholding hand creativity and making in the architecture profession. This proved to be quite difficult because I would do all the drawings by hand, but they were beautiful, and my clients resonated with them and I knew that there was something of value there through the process of drawing something by hand with a pencil. You can interact with the drawings and understand them a lot more than something that's produced on AutoCAD. So, I did that for a number of years, as well as dabbled in graphic design, and at one point my slogan was “all things design” because I just enjoyed doing everything with my hands. It eventually got to a point where it organically morphed into more of a fine arts thing because you can't hand draw five designs for a living room or a cottage edition because that is just way too time consuming.

So that is the long background story of it, and then as per Slow Principles specifically, in 2019 I was doing anARCHI design and I also had five other jobs. I was Executive Director of Design Quarter Winnipeg, which was a brand-new non-profit that operated like a marketing organisation targeting design culture in downtown Winnipeg, and it was curated and chaired by a very prominent architect here in the city. It was a great idea and I enjoyed it a lot, I was in the position for three years, and it was all about bringing attention to the walkability of downtown Winnipeg and the local design culture that exists. It was membership based and there was a map designed, along with brochures, social media, and all that kind of stuff. So, I was doing all that, and being the executive director of a non-profit is in and of itself like 10 jobs. Plus anARCHI design, and then I also did fitness coaching, which I still do as one of my main things. I was also tattooing on the side and part-time modeling and it was just a lot; to the point where I definitely hit a wall. It was a long time coming of putting too much expectation on myself of what I thought I was supposed to be doing with my life. As much as I enjoyed Design Quarter, as it was design related and I was getting a regular paycheck, I was trying to convince myself that “this is what I should be doing”. So that was the summer of 2019, and I quit everything except for my anARCHI design, which was making art, and my group fitness instructing. I went through a very deep dive into self-actualization; your typical awakening moment in life through a big transition. And the question that I asked myself initially was: “what makes me happy?” And what can I do in my everyday that's going to make me happy because I'm tired of doing things that I feel like I'm just supposed to do, and I couldn't really answer the question. So I reframed it slightly to be: “when do I feel the most fulfilled?” Because at that time fulfillment seemed a little bit more tangible for me than happy, and this idea of flow came up. I don’t know if you’ve come across flow in your Slow Design research so far. I knew what flow was, but I hadn’t done a deep dive into it at all, and then I started to and it became this idea of being so present, that you're connected to whatever activity you're doing. And from that point on that kind of drove my practice, both as an artist and in my position as a group fitness instructor, this idea of just creating flow, being in the zone, being connected to yourself and finding ways with regard to art,

like finding creative processes that allow me to really sink into that. And of course, to kind of bring it full circle, a big part of that is doing things hands on and not using the computer and things that are virtual and distancing.

That's great, my next question is actually about slow flow because that's something that stood out to me on your website. Could you elaborate a bit more on what that actually looks like in terms of your creative practice and how do you get into that state of flow?

Yes, it's a constantly evolving creative process. And I think that's part of it too, it's realising that there's no fixed way of doing something, but having certain I guess foundational principles in place. For example, one thing is not restricting myself to any type of medium. Well, the first and foremost thing is no computers, like I refuse to do anything on the computer. So first and foremost, tactile paint, charcoal, whatever. Secondly, no restriction. I feel like even in the last couple years I've put a lot of parameters on what I'm creating, what I think it's going to look like, what shapes I kind of want to evoke, or messages, and I've since kind of thrown that all out the window and just been like: there's no expectation, there's no limitations on what I can create in this moment. Another one that has to do with parameters as well are time limits.

(Brief pause here for interviewee to answer the door)

Sorry about that. So yes, parameters, timelines. I feel like that's just a residual thing that happens from living in a society that's focused on productivity, and whatever, whatever, that you feel like you need to finish something within a certain time. And I'm very grateful that I'm afforded the opportunity to not have those deadlines. Like, it's very different and I actually would be interested to hear from your perspective as a graphic designer, where it's more service based almost, where you have clients and you have deadlines, whereas I can kind of just like willy-nilly make a painting whenever I want, and not work on it if I don't want to. But I think to kind of sum up the answer that question is like parameters around your work and just releasing those, because one of the things that I think completely squelches flow, or decreases its chances of coming about, is that expectational aspect and those parameters because part of flow is just being completely immersed in the moment and allowing whatever's going to happen to happen. And maybe in addition to that, too, is just creating a peaceful environment in which that can naturally unfold so like lighting a candle, making it quiet in my space, and just having the physical and the space in relation to time very accessible and open to me.

I relate to that because I have experienced burnout in graphic design with so many deadlines colliding. It's often a very time-based industry and quantified by hourly rates, so as part of this research I'm kind of hoping to see if there are frameworks or strategies for designers to not be so critical of time, while obviously still making a living. What I've been finding so far is that slow doesn't necessarily mean it has to all be slow all the time, but finding that balance, almost like the ying and yang of slow and fast. Finding ways to really lean into those slow spaces, and then knowing when to go through things more quickly.

In terms of your slow flow process and working with clients; do you find people usually seek you out based on how their values align with your work? Or do you typically seek out projects? Or is it a combination of both?

Yeah, great question. I think recently, I have been sought out which I'm very grateful for and you kind of hit the nail on the head with your wording there, they seek me out because our values align. It's really interesting because through these last four years of self-work, there's been like a spiritual aspect to it, just naturally so. You know, law of attraction and manifestation is something that I really do believe in. I'm still rooted in physical reality, I feel like I have to justify myself when I say that, which I shouldn't, but I do think it makes sense if you think about, okay well if my core values are this and if I'm saying yes to these projects, those are the ones that are going to come to me. If I say yes to projects that I don't really jive with but I'll say yes to anyways, then I'm opening that gate for those kinds of things to come to me. So I think over the last four years I've really been sinking into my personal authenticity, who I am and what my core values are. I've done a lot of values work, which I think is surprisingly really important. I always encourage people including my partner, and my friends, and I recently did like a mentorship where I was mentoring an emerging artist through one of these nonprofits here in Winnipeg, and that was the first things I told her to do. I was like, do this values exercise so that when you have this foundational list of things that you believe in, naturally you're emitting that into the world and that stuff's coming to you. So in terms of my practice, I think especially recently, people have been seeking me out. I've definitely been way more selective, so people will ask me to do things and if it doesn't resonate with me then I say no, and it is kind of an intuitive thing. I try not to think too hard about it or mull it over and be like, "well, should I? Pros and cons list." I used to do that and it's so funny hearing me talk about this out loud because me four years ago was the opposite; hence the six jobs and whatever. So it's cool that I'm afforded this life now where I can just say no if I don't want to, and I think perpetuating that practice of saying no, and being open to only the hell yes things is ultimately making my career in the direction that I want it to go.

That's exciting to hear. My next question is what do you see as the potential challenges then of embracing slowness - personally or professionally? Are there things you've come up against that inhibit your practice?

I feel there are a lot of challenges, especially like I said before, just being conditioned and growing up in a capitalist society where western culture is very much focused on productivity and external attainment and doing things externally outside of you for fulfillment. So a very fundamental challenge is kind of dismantling everything we've been taught, which has been a big part of the last four years of my life. Related to creativity or not, it's just like – why do I feel this constant need to have to produce and finish things and check things off my list? So I think there's a deeper challenge there that I feel like we should all be encouraged to explore a little bit deeper. I do think that the immense surge of technological advancement is a huge challenge, because that whole context, or medium, is a literal breeding ground for like "let's go" and just disconnection. I did a talk recently through Creative Mornings, it's this really cool organisation that does talks the first Friday of every month and they have different topics. It's like, have you ever heard of Pecha Kucha?

I have, yes I've been to some Pecha Kucha talks in Vancouver and loved them.

Okay, it's essentially like that but a newer version, I think they started during the pandemic, so it's only been a few years. But yeah, I did a talk about how technology is just completely corrupting, because the theme was corruption, which I was like, there's a lot to do here. Because technology is corrupting the creative process of creatives. Like Procreate even, especially for young people who are becoming artists now, how do you teach them to paint with a paintbrush if they're just taking an ipen and doing this and they can create any kind of stroke that they want? There's such a disconnect there.

And you can undo everything too.

