

Communicating Disparity: How Social Design can create Public Engagement with Issues of Inequality

Colin Kennedy (PhD)

School of Design, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Email: colin.kennedy@vuw.ac.nz

Abstract

This discussion highlights the fact that inequality has become embedded in society and as such it is difficult to motivate people that change is possible. This is partly due to a widespread tolerance of the social condition and the often esoteric presentation of the situation to the public. By focusing on these issues of communication and naturalisation, social design can seek to introduce disruptive strategies and tools to elicit change and achieve greater popular engagement. The article looks at a selection of recent communicative responses to social inequality and finds that storytelling, including its tools and delivery, is crucial to the success of any public and community engagement approach. Therefore, a social design focus should concentrate on context-specific innovations that open safe spaces for dialogue and create new ways of delivering motivating and clear messages to the general public by challenging normalised ideas. Ultimately, this article creates a platform upon which this type of social design thinking and output can develop.

Key words: *Inequality; communication; social design; storytelling*

Introduction

Social inequality is difficult to understand. It is an amorphous, complex concept that covers an extensive range of situations and relationships. For many disadvantaged individuals and communities social disparity is often naturalised and tolerated, while for the wider public interest it is commonly presented in the form of bewildering statistics and policy-focused technocracy. The result is frequently inertia. Those who feel disempowered and disenfranchised may see no point in attempting to understand the causes or agitating for a change they presume will never come. Likewise, public opinion typically appears too disengaged from the societal consequences of inequality to provoke the necessary scale of transformation.

Despite a wide variety of policy and social responses, inequality has proven tenacious across many societies and communities. This article suggests that a social design approach can help engage a broad sweep of society with the reality of inequality – its mechanisms and damaging corollaries – and consequently stimulate people to urgently seek new ways to compel change in their own contexts. Additionally, it can enable the creation of techniques that might better represent the

erosion of social cohesion to the public conscience. A social design approach offers the opportunity to work towards an expansive, coordinated effort that can engage individuals and the public body in an intelligible discussion on the topic. It has the capacity to disrupt normalised behavioural patterns and facilitate new spaces for dialogue and communication through creative thinking. In this article, the focus is on developing communicative tools and spaces to de-mystify and 'de-naturalise' social inequality, so that social and policy responses can be validated as practicable and crucial.

How can this be done? A social design approach seeks to disrupt the naturalisation of social disparity and prevent the abstruse communication of its nature and consequences. With a focus on participation, a social design approach would put contextualised individuals and the public at the centre of the dialogue, bestowing an authority on them to describe and explain the situations of disparity that are lived through in everyday life. This requires the design of safe communication spaces and techniques to engage people and it is the intention of this article to create a platform upon which these designs can happen. To do this, there is an initial discussion on how inequality is often accepted and endured before a broad social design methodology is outlined and recommended to address any confusion and indifference. Finally, some current examples are given to demonstrate the current activity regarding this topic that might be used to encourage and guide a social design approach.

Embedding inequality

In their now seminal text *The Spirit Level*, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) emphasise the importance of inequality by stressing that many of the world's most pressing problems are not the consequence of poverty at all, but rather the result of inequality. They worry that deteriorating mental health, health issues, and increasing violence, among other issues, are direct products of income disparity. The result of increased stratification, it is argued, is more violence, a weaker educational performance and social dysfunction. They claim (2009:181): 'The truth is that the vast majority of the population is harmed by greater inequality.' The harm can take many forms, such as the inability to engage fully with the employment market, education, health resources or the environment. Such a prevalent condition is, to an extent, the outcome of how inequality has become embedded in society and as such it is difficult to motivate people that change is possible. This is partly due to a widespread tolerance of the social state and the often esoteric presentation of the situation to the public.

In an attempt to better understand how disparity becomes embedded, Bottero and Irwin (2003:480), in an article that looks at the shaping of social inequalities, suggest that disparity is 'inherently about power relations, inequality and the naturalisation / fixing of human-made social relations.' It can also be argued that another cause is the intergenerational nature of unevenness. Disparity functions on various scales; its dimensions interact and have outcomes that are felt across space and time. 'Disadvantage tracks people through their lives,' warns the *Human Development Report 2005* (2005: 6). This durability is fuelled by the internalisation of, and acquiescence to, the externally created unevenness, which can destroy dignity, self-confidence and esteem. In his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, esteemed educator and philosopher, Freire (1970:544) suggested why this process is so important:

The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalised.

Freire's work highlights the destructive elements of inequality, often leading to one individual internalising their one's position in relation to others. The result is the perpetuation of a context in which individuals are prevented from an equality of opportunity either through discrimination or through their own lack of self-belief. Marxists call this phenomenon 'false consciousness', a term that expresses the notion that people are unable to see exploitation, oppression, economic factors, or social relations, as they really are. They believe that the interests of the elite are their own interests or at least serve their interests. Sen (2005) understood this behaviour as the result of structures and considered decisions by the wealthy and powerful. In his forward to Farmer's (2005) book, *Pathologies of Power*, Sen quoted the author as saying, "Human rights violations are not accidents; they are not random in distribution or effect. Rights violations are, rather, symptoms of deeper pathologies of power" (2005:xiii). What Sen was focusing on was Farmer's anguish that those with power purposefully aggravated people's deprivation and loss – a cruelty that Farmer often called 'structural violence', and what Sen labelled 'a quiet brutality' (Sen, 2005 in Farmer, 2005: xvi).