Exactly, you can "control Z" and there's no intention, there's no commitment, there's no consequences of your actions. So I think that's probably the biggest challenge, well those are two really heavy things in society. But yeah, technology and how, like you said, there's a time and a place for slow and fast, there's a time and a place for using your computer to create things, but I think it's just being mindful. I think that's actually how I ended my talk was like, you know, I've been very anti-technology this last hour of speaking, but in the end, everything has its time and place, but as long as you're mindful of how much space those things take up and what you're doing with them.

A lot of what you do seems to be very entrepreneurial, and you're kind of working more independently, within that what does connection or creative community look like for you?

Yeah, I try but honestly it's isolating. This whole practice, this whole mindset and approach to life is very isolating. And I know that and it's something that I reflect on a lot and talk to people about. And I don't want it to sound vain, but there comes a point where you think very differently than everybody else, and it's hard to be able to justify or explain yourself to people who are like, “well, you don't work a nine to five, and you're having a baby, how are you going to do it?” All this kind of stuff, right? So yeah, it is a very isolating practice. A friend of mine who recently quit his job, he was in a totally different field, like a business consultant of some kind, and he quit his job back in the spring and started this group where we would get together once a month to talk about life and like our processes. It was really cool because there was a bunch of different interdisciplinary people that attended these things. It was a small group, maybe six people, but that was maybe one of my first and only physical get togethers. Like, let's connect kind of thing. I have a handful of friends who are artists, like two or three, and we jam out and like have coffee and stuff, I wish I had a more positive answer, but it is a solitary thing, right? Especially the creative process of being alone and cutting out distraction and just sinking into flow. Again, another big deterrent to flow is distraction. Not to say that community is distracting, but just other external forces of any kind are.

Definitely, thank you for your honesty. On the heels of that, have you found that utilising slow practices have contributed your own wellbeing or fulfilling your creative desires; in your work as well as personally?

I think it's all integrative, that was one of the main reasons why I did what I did in 2019 and decided to flip the switch, right? I feel like typically in our society everything's very compartmentalised, like this is my work me, this is my home me, this is my party me. And it feels very disembodied, because you're having to wear all these hats. So part of the values exercises and cultivating the feelings of who you are, were really important to the foundational work of what I do. So when you say like, “how does it contribute personally and professionally” I feel like my personal and professional life are just the same. They're so intertwined that it's not really separate. It's very holistic, I'd say a typical day in the life of me is I wake up, I meditate, I journal. Something comes up that I feel like could be expressed in a painting, I start painting. It's all very fluid, so I think it's all “integrative”; that’s the word that pops up for me. But there's no separation really of what I do creatively and what I do personally, it's all me. And something that I think about in my creative practice, because ultimately I'm still trying to sell paintings and make a living, is kind of looking at it from a different

perspective where if people believe and buy into you as a person, the things you create, obviously, those are still important, but they're not buying them because of the way it looks. They're buying it because you created it and it's a part of you. So kind of taking that step back and being like, well who am I and how am I conveying myself on Instagram and what am I doing? That's what you're sharing, right? The art is just the medium through which you're doing that. So there's no separation really.

Beautiful. My next question is a bit broader, so take from it what you will. But in thinking about how our societies are so fast paced, what do you think would be of benefit to people to engage in more processes of slowness? And do you think that there are ways that making space for slowness can be incentivized in communities?

Yeah, that's a great question. How can they be incentivized…

It can be hypothetical too, but kind of like a zooming out to consider the bigger picture of slowing down.

Yeah, it's so hard to picture, right? Just because it's such an ingrained value. I feel we've kind of talked about the benefits. I think something that helps me in continuing to develop these skills and continuing to practice them is the fact that I am involved in fitness instructing, and I think connection to the body, connection in general, but connection to the body and to the self is at the core of what slowing down is. Because by moving fast there's no time to even feel. Therefore, my position as a group fitness instructor is something that inevitably seeps into my life and creative practice. And I think just more bodily connection and more movement. It's really interesting, group fitness and my creative practice are seemingly pretty disparate things, but they're very much connected in the way that I integrate them. Like, it is about connecting inward, connecting to the body, and finding movement and how that movement evokes feelings for others who are viewing my art or who are taking my classes. And it's always very surprising to me how many people don't move their bodies. You don't have to come to the gym to workout but movement is just so important. I think that's a big fundamental piece to it that I think has a ripple effect to slowing down and to reconnection. So as for the broader context of what to incentivize or what to promote is just like, movement almost, connecting to the body, doing things in nature, or going for a run, stuff like that. Which, like I said, seemingly doesn't really have anything to do with creative slow practices, but I think it is that core principle of returning to the body.

I relate to that. I know when I'm not taking care of myself, even in school being slumped over a computer for hours after a while I just can't do my best work unless I move or I do something else.

Yeah, and I think this kind of is more specific to what you're researching, but I guess things that can be implemented in the work force that creates that balance. And I think people are doing that more these days and corporations are realizing it, like standing desks and breaking to go for walks at lunch and stuff like that. Those are all very important and I think they do contribute to slow practices more than we might think. Don't even get me started though, having this baby soon and thinking about school and what a terrible environment western culture school is, sitting at a desk and not being outside and thinking about how all those things effect your mental and physical health.

My last question is if you have a specific piece or project that comes to mind that stood out to you as an example that really embodied your slow process or principles; either in the process or outcome?

I think it would be my flow murals, which if you were on my website you probably saw. They're black and white, and I do it in contexts other than murals as well, but I enjoy the mural format the most because it's the biggest scale and it's very connective to the body. That whole style, if you want to call it that, came very naturally and I think that's a part of the reason why it evokes flow. Not only in its visual product and creative process, but how it came to be. I really didn't even think about it, I was just doodling and in the present moment, I do it in my notebook all the time. And the first one I did was at the gym that I work at and the owner was like "we want to do this mural, do you want to just do something?" And same with that, she was like "no parameters, do whatever you want" and I was like, "well I'll do this flow mural thing that I've been thinking about." And from there it blew up and became this thing and I did three murals within the next three months and it was very natural, coming to me, like I mentioned the law of attraction and manifestation.

And if I remember correctly, you don't plan those right? You show up at the space and start?

That's right, I show up and just do it. And it necessitates me being in flow, being present, being connected to my body. I've also since then conducted a number of flow workshops where I teach the practice as a meditative thing, if people want to take it that way, by introducing the principles of flow. Some of the things I encourage them to do, we use just pads of paper and pens, is to not take their pen off the paper for more than three seconds so that you're constantly staying in that state of flow. And we do an exercise previous to actually diving right in to the flow, of quick sketching. So

I'll have an object in front of them and they have to draw it in 30 seconds, then flip the page and I'll switch it out so that they're constantly moving forward and not worrying about what they just did, no matter what it looks like. And not looking at things as mistakes, but as opportunities. So it was very interesting creating that flow style and then breaking it down into a class in order to figure out how to explain what it actually is. But yeah, people really resonated with it and I think it's a great tool because you know, who doesn't have just a paper and a pen; it is essentially glorified doodling and trying to make it look nice at the same time. But yeah, I really, really enjoy it and that doesn't feel like work to me. It's like going to meditate somewhere for a few hours.

Wonderful, those are all of my questions, thank you again so much.

Appendix G – Interview with Peter Maybury

Date: 17/08/2023
Time: 11am IST
Duration: 65min
Location: Fairview, Dublin
Interviewee Title: Graphic Designer & Educator

Can you tell me a bit about your background in design; how you got started and how it led to what you are currently doing?

I went to art college and I did a foundation course, I studied graphic design not really knowing what it was. I just knew that I wasn't suited for what was being taught in the fine art programme. I think in my experience it's similar to a lot of students at TU Dublin that by second year they say either they didn't know what it was, or it was not what they expected. So that happened and I found fairly early on that I had an affinity with this. In college I played in bands which helped to fund my college fees so I ended up designing record covers for that. Then there was a friend of mine that was connected with a Sculptor's Society of Ireland, as it was at the time, and they needed a leaflet so somehow I got roped in. Then because of that, I got connected with a promoter who was putting on a festival in London called A Sense of Ireland, a major festival of Irish culture, so I did the design for that while still in college. This meant that by the end of college, I actually had a substantial amount of professional experience. I did another book, for the Sculptors' Society – I was very lucky but it was also a bit of a confidence trick, I just assumed I could do it and figured it out. So that gave me a fairly decent foundation, and then very much by chance, there was a pal of mine that was on the design programme with me and he wanted to go to Saint Martins, so I said, "Okay I'm going too." I didn't know what it was, never actually looked into any other alternatives, but it sounded cool, it's in London, I'm totally going there. So we flew over and somehow convinced them to let us study there and it was actually really transformative. It crystallized everything for me and that was really foundational. I had always felt that there was a lot to be done in graphic design with regard to form, and content, and meaning; what you're saying and the responsibility of that and so on. So, I was grappling with that, and in Saint Martins there was a programme chair, Tim Foster, and he was just perfect for me. He put together quite a big team, there were maybe 30 of us in the master's program from all over, a wide range of people from Japan, Brazil etc. and that was really great in itself, because you're meeting those people. And then there were 12 visiting lecturers, so the programme was a very diverse spread of things. I had two tutors assigned to me, one of whom was an artist and a painter, and the other Joe Ewart, who had worked with Assorted Images. And they were

brilliant for me in terms of poles of opinion, and it was really about learning who you are and asking those questions, and the whole message was stop making stuff. What are you making stuff for? So actually, for the first semester, it was don't make anything; think about what are you doing. And that was really great, I read a lot, including Proust, Huysmans and all this kind of stuff. In retrospect, I did a very poetic thesis out of this. Then when I came back to Dublin, and having borrowed lots of money from my parents I had a huge debt to pay off. So I thought okay, I need to get some work. There were some friends of mine that got use of a space in Dawson Street, back in the time when you could do these things, that they set up a gallery. So I designed the identity for the gallery. Then prior to going to London, I had connected with this office in town called The Works, and they had Macs which I didn't have at the time so they did typesetting for me and connected me to printers, and let me use their office when I needed. Then through that, a printers (Typecraft) were getting rid of stuff and they had a small letterpress that they gave me, so I was able to letter-press invitations for the gallery.. So now I was printing stuff, and then my pal who had gone to Saint Martins with me took up an office in the center of town and he was looking for somebody to split the rent so I had a room there. It was always through word of mouth that somebody asks you to do something, so the connections continued through one of the sculpture organisations and I ended up doing work for some of their exhibitions. Before I took an office I'd be sitting there working in my bedroom, on the phone, then running across to The Works to print things out and deliver them to the client and then race back to take a phone call. It was fun really. I gradually built up a range of clients, always on the basis of stuff that I was interested in – architecture, art, and film particularly – so I looked around and there was The Douglas Hyde Gallery and that was another kind of turning point I suppose. I just rang up the Douglas Hyde Gallery and said I think I can do some interesting work with you. And I still remember that phone call, the woman I spoke with said "well the director is a very busy person." But I got a call back asking me to come in, and then I worked with the director of the gallery solidly for eight years and it was very productive. In my thesis I talk a lot about this idea of mutual constituency; that you're working with somebody, but essentially you're exploring your own concerns and they're exploring theirs but they overlap to make something new, greater than the sum of the parts. I think a lot of this notion of collaboration is very false. I think actually collaboration is always forced; you collaborate because you have to, and it tends to be a lot about compromise. I think it's very much a false dichotomy and the really rich work is where it's much more this kind of mutual constituency. So, John (Hutchinson) had this agenda for the gallery and my way of thinking very much connected with and fed into that, as I was interested in the communicative possibilities of graphic design, and this allowed me the space to explore this. The gallery had very small budgets and were producing minor leaflets. With the same budget I managed to find a printer and different ways of printing things that were a bit more expansive; exploiting the limits of the budget using cheap papers and one only ink, with larger sheets, making interesting folds. It become very clear

what I was doing through an exhibition of the artist Alison Wilding. She made a sculpture ('Echo') that was in brass and copper, really expensive materials. There was no money for colour reproductions or anything like that, so I thought well, what's the total antithesis of this? Alison had faxed through schemes for the exhibition that included photographs which had turned into black smudges – posterised 'echos' of the works themselves. So I printed those as the images on leaflet using the thinnest paper you could imagine, so it was alerting you to the materiality and the gap between experience and documentation. So all of that stuff is actually what my whole practice is about, but it came out very early in that I had this platform to do all of that. We did a whole series of exhibition leaflets which retrospectively they're quite slight, physically, but they were very influential in graphic design in Dublin and they served me in shaping my practice. Then the economic climate shifted a bit and there were more funds available for arts publications. I had made a book of my own in 1997 ('The white book', in an edition of 5), and some of my ways of working with text got folded into this next book for the gallery – 'The bread and butter stone'.. Again, this idea of the mutual constituency, that I'm not actually changing my inquiries, it's the same inquiry, but you're using it to amplify a message in a certain context. So we did this book, and again it was quite influential actually, and when there was more money available for production we wanted to make a book that was really of an international standard. John had a lot of connections with galleries in the Netherlands and we would see these beautifully produced books. So I went off to some Dutch printers in Amsterdam, and I met these amazing printers in Nuth called Drukkerij Rosbeek B.V. , who were really influential in print culture and we made this book 'PATMOS'. As far as I'm concerned this was the first book made for an Irish audience that had that level of production values, and this embedded relationship between the materiality of the object and the material (subject matter) of the book.

When I went to Rosbeek I had all these things; "can you do this? Can you do this?" And they always answered yes (with a smile). They were so generous – they actually shipped back a huge box of samples for me – books and papers that I had picked out. And I specifically remember the John (van der Poel) who met me, saying, "if you ask us to do something we'll either do it for you, or we'll prove to you that it can't be done." So this was a total dream because Irish printers didn't have any of this capacity. It completely opened up the vocabulary of the materiality of the book. I think there's an interesting way of thinking about these two books – The bread and butter stone, and PATMOS; one is the lowest possible production values and all of the communicative inquiry happens on the surface of the page, with the ink. The text disintegrates. It's about memory and there's a disintegration into almost total black. This is all during the digital transition era; prior to digital cameras you had this really laborious and expensive process of photography and repro. With The bread and butter stone we couldn't afford that, so again, I was looking at well okay there's this

catalogue and I can scan that. It gave a particular quality – including paper edges, shadows, unevenness – so the gap between memory and experience was amplified through that. Whereas in PATMOS, *(the other book example printed in the Netherlands),* it is much more 'bookish', more conventional, but the visual language of this book is really activated in the substrates. There are multiple papers, and different weights, and the ink color modulates (a range of blacks), to make it much more about the materiality; but to me both books do fundamentally the same thing, that there's this language or progression of a material, tangible nature that's happening in and against the text that supports it, and this is shaped by the technological processes and their affordances. At the beginning of PATMOS there's a sequence of six different papers with six different inks getting progressively lighter, in a parallel with text that is moving from uncertainty towards a notion of enlightenment; it's a book that's a poetic object. So actually, while the brief for both books was to document five years of what was in the programme, accompanied by a framing text, the possibilities of what you can do as a graphic designer really emerged for me in those books, and that you can explore this really rich realm of the Book Space. It really opened that up for me as an exhibitionary space. Galleries always want to make "catalogues" of exhibitions, but they are inherent failures before you start. So if you accept that that's not possible to adequately 'document', then what can you do? And that's the language of the books; so that's the foundation of all of my practice I suppose. That was 2001, so then I spent the next 20 years and more mining that, changing, and getting into evermore complex relationships and exchanges, working in exhibition and film, essentially because I'm talking to somebody and say, "yeah, I can do that" and that's the way it grows!

Lovely, I think you have already touched on a lot of the topics related to my other questions; so circling back a little you mentioned not necessarily aligning with fine arts in your studies. Could you elaborate on what it was about graphic design that drew you in and what you hoped to achieve through it?

I would say ignorance! But also it was a very long time ago – I was an undergraduate in 1987. There were some very smart and very good people that emerged at the same time as me, but Fine Art was still centred around etching, oil painting, and sculpture, framed in a very conventional way. New media hadn't really entered this framing and I wasn't good at oil painting! It's interesting in my various supervisor meetings (for my PhD) this has come up a lot, that I'm being told you don't have to hang on to the label of a graphic designer, because a lot of the way I operate is like that of a fine artist. But this actually doesn't interest me. Graphic design gives me an operative position which many things are possible. So the reason I didn't study Fine Art was because of the way it was framed and my ignorance of what it could be more than anything else. I only did graphic design

because it wasn't that. So then I was studying it and I was just looking to see what I could do with this situation.