While this brief discussion may indicate some reasons people tolerate their own situations of inequality, it doesn't clarify why public opinion so often gives the impression of being impervious to it. It can be argued that part of the issue is in the source of authority. Statistics from the World Bank and local governments are pored over by policy-makers and academics who then make statements, write articles and deliberate on what should be done. All too often the text and reflections are delivered in jargon that obfuscates the true impact of inequality and disengages the vast majority of the community. This is a worthwhile discussion point, not only regarding the deliberate manipulation of information that Sen and Farmer talk about, but also from a public engagement perspective. Petrova's article, *Inequality and media capture* (2008), demonstrates that the media plays an important role in shaping people's preferences and policy outcomes. She shows that the media is the most important source of information about public policy for the general public and, as such, it 'becomes an attractive tool that can be used by the rich to influence public opinion' (2008: 205). Her article argues that the higher inequality is in an economy, the greater incentives for the wealthy to influence the taxation and policy preferences of those with lower socio-economic status.

In his 2013 chapter concerning the importance of making the notion of society a public issue, Lundgren (2013: 66), argues that 'Making society a matter for the general public was hence a project situated at the heart of modernity.' He uses the example of museums that have challenged conceptualisations of the familiar and ideas about everyday life, forcing individuals to learn how to understand themselves in the light of research. It is an important statement about the potential of public engagement with complicated and urgent information about inequality. As Lundgren (2013:73) says, 'social knowledge [is] not only useful raw material to back a political agenda, but a way of dealing with collective issues by involving as many people as possible. The optimism to bring about informed, engaged, and responsible publics was significant.' Public knowledge, be it created or obtained through museums or social media, has a crucial role to play in prompting social action to combat inequality.

In his article on style in science communication, Bucchi (2013:909) considers this and suggests that 'this recognition of communication as an interactive transformative process rather than as a pure transportation of content across communicative contexts invites us to explore the correspondent of style.' If inequality is consistently discussed in terms of statistics and technocratic argot then, for the vast majority of the public, there can be no interaction, transformation or engagement. Social disparity is largely crystallised into the public consciousness by a lack of understanding of its causes and impacts. Some of this may be because of deliberate obfuscation or poor media communication techniques, while it may also be a result of a lack of moral consensus – what Bucchi sees as a consequence of increasingly pluralistic and fragmented societies (2013: 907).

Regardless, those who have a clear idea of the mechanisms of social inequality and an understanding of its harmful impacts have a responsibility to convey this as cogently and effectively as they can.

Increasingly this communication is occurring directly to the individual across digital media, which in itself creates an issue of unevenness. In their discussion as to whether or not information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be pro-poor, Forestier *et al.* (2002:642) comment: 'ICTs have been a force for divergence – perhaps between, and probably within countries. In this way, ICTs have acted the same as most new technologies in terms of their impact on income differentials across countries.' This notion of a digital divide or digital inequality (the gap between computer users and nonusers, often focusing on socioeconomic disparity) is the topic of Pearce and Rice's 2013 article, *Digital Divides From Access to Activities*. They consider various arguments to explain the divide, including the 'Matthew Effect', where the rich get richer because "more usage, activities, and benefits flow to those with greater resources, abilities and information needs" (2013:722). The same article also mentions the 'knowledge gap hypothesis', which suggests that those with the most resources obtain the benefits of digital progress more frequently and more rapidly, consequently increasing knowledge gaps in society. Furthermore Pearce and Rice look at the impact of multiple divides, which involves gaps between groups in awareness, adoption, skills, devices, use and outcomes for communication technology. These disparities, just as intergenerational disadvantage operates, are perpetuated in a cycle. Pearce and Rice (2013:723) emphasise that 'existing social inequalities thus both affect and reinforce various digital divides'. Therefore, to prevent the establishment of a digital and new media divide, and consequently a division regarding access to (and comprehension of) key information, there needs to be a disruption of the processes that naturalise social inequality and vice-versa.

What is Social Design – and why is it useful in this case?

The challenge of de-normalising inequality through innovative communication techniques and widespread engagement is an appropriate one for a social design approach. Social design seeks solutions and improvements to enhance people's lives and create a sustainable society by applying design principles to social issues. Faud-Luke (2009:49) appreciates the extent of the undertaking and comments: 'There is a growing need for new design heroes and heroines to provide some guidance to meet the enormity of the scale of the environmental, social and economic crises in the global, and regional/local, economies.' Shea (2012:7) agrees and appeals for a shift in thinking, saying that 'Social design defines a new kind of designer. It needs to be expansively conceived beyond trained designers to include end users and social participants. Social design cannot be a subspecialty of the design profession.' This is in line with IDEO founder Tim Brown's belief that design has become too important to be left to designers: 'innovation has become nothing less than a survival strategy.' (2010:7). IDEO is a global design firm that takes a human-centred, design-based approach to helping organisations in the public and private sectors innovate and grow.