And what is it that you wanted to do?

I suppose I've always had a sort of slightly subversive or counter-hegemonic tendency. I always like to disrupt and undo things. If I'm asked to do one thing, I think well, okay, how can I do that through doing another thing or exploring that? That's a disposition as much as anything else, and I think when you start to do that there's a really fundamental connection, a technicity between material processes, technical processes, and you as a human being, and this kind of feedback. In the most obvious ways, you know, you're photographing something and trying to capture it, but inherently the technology is telling you all sorts of things depending on the type of camera, and the film or the digital process, and the lens and so on. It's giving you "I want it to be this way", and it's a frame so you're manipulating that. And I think there's a real kind of, circular and reflexive thing that happens with that. So I became very attuned to that early on and realising well, that actually applies to absolutely everything: to the paper, to the substrate, to the ink, to the way you layer and arrange or combine things, the way you frame and crop and all of that becomes a vocabulary. And then also the other really important part in all of that – which is not important now – and this is interesting because I find teaching undergraduates that all of my frames of reference do not exist to a 20-year-old (and that's fine!) – but when I was learning how to practice, it was concurrent with the Macintosh becoming The tool for graphic design. So you were just pushed up against this machine and you didn't know really what it did or how to do it. But you knew that it could do a lot of the things you wanted to do, and this is why Emigre was so formative for me. And actually, I saw very little of it was because it was published in California. I managed to buy one copy while at collect and otherwise it was only relatively laterally available here in one shop for short periods of time, but even at that it was expensive so I only snatched glimpses, and I think this is really good in terms of making you curious. Anyway, it was that thing of confronting a technology, not knowing how to do it, so you derive the work around; I can't do that, but I can do this. And then it is always this dialogue with the technology. So that really fueled me in terms of how that shapes the message, and that collided with what I'm interested in including music, architecture, and art and these were the areas that I tried all of this out in.

Could you speak a bit about your practice as a freelancer and how your process has developed working independently? You spoke a bit earlier about how collaboration can feel forced; could you elaborate a bit more on that in relation to your process and how might the concept of creative community look within that?

The notion that a freelance designer works alone I think is bogus as well because nothing happens in a vacuum. I think that how you work with and relate to people is a really fundamental component of practice. I've done loads of things which are various degrees of either side of conventional collaboration. I've done things where pretty quickly you can see, well I'm okay with doing this, but it's not going to be anything particularly noteworthy. So, at that point you just say “I'm just going to do this really professionally, and competently”, and in some ways satisfy your interests in terms of the formalism of graphic design. In such contexts you just make sure that you do a really good job, while other times you get more of a sense from who you’re working with of what they are up for and interested in. It's a whole range of those experiences, I suppose. This book I’m making with Sarah Browne (Echo’s Bones) at the moment – I've worked with Sarah for nearly 20 years now in various contexts, and I have a very good understanding of how she works and what her parameters are, and she knows the same of me. In this book I'm very conscious, in quite a simple way, to use the abilities and knowledge I have in order to distill and to bring out the themes and the complexity of her work, in a way that's useful to her. So I think this is an example of a successful coworking relationship, but again, I wouldn’t call it a collaboration because it’s of a particular nature that we have mutually arrived at, and I know the culture in which I am operating.

(A brief pause here in the conversation for the interviewee to answer the door before proceeding with the interview).

Something significant for me is this word emic; it's about where you are situated in relation to your research – when you are within the culture that you're investigating and you're conscious that your research is affecting the process and the results. For me it’s really this idea of the emic, (in relation to the book Throw Away - Dublin Nightclub Flyers): I'm part of that culture, I was there making the fliers and going to the places. This is important as the graphic designer is most often outside the culture or the research, and their role is even understood as external and transparent. So even though I didn’t know Ciarán (with whom I co-edited the book) during the timeframe that the book refers to (the 1990s), I understand the culture he is coming from. So that establishes the ground and he knows what I do and how I was a part of that culture. We had conversations but the design of the book happens really as a gesture of trust. I think there are lots of these different relationships other than ‘collaboration’ that you can establish and people don't talk about them.

There are two other really long term collaborations I have, one is with Tom dePaor, an architect and the other is Gerard Byrne, an artist. I’ve made five books with Gerard – he initially came to me because he had a show in a gallery that I had done the identity and first publication for. We were aware of each other’s work but when we met we had a real affinity. Discussions was easy (and

challenging!). Gerard had an upcoming show in IMMA and asked that I would make the publication so then we had two books back-to-back, and I think that's one of the instances of this idea of mutual constituency, because again I'm within the culture – I attend museums and galleries, and our practices have many common concerns. I'm outside of his practice but I'm within that kind of framing. So we have a need to make a publication, but his work is primarily lens based, so there are films, photographs, occasional objects and they're arranged in an exhibitionary space. These are intricate arrangements spatially with lots of screens and sequenced screenings, which are all quite experientially complex. And then there's the book, and the book some of these thing, but quite differently. It is spatio-temporal, required reader engagement, but it's a quiet space, I like to speak of the quiet subversion of the page. If you put formal jacket on a book it exudes a kind of authority and has a voice and an expectation to it; but then within that you can shape and manipulate it. There's a lot of complex devices going on in this particular book (*Tuxedo Junction, 1960*). For example, there essays, but those essays have been printed out and photographed, so there's this flip where the text is becoming an image. And then I think that does something very interesting in terms of representation because it puts the text on the same plain as what we understand as an image such as the film still or the installation view. So now they are equal if you like, they are all photographic. The paradigm of an art book is that it's a selection of reproductions accompanied by forward and introduction, two or three serious essays that point to all of the theory, and there's a real hierarchy in that. And actually, if you think about it, the writers of those books are people whose practice is writing and that's their practice in that text, so they are developing new insights which emerge from their personal thesis. And this doesn't always align with the work itself or the practice of the artist. I was trying to develop a conversation with the artist and with his practice and mine and that fueled five books. And I think that became really interesting and really complex and the relationship was about trust, and empathy, and actually just getting on with somebody. And I think that's under theorized as well, we developed a really subtle kind of balance, reflective, where there's never an instance where I'm imposing things at the expense of anything else. It is very mutually constituent. I think one of the important things about being a graphic designer is to be ready; perhaps why I called my book *Make Ready*. We are taught, I suppose, as you know from your thesis, that we're supposed to figure out a structure, and you build on this framework, essentially pouring in the content, but my brain doesn't work like that, and my life experience isn't actually like that. I've never really had much of a plan in terms of how I would approach anything, but I'm always ready,. In *Images or Shadows* there are nine written texts, and I received these as text files, and Gerard left hard disks with me with literally hundreds and hundreds of gigabytes of material and I sifted through all of it, I read all the texts, and I illustrated the texts, and Gerard looked at the book said, "yeah, that's great." And then, you know, we tweaked and refined and swapped some things out, but essentially that's a first draft book. This was a very responsive relationship if you like,

because he saw in the way I had arranged the material the possibility to then add another voice, which was this other floating narrator that makes a commentary on the stream of images, because one of the things I was really interested in in this book was that across the nine essays, they're talking about over 10 years of Gerard's practice, and a lot of them would refer to the same works – *New Sexual Lifestyles*, Subject etc. would recur in multiple essays. So I thought, okay this becomes interesting as a constellation, so that each essay is looking at it from a different perspective. So, I just followed the text to build a structure, but for each I reproduced different image of the works referred to, or showed them in a different way; an installation view, a piece of text, or an image from the research, or a film still, but in this kind of multiple way so that every time you're looking at the same thing, but it's always different. And then what that does as a book is it presents nine essays which are illustrated, but you can also see it as an entire entity, as a book space which is a visual essay. And in that sense, the texts have a different value, they're supporting the image narrative. And I think that's one of the things that the running caption does very well then is that becomes the top text even though it's the smallest, upsetting the assumed hierarchy, and you can read the whole book through that. So then the voice of all these different authors and all of their references, become part of that constellation rather than the hegemony where the author tells you what it's about, and then you look at the work and say, "Oh yes, it's about that, I see what you mean." So all of that comes about I think by being ready; that wasn't the plan, I didn't work that out. I didn't think "this is what I'm doing", I just did it, and then this happened. So I think that's about this kind of feedback or foldback; that I realised, okay I've got so many pictures, and the normal thing to do is you strip it down and reduce it. And I've often referred to this idea of Robert Smithson and the privileged view of the camera that chooses an image out of the entire of the universe and the continuity of time and says 'that's it'. But no, it's not – that's just –that! Publications particularly carry that fiction with them. Show me the work. Oh, this is work. Oh, I see how it was. And you know that's of course a total fiction. So that became: well, it's all of these things, and because it's all of them, it's also none of them. Because it can be any of these possibilities or any of these configurations.

Wow, fascinating. This next question is maybe a bit of a swerve in the conversation, but you're the first one that introduced me to the concept of Slow Design and I wondered if you could share how you came across the idea of Slow Design and how it relates to your own process.

I'd come across the Slow Food movement, and this and that, and I worked on a Slow Architecture publication with Mike Haslam and Simona Castelli, so I suppose I became aware of it then. But this is something we talked about in one of your online sessions, that the people you're talking to won't necessarily identify with that term, but actually it captures quite a lot of what they do. So I don't

necessarily think of myself in these terms, but if I put together all the things that I do, it seems to align. That's not to say that I haven't spent many late nights, you know, stressed with the level of work and banging it out because things collide; which relates to what you said earlier about reading about slowing down but then having to frantically write your thesis. So firstly, within my practice it never really occurred to me to try and make a load of money. It occurred to me that I need to clear my debt and I need to pay my rent. Actually, in terms of my whole money framing; I did have one corporate client that it actually allowed me to get a deposit on a house and if I hadn't done that job, I never would have. So you know, it's not a perfect thesis, because that job just boosted my income so spectacularly But it was accidental how I came to work for that client, and it was just a one-time thing. Aside from that I've always just done things that I'm interested in or that my interests facilitate. Like I said to you, I go to a gallery, so I worked with the gallery. There was never an idea for me of just trying to make a load of money. It was really just trying to make really good work, trying to become a world-class practitioner, and this path lead me in unexpected ways. I think a lot of young designers have that aspiration to be great. but I think typically what happens is it gets whittled away. And I think unusually it hasn't with me, and that's largely because I stayed freelance. I thought for a while that I should expand as a business, but I realised no, what's actually really fundamental to how I practice is that it's freelance you know, politically to be outside of anything corporate or anything industry based, and to have direct engagement with the people with whom I worked. All I could see around me were people who were designing, you know, crisp packets, and then what they do is they show the stuff they've done for Amnesty International, but actually it's a facade. They had become very commercial practices, and they may have very capable, competent designers in there, but 90% of what they produce I just couldn't go near it. So then, you're working on things which just take longer and you're more concerned with the value of them. I mean, I designed club flyers, and there's a kind of irony in that, as they went out in the streets and then they just evaporated, but I took them on as really substantial pieces of work that I devoted my time to… (and then years later I get to make a book about them, so in fact they do have some longevity!). But I spent inordinate amounts of time on these tiny little pieces of paper.. I took that really seriously, and I carried that approach always I suppose. And then this way of working just takes longer – it is serious enquiry into communicative modes; and you gain a bit of confidence and you fight back against the rush of the clients because you become really conscious as well (particularly with paper) you become really conscious of it and the industry and the energy that goes into making these things, and you want to make things that last. It's a difficult thing to straddle, but I think the idea that you just don't make books because of their carbon impact is nonsense because we consume all the time and all our electronic data far outstrips this; but I do think it makes you more conscious of your choices, and about making a book which lasts. Then that becomes interesting in terms of thinking about the book as exhibitionary space because that book exists right now in your hand

(Images or shadows), whereas you didn't see I presume the exhibition(?). It's gone. The museum has very little, they have some installation views on a hard disk somewhere, which may or may not emerge. But that book is a piece of currency. So if you're working on a project that has an inherent value, then you invest that energy into it, and I think that really becomes something tangible and substantial. These books aren't about sales – they become part of the currency of institutions that they need to make publications to give them status. So I think okay, well that's that situation, but let's make something which is -way- more complex than a catalogue because then it will last much longer. A catalogue is a timepiece – you look at and think well, that was then and this is now. It's fixed in time, but doesn't offer much else. I suppose I'm always trying to invest value and complexity into whatever it is I do. Then this idea of the multi-valency and multiple views of things I think contributes to that because it's not a single message. So much of what we receive is this single message perspective, an account. Which doesn't wear well other than as a timepiece. Whereas when you make these things that are more complex, they allow you as a reader to enter into them and form your own opinions, which aren't necessarily the same, but they're also not necessarily at odds with what's in there; they're just provide another view. So I think it's not necessarily slow design, maybe, but it's certainly much more conscious of the value of the thing that you're producing and the time you're putting into it.

And would you say you specifically seek out those projects? Or based on your values and way of working do people seek you out?

It's mostly that people and work come to me. At the beginning I would actively ring around, but there was usually a pretty low hit rate on that to be honest; mostly work comes from word of mouth. But I would say a lot of people who contact me, they don't really know what it is I do; they know I do something and they like it, but it's out of conversation that they see those possibilities. Because I've spent at this point, you know, most of my life thinking about this stuff, whereas I don't think most other people do. I have this knowledge to hand. So when I make that book in that way, and I'm framing it that way, it's not that I expect you to look and say, "Oh, look, you've done this." But actually, it's how you perceive it holistically, that it has that level of complexity to keep offering things, much like good art. Whereas I think graphic design tends to be very surface; I read it, I get it, that's it. And very often it's about the voice of the designer and I see what the designer is doing, and it looks beautiful or it's clever or whatever, but it doesn't have a depth beyond that. So I think that's the level at which I'm operating at. I'm very attuned to how they look, but I'm most interested in how they communicate, the communicative experience.

Touching again on your freelance practice, what would you say have been the biggest barriers operating independently outside of the more corporate graphic design world?

Money! That's largely why I ended up teaching. Now, I happen to love teaching, but I spent 25 years being independent and it's just really precarious. It doesn't let up. I think of it as a remarkable achievement and a privilege that I have been able to remain independent. I guess when you scale up to become a design agency of some sort, you tend to have somebody in marketing or and they're just selling. And their job is to keep the people in the office busy. Their job is not to follow a line of inquiry or to make or to make something beautiful or anything of cultural or lasting value. So again, that paradigm I don't think works, I'm not sure you can have a slow design company with 10 people.

I was going to ask if you think there's a way to infuse or inform more depth into corporate design projects?

Well, you sort of feel like that has to come, don't you? But I think it's going to be who blinks first. You know, all the catastrophes that are happening and yet nobody blinks. So I struggle with a lot of things that are still considered socially acceptable. Now, I mean, we all do our best, we all fuck up. We're all inconsistent, we're all hypocrites, but you do your best. I am amazed at the level of consumerism that's still totally and openly acceptable, even within the university you know. So I don't know, in design agencies it's like a lot of them do token projects; everybody designs for Amnesty International because it wraps up so many things. You know, I'm a concerned citizen and I'm giving back. But at what point will people start turning down work? I don't know. The problem of corporations that they exist to serve the shareholder. I think that's a huge problem. I would like to see those things go away. I don't know how that's going to work, I think that it has to come from some greater outside pressure. I don't know what that is, but I think as an individual you can do something. It might not make a difference but you can make some good stuff. I think you've uncovered some of this in your research, that there are collectives in places that are doing things and I think they can last for a period of time but it still doesn't really get you through the whole way; it's not a complete diagram. You can be in a collective, but then you know, if you're like me you're 54 and you've got two children and this just literally isn't generating enough money, there's a problem there. That said, I also think I've been immensely privileged to somehow pretty much only do stuff that I really value and get by. I don't know how that happened; it's hard to see how you can do it now. But when you're in it, you just do it. I think you become what you are. I don't think anyone's going to say "oh, you know what, I'm going to be a slow designer, show me how." But I think your thesis might awaken in people some of their tendencies and their interests that they might build on that. Being able to describe it, to put a name on it, can be transformative. But it is a slow process

as well, isn't it(?) because the model is set up. Even in TU Dublin the model is how many of the graduates get a job and it's very engrained but we need to be more nuanced to change the market rather than perpetuate it. It's hard to break that cycle, and sure people need to make a living, but there are other ways; they're difficult but it is possible.

I believe you touched on this a bit already when speaking about the different printers you work with to produce your books; but could you share a bit more about your selection process of working with third parties? Do you have a process of choosing who to work with based on their values or what they can offer?

In Ireland there are some printers who are doing a lot better, but I still need to work outside of Ireland to achieve the levels of production I require. I think if you are making an object and you expect it to be on somebody's shelf in 25 years' time it needs to be made well. I am only interested in producing world class work. So I found this printer Rosbeek but then even they eventually went bankrupt, which says a lot about the precariousness of the print industry. A lot of printers shut down between 2008 and 2012 because of the economic collapse. Printers operate on low profit margins so they need demand, and if you're Rosbeek and doing very exacting things it takes longer. A lot of important printers went out of business. If at all possible, I work with this printer Marcel Meesters with whom I have worked for 20 years now and he used to work in Rosbeek so that's the connection and it's been a super valuable exchange. Again, I wouldn't have ever described it as slow design, but actually I have one guy in Dublin that I work with on coding and in the digital realm and then with Marcel for printing, and in both of those situations I will never go to them and say "I want this, this, and this and I want you to do that." It's much more conversational, so I wonder if that is a kind of characteristic of slow design if you like, that it's more discursive? You know there's a demand on the professional designer to answer the brief; or worse still, the thing that I've never done is to provide three options. I think to do that is a total fundamental flaw; I just don't believe you can produce three versions that you are equally convinced of, most likely they're all equally mediocre. If you fully think things through, there's one clear approach, and, sure, it needs modification and conversation, but there's never three! I don't think design is about choice actually. I think all of those things are wrong. I think it is about this discursive relationship, so with the printer I always ask and say, you know, "what do you think about using this paper?" Because he will have all of this knowledge that I don't. So, yes it prints beautifully, but it doesn't fold into 16-page sections unless you pre-score it, or better to do it in eight-page sections, or whatever it is. And all of these things are small but they're this level of craft and expertise that I just don't have; and I also don't want(!), but I want it available as part of the conversation. And then equally when I'm designing websites, I figure it out in a much broader kind of way, I think about what's the experience of it; what things

does it need to perform? And then I'll discuss with Neil about how that might come about. I might have this idea and he will say, “well no we can't do that, but we can do this.” And that discursive thing always makes the work better. I think again, there's a lot of hierarchy, and I think maybe slow design is about dissolving some of those. The idea of the service provider – I think that's all wrong. I think it's all flat. And if you think about it as flat, then you get all of these values and insights from these experts that you can't get on the internet and it's really, really specific and also you realise that if you find the right people, they’re all drawing on the same good, different, well of readiness, of sustained engagement. They’ve always been in this so they know and feel things; like I can feel things about how a book should be; but it’s difficult to rationalize those things sometimes, you know, and I'm always looking for ways to explain to somebody else why I just absolutely know that I'm right. And it's not out of arrogance, it's just that I’ve done it for so long. And you know, it's tacit knowledge, it's intuition, sagacity. It's all sorts of different things that are all mixed up. And again, I think if you're in a fast design culture there's no space for those things to happen.

So, I guess maybe another defining characteristic of any kind of slow practice is that it's really about who you are and what you're doing in the world and how you relate to that. I think that's a fundamental difference. Going back to etic and emic, I think the graphic designer nearly always is outside of the situation and somebody comes to them, and they then have their formal training that they superimpose this, and it works towards a degree of collaborative compromise. I think that's the model. And I think if it's more of this emic thing, that you're operating from within the culture. There's lots of things that you can be interested in and be active as a visual communicator, you know, it doesn't have to be ostensibly the green agenda or whatever. But I think if you're generally concerned with your presence on the earth and what bearing that has on things instead of just banging things out, then I think you're naturally aligned to those things and you're interested in quality, you know, (and quality can sometimes mean ‘bad’ quality! That can be productive). It's not that everything has to be meticulous, it's the appropriate quality to what you are communicating. And I think all of it comes out of that, so whatever you're interested in, whether it's gardening, or tattoos, or film, or art, or cycling, or whatever it is, I think you can bring all of these things into what you do and I think you can develop a practice out of and around those things. And you may need to prop it up with other things, but I think you can do that.

I love it, I think that's a good place to call it, thank you so much.

Appendix H – Interview with Ruben Pater

Date: 28/08/2023
Time: N/A
Duration: N/A
Location: Questions responded to via email
Interviewee Title: Graphic Designer & Educator

What are some of the key turning points in your design career that shaped your current practice?

It wasn't exactly turning point but rather a slow process of learning and practicing design. What others may interpret as some kind of sudden radicalizing, was in fact a political sensitivity and an interest in history that was always part of me. Specifically, it was reading philosophy, the punk and hip-hop movement that inspired me to bring art and politics together in new forms.

As someone who has done an in-depth study on the relationship between graphic design and capitalism, how have your approaches working as a designer evolved as a result of this?

When designers talk about politics and activism, they tend to put everything into slogan and posters. What designers often do not realise is that it matters more how socially aware your practice is. Do you work with local printers, or cheap bulk printers abroad? Do you pay your interns? Do you use open-source software? Do you refuse to work for fossil fuel, the fast fashion industry, and real estate companies? Do you work locally in your neighborhood or do you work with foreign companies? That is where I try to make my practice more socially relevant and ecologically responsible.

In your book CAPS LOCK you talk about the concept of "creative destruction" as a capitalist process of destroying old structures to make room for new, more profitable ones. As graphic design practices are often enmeshed with the development of new technologies and trends, what do you think are some of the ways graphic designers can operate with a more long-term view of design?

It starts with the realisation that infinite growth is simply not possible on finite planet earth. So every design, every object we put into the world, uses valuable resources which are running out.

However, the way we design right now has very little interest in maintaining or improving the health of the planet. Already taking the resources into account when choosing to design or not, or to produce or not, is an essential step in treating this planet as the birthplace of all life, and cherish it accordingly. This means we will have to design less new objects, and spend more time fixing, mending, and repairing.

I am interested in the practice you describe as commoning as a means of facilitating more ethical forms of design through both the sharing and defending of design resources and spaces. Since writing CAPS LOCK, have you seen or been a part of more commons-based practices in graphic design?

The concept of commons may seem abstract but it refers to all things we have common access to and cannot be privately owned. Think about rivers, beaches or forests, but also libraries. Since I do not own any property, I focus on the intellectual property I produce; my books, my designs, and most of my work is publicly accessible or can be used with a Creative Commons license. If the opportunity ever arises, I would love to start a commons-based studio/workspace that can be used by everyone and is run as a cooperative.

Appendix I – Interview with Niels Schrader

Date: 20/09/2023
Time: 8:30am IST
Duration: 44min
Location: Virtual meeting between Dublin and Amsterdam
Interviewee Title: Information Design & Educator

Can you tell me a bit about your background in design; how you got started and how it led to what you are currently doing?

Yeah, that's a good question because at a certain age it gets very elaborate to answer. I started as a graphic designer and studied in Dusseldorf, Germany. I was born though in South America in Caracas. So I have German parents and I have an incredible fascination for words, language, and type. And that was something I really loved to explore in my bachelor's programme. And it was through typography that I quickly went into programming, because in a sense the basic framework of code is language. It was really the time where the internet was emerging and programming your own websites was really the next step to explore these opportunities. It was really new territory at the time and then from programming I went into what you would call information design. It's a bit of a generic term because I think if you don't design information, then what else do you design? But I believe for many people it captures what I've been doing for many years which is visualising data. And now currently I am the head of a programme I started, I believe 13 years ago, teaching at the Academy in The Hague; which is a really interesting Academy because it really has this focus on typography and type design and some very famous type designers have come from this academy. And what triggered me was that they were working with quite an old-fashioned curriculum. So when I was asked to take over the programme together with a colleague as an interim solution, because our director was leaving, I thought, well, I do need to sort of change what students are learning here, because it's very much looking at a graphic design practice of the past. I think I left an incredible footprint in terms of new technologies there because now students are learning how to program and students are very much focusing on the emerging technologies. It was an incredible effort, but I'm very happy with the result. I changed from being a head of the bachelor's programme to a head of the master's programme almost five years ago now, so that's been a bit of my journey.

I'm interested in what you said there about helping your students embrace emerging technologies. In your article "Information Ecology", you mention the importance of cultivating uniquely human experiences such as intuition, imagination, and empathy. Could

you speak a bit more about what it looks like for designers to cultivate those in tandem with these emerging and accelerating technologies?

Yes, I think in particular what made me start thinking in this way emerged from real-life experience and realising that things might become unmanageable, through the simple fact that as a designer of information you are always receiving data packages from your clients; which start very small, but over the years really start increasing. And the challenge of more data also raises the challenge of making sense of it. And I think what becomes more and more of a challenge is the ability to handle all this data. So basically, if you think that it first started with sort of simple Excel sheets, but then it becomes much more elaborate, so you need to get access to databases. This amount of growing information hit a nerve for me because I think there's a certain point where it goes beyond what we can grasp through human cognition. Which on one hand is good, but on the other hand should be reflected on. So that made me look at these tools very differently, and by tools I mean the computer in particular, as a sort of brain with all of its technologies and softwares that have been developed. What they promote is acceleration, and essentially you're always too slow in response to the computer. So using it without this sort of differentiation becomes a challenge that your brain cannot grasp all of the information that it's exposed to. I think computers are still good and you can use these technologies, but the problem arises when you merge thinking and reasoning with speed. At a certain point it can become overtaking, where thinking and reasoning don't count anymore; and I think that's the point we have to look out for. There are a lot of technologies in development that might simply make us stupid. It's sort of externalising your brain and I believe that's where we don't want to go because it's also giving away agency. And I guess this sort of reflection, which is probably more ethical reflection, has not really been on the agenda of big corporations. Because they, of course, have an incentive to make money. And that's, I think, where this sort of critique should come, and in particular I believe that's where the Slow Movement has an incredible and valuable point.

When did you first hear about Slow Design or how did you first come across it?

As a term, probably when I was invited to contribute to the *Slow Reader* book. I was never the sort of person that was using it as a sort of label or terminology, but intuition was just telling me that you frequently have to sort of stop, step back, and look at things because the reflection that you really want to provoke is very necessary to make decisions. And if you just leave the decision-making processes to the computer, and you don't oversee them, then it's actually really this giving away of agency, responsibilities, and accountability. And I think that's also where the ethical component comes in. I don't know if you're familiar already with this, but a lot has been said in the past about

computers and the critique of, say, racial discrimination, or how many sorts of algorithmic decision-making processes are biased; and basically corporations or individuals stepping back and saying "Well, it's not my fault", whereas it is your fault, because you are the ones who have developed it, and have actually implemented it. So it's really about understanding the technology as a sort of space that requires accountability and responsibility.

That's super important.

Yeah, and I think this is where the idea of Slow Design as a concept is important, which again I am not really familiar with in terms of a movement, but I know that Caroline (Strauss) was very much promoting it. And I thought about how where there is this aspect of acceleration, there is also this sort of ethical danger that needs to be corrected. So if you ask me personally, I cannot tell you a lot about Slow Design as such, but rather of what I, as an information designer, encountered in response to the acceleration of technology.

Yeah, that's really helpful because that is something I am finding within this study, and from my own lens as a graphic designer; that even though I wasn't finding a lot of explicit mentions of graphic design within the Slow Design literature, the more I talk to designers, the more alignments seem to emerge. A lot of it tends to be through intuition like you mentioned earlier, of ways designers are already practicing reflective ways of slowing their practices. So I'm interested in continuing to uncover that a bit more, of how people are interpreting Slow in their own ways.

Are there any projects or examples that come to your mind that you felt really embodied your interpretation of slowing down and having some of those deeper experiences within design?

I don't think I wouldn't be able to pinpoint one particular project and say, "Okay, well, this is a project in my portfolio that does incorporate Slow Design". I believe Slow Design, or slowing down, is definitely something I'm implementing in my body of work as a sort of necessary reflection moment. I believe it is necessary to take a step back to sort of install a practice that allows for these moments. I think, also, maybe understanding that next to the speed and acceleration, there's also probably an incredible aspect of multiplicity, which means that it's not only the speed that increases but it's also the amount of channels, for example, in which we are communicating. So it is almost sort of a viral thing that you lose control of, and I don't want to be anti-technology because I believe that these are the directions we are going and we should not ignore them. But I do believe there's not enough room for critique and learning from it, and I guess that's more the position I'm taking in my

practice. And that's funny because I think I grew into this position; maybe it's a matter of age, having seen a couple of projects and actually understanding the point where I believe Marshall McLuhan is right, that that the tools we're using are designing us. And if you sort of understand how the internet works, and then work off technologies with this sort of fast increasing processors, then you can actually very easily understand that this is exactly what we are facing cognitively. Basically, the technology is surpassing the capabilities of our own cognitive limitations, which is something that I again think is okay in terms of technological development, but there are little moments that we actually sort of say, “Well, why do we need a new update on the iPhone every year with new features”, because in the end that’s just a marketing trick, right? It's not about helping anymore, so that sort of critical thinking should be implemented more. But it's also capitalism driving this sort of whole market that is very exploitative.

Definitely. And just to clarify, do you still operate your own freelance practice in addition to teaching?

Yes, I have my own practice, and it's challenging because I invest two days a week into the heading of the programme, and then the three days that remain are put into my own projects. They are mainly cultural sector projects that are not as large scale as I once did when I was full time and had more space. So in that sense I am scaling down, which is okay because I'd rather focus on the details rather than the scale.

And the clients you are working with: do they tend to seek you out based on their alignment with your values and vision, or do you seek out clients to work with?

Normally it happens naturally as I believe that through the type of work that you are doing, and through the reputation that you are building, a certain type of client will be attracted to your work. There was a time in the past where I wondered if this was really what I wanted to do. And of course, there is a certain point that you do need to do a job because you need to have an income. But now, after being in this boat for 25 years, I can very much say that it grows naturally; and the clients that you're actually having a good time and enjoy working with, tend to be the ones that keep coming back to you. Fortunately I have a small enough practice; I have one or sometimes two assistants, which makes it small enough to allow for certain moments to step out if it is not going in the direction that I would like it to go. But that rarely happens because normally these are the sort of things that you anticipate at the very early stage.

And is your practice still called Mind Design?

Yes, it's actually an English translation from the German word Gedanken which means “thoughts.” So Gedanken Design means the design of thoughts and this was a super sweet compliment that one of my professors made when they were writing an article about me because I had graduated *cum laude* and I think it was in that context, or at least at that time, and what he was saying was that I was doing this “gedanken design”, by giving form and shaping thoughts. And I thought that was a really nice way of describing what I was doing. It is difficult to describe that, because the mind is not necessarily the thought, but I think it was close enough to give it a name, and that became my design company name which was really nice. It wasn't my idea, but I thought it was just too beautiful to let it go.

That’s lovely. Do you have any projects coming up with Mind Design that you are excited about?

I am doing a lot of work currently for exhibitions which is actually quite funny realising that I'm coming first from the practice of the printed book through typography, then became a designer of websites, and then became a designer of information. And now it becomes a bit more spatial and I have to admit I'm enjoying it because what is really nice about exhibition design is that the matter of scale is very important. And it finally gets us out of the computer again, which is something I also really enjoyed when I was designing books; the physicality of it, and I think that's really a bit limiting in the context of digital designs. But I think, then again, there are other exciting things that do make so much sense on a digital level; I think one of them being Time. Time is a sort of value that I think you can very much make use of on the screen.

Definitely. This is maybe a little aside, but I read that within your freelance practice you used to work with Irma Boom; she’s one of my favourite book designers.

Yeah, that was during the time when I was still doing book design. I do have to say, I really learned a lot in terms of condensing a lot of information to an essence. I think that's what Irma was really good at. She would have clients that would just literally bring boxes of stuff to her telling her yeah, how can you make a book out of this and you're like, “Okay, well, how did you begin?” That sort of thinking of really narrowing things down to an essence I really enjoyed learning from her. At the time I worked for her she was less in the sort of immediate attention because we were a small studio, basically two assistants and her. But I think it gets to a certain point when you want to fly for yourself and start your own practice. And I think this grew naturally as I did my Master’s programme here in the Netherlands. I started to get my assignments and people were reaching out to me and then at a certain point I started to have my own studio. I joined a little studio space together with

some friends in a really old school. That was really funny because we were sitting literally in an old classroom, but it was really nice actually. And from there, it really became a practice where you establish your network of clients, you establish a timeline where you have to meet deadlines and work with other people's calendars. I do love to say, especially to young students, that I think the best of graphic design in general is collaborating with a lot of people. And I think if you're enjoying that for yourself, you should definitely use this time to get to know people and establish really nice connections. Because this is the best time in your life that you can really connect and build friends for life.

That's really good advice. How would you say you balance operating as a freelancer while also building this kind of network of collaboration?

I have the fortunate position now at the moment that I can rely a bit more on the fact that I do have the income from the Academy; which doesn't necessarily make things easier in the end because you're also trying to manage two sides of the same coin. I do think, though, it gives you a bit more of relaxed decision-making time because at least my rent is paid. I think that's already a lot, and on the other hand, I think having good clients is really the essence of it. And you establish a good circle of clients by mainly doing good work. That's my experience, because I've of course also had the times where I thought, “Oh my god, where's the next assignment coming from?” But funny enough, it's always this moment where the next one is lurking around the corner. And it's not that you foresee that, but you learn to trust, and when there's downtime you can focus on your portfolio, your website, cleaning up your office, there are always things to do. It might take a couple of days, but then the next thing comes along. I’ve been in this business now for 25 years I believe, and there were moments where we were sweating and thinking it wouldn't be coming, but this was just for a couple of days, and then the next thing would appear. So I also learned to trust and lean into my network a lot. And I think that's something you have to learn over time, and by looking back you understand how it works. You do have to establish it; you have to keep a network alive, and I think it does require work: which involves not being ignorant towards your clients as soon as a project is finished. It means staying in touch with them, thinking of them or calling and inviting them to have a coffee now and again, or even asking if they want to join for a project. Because collaboration goes both directions. It's a very dangerous path to think of working as only one directional. So whenever there's opportunities for you to think of your clients, it’s good to also push work their way and say, “Hey, this is something that you might be interested in” and so forth. So you’re actually becoming friends at a certain level while still being professional and you can help do things for each other.

Interesting, I feel like having that longevity in mind seems to relate to Slow Design in terms of stewarding client relationships for the future instead of viewing projects as "one and done".

Absolutely. And are you planning to have your own practice for yourself?

Yes, I was almost a full-time freelancer for about four years leading up to going back to school. And I've kept in touch with a few of my clients, so it's nice to have that on the side and still have a bit of income while I'm in school.

A lot of students are trying to establish a practice where they work say for three days with a company so they have enough income but then still enough time to follow up on their own projects because you don't want to end up just doing really exhausting corporation stuff.

Exactly, and that's where I was really interested in looking at some of the ways Slow Design could potentially be applied to freelance because I did do a lot of corporate work and it can be draining, and quick, and always on to the next thing, and not always asking "What's really needed here?" So in working with smaller organisations, or nonprofits, I think there can sometimes be a little bit more space to steward some of that.

Sometimes NGOs or organisations who are doing exciting work can be incredibly overlooked. One of my good, collaborative partners from the academy works for Amnesty International for example and I always believe these organisations also need to communicate and have certain values they want to pass on. There need to be strategies and ideas of how to make that happen, and of course these are not the projects that you win prizes with normally, but on the other hand, it's very fulfilling. I have been establishing collaborations throughout the NLN programme (Non Linear Narrative master's) on a regular basis and we have an incredible portfolio of NGOs and cultural institutions that have been working with us. And what I see with my students is that in the end, they're so incredibly thankful for that experience because they rarely would have pictured themselves in that position. And I think when it comes to really having fun working, which I think is the essence of a really nice life, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't be working or should work less. I think, as long as the work is not exhaustive; if it's fun and you enjoy doing it then it's absolutely a bliss to work six days a week without any problem, and I actually enjoy it. And then there are days where I think, "Oh, my God, I can't get out of bed for two days", because I'm just so done with it. I mean, I'd rather go for the first version, so all this is to say: make sure that it fits for you. I believe that reputation, prizes, awards, are all very short-term successes and it's not really very fulfilling. For example, I stopped taking part in these sorts of competitions for prizes because it's just not enough. It's

interesting in the context of Slow because it's really not sustainable or long term, it's just a sort of repeating cycle of the same thing year after year.

That's so interesting, I hadn't thought about Slow necessarily in the context of design awards.

Yeah I think also because it's a type of system that propels a feeling that you have to perform. But I think it's also a personal thing to be honest, I believe it's much easier to cope with it when you're young. But maybe it's also sort of more from the Boomer generation that they need this external confirmation, I don't know. But I really hope the younger generations are much calmer in their inner truth and I think that's an incredible quality that I see with my students. I'm not a Boomer, but I'm Generation X so I do feel a connection to some of the anger and drive because back then we were very much about finding a certain level of autonomy, reinventing the wheel when the internet was developing, and also finding your way in this world where everything was driven by economy and capitalism. And in the end, if they wanted to silence you down you would be put in front of the MTV programme, so that was sort of your iPhone back then, on a level of interaction. So I think there are a lot of similarities to be honest, but what I really like is that there's a lot of consciousness about mental health and keeping your balance and that is definitely something that our generation did not have. It was much more about trying to perform on the basis of external factors and I think the rise in consciousness is an incredible win.

That's good to hear, and do you have strategies in place to help balance your own personal wellness in line with your work?

I think not taking yourself too seriously is a really important one. I believe designers take themselves far too seriously. I think another big point is collaboration, because then every new design project becomes a new experience and a new exploration which is always fun to learn from. And I guess keeping professional life and private life separate, which I'm saying because I wasn't that way at all, when I was young I was a 24/7 designer. And I think I still am, definitely if I ask my partner, but what I do much more clearly is draw a line and say that I do need to unplug. So maybe understanding where your boundaries are, which doesn't mean that you're not open to help people or continue because they are having a challenge, but it's more this idea of what do you get out of a project. Say for example, if it's money, then the question is, Do you value money as much to sort of continue and potentially break down your health for that? Or, is it because you are helping someone? Or is it because of your reputation? I believe the incentive of working, for me, is not necessarily monetary or reputation, but mainly fulfillment. I guess that sort of level is something that really comes with age, but you realise at a certain point that the bottom line is "What do you want

to achieve in life?" And I guess a lot of things go aside and you really think about what the real causes are that you want to spend your time on. And one of my major things is education and also having an impact on certain topics that are very close to me; environmental as well as justice and social-political cases. And eventually you start to wrap your practice around that. But that, of course, I do want to emphasise is nothing that you have to have very clear at the very beginning, but it will naturally grow. What I find very exciting about this new generation that you are a part of is really that the consciousness is already there. I think that you guys are already a step ahead and that should be celebrated.

That's lovely, thank you so much. Those were all of my questions.

As my last remarks, I think the essence is looking at Slow Design from the perspective of technology and asking what technology does in the context of acceleration. Because we are using technology as tools, hence what do tools do to us? And how do we respond cognitively? Because that is our center of attention, and in this process, are there moments where we have to interfere and allow for slowing down? I think for me that is the essence of what Slow Design can mean, through a practice of looking at the process of design and looking at the tools and technologies we are using, and looking very much at the capacity of the brain and capacity of humans to juggle information, communication, and so forth. I suppose that might be different than what you may get from other scholars about Slow Design, but I think it's definitely a reflection from someone who has been very much been involved technological development and using computation power but also refraining sometimes from it because sometimes it just overwhelms you: so asking where is the good balance here. And I think we should be the ones to make those decisions and not the big corporations.

That is a helpful framing, because I know currently there is so much talk about AI and how, especially as graphic designers, we fit within that.

You shouldn't be afraid of AI at all, I do believe it is a new technology that is coming and there will be people needed who master it, but it is a bit like the milestone of the internet as a sort of platform. If you are adaptable you can get to know the tools, get to master them, and there will always be people who are needed to facilitate communication, which in the end is what designers do. But the question is, are you adaptable enough and happy to get to know these technologies? I think those are the key assets and the rest is to enjoy it because I think it's always an exciting time when there are new developments, so throw yourself into it.

Wonderful, thank you so much for your time.