Such a methodology might suggest that design is moving away from its traditional focus – visual communication, product, information designs for example – to emerging design practices that centre around people's and societal needs, such as interaction, service and transformation design. In an article regarding design practice, DiSalvo *et al.* (2011:196) note this and argue that 'we should recognise the collective articulation of issues as a design practice that provides base material for social innovation: it works to reveal the factors, relations and consequences of an issue, from which opportunities for innovation emerge'. Social Design works with innovative approaches that contribute positive social change, such as social equality. It aims for transformational, structural and systemic change through disruptive design thinking. Burkett (2012), from the Centre of Social Impact, proposes that the focus: 'is on the design of products that benefit people (for example, the

design of water purifiers for people living without potable water); or services (for example, designing more inclusive financial services); or processes (for example, designing participatory decision-making processes inside organisations).’

Papanek’s *Design for the Real World* (1972) demanded a new social agenda for designers, one that distanced itself from design for a commercial market. Margolin and Margolin (2002) developed this notion by discussing questions such as, ‘what role can a designer play in a collaborative process of social intervention?’ and ‘what kinds of products meet the needs of vulnerable populations?’ They did not suggest that the potential answers to these questions necessarily pitted a market model against a social model – the two were viewed as existing on the same continuum – nor did they differentiate methods for the two markets. However, there has recently been a greater emphasis on a methodology that does appear to focus more on the social model, for example Barab *et al.* (2004) or Sanders and Stappers (2008). The latter commented that ‘the evolution in design research from a user-centred approach to co-designing is changing the landscape of design practice...creating new domains of collective creativity’ (2008:5). They label it as co-design or co-creation, but acknowledge that such practice has been around for almost forty years, before Papanek’s polemical book, in the guise of participatory design. They claim that ‘The application of participatory design practices (both at the moment of idea generation and continuing throughout the design process at all key moments of decision) to very large-scale problems will change design and may change the world’ (2008: 9).

Potentially social design could be criticised as having competing characteristics. On the one hand the approach is understood to be responsible and constructive, working with communities to achieve shared goals. Conversely, it is also discussed in terms of design activism, which Faud-Luke (2009) often describes as the deliberate generation of a counter-narrative to create disruption and ‘massive change’. These two faces of social design need not cancel each other however, as the struggle to achieve sustainable and positive change within the context of contemporary challenges often demands interruptive approaches. As Berman (2009:1) concludes in his book, *Do Good Design*:

Designers have an essential social responsibility because design is at the core of the world’s largest challenges...and solutions. Designers create so much of the world we live in, the things we consume, and the expectations we seek to fulfill. They shape what we see, what we use, and what we waste. Designers have enormous potential to influence how we engage with our world, and how we envision our future.

Social design innovation needs to be accessible and viable so that generated ideas can be implemented by (and with) non-designers for the greatest impact. This can be achieved through a culture and process of storytelling and exploration or, in different situations, through observation, experience and research. This level of preparation is essential and is what IDEO’s *Human Centred Design Toolkit* labels as the ‘hearing’ phase of the process. This refers to the concepts of facilitating and co-creation (or participatory or co-design), which have been long been discussed within social development contexts (for example, participatory action research). In the opening chapter of their book on participatory action research, Kindon *et al.* (2007: 13), explain that the approach ‘emphasises that there is a socially constructed reality within which multiple interpretations of a single phenomenon are possible both by researchers and participants. Such a perspective opens up spaces for different forms of knowledge generation through methodological innovation and political action.’ Such a bottom-up perspective requires that the interaction be context-specific (or place-based) to ensure that the design outputs have people, communities and location at the core of the empathetic collaboration, what Escobar (2013:6) calls ‘bringing people back into situations.’

Recent examples of storytelling to create engagement with disparity

Two areas of focus have been highlighted in this article: that inequality needs to be stressed as an unfixed consequence of structures and societal behaviour and that the public needs to engage with the issue through germane and accessible communication. These two emphases overlap, as public engagement will contribute to the de-naturalisation of social disparity for individuals and communities by prompting responses. There are many activities already in operation that are seeking to achieve these objectives, albeit not necessarily under the label of social design. Many of them are proving successful in bringing the concept of inequality to the forefront of public debate and policy discussions. A selection of these undertakings will be discussed shortly to draw attention to some of the techniques used and to celebrate the accomplishments. The examples have been selected to represent recent different techniques, mediums and participants. However, the issue that many of the practices are not reaching the most disadvantaged in societies needs to also be considered. A social design approach will attempt to establish a counter-narrative by placing communities and people at the centre of the activities, crafting creative and safe spaces for social dialogue. Ultimately, this article hopes to use this discussion to build a platform for social designers to collaborate on devising and employing new responses.

This type of creativity in seeking physical and virtual spaces for responses, such as dialogue and storytelling is essential. Brown (2009: 148) suggests that ‘storytelling needs to be in the toolkit of the design thinker – in the sense not of a tidy beginning, middle, and end but of an on-going, open-ended narrative that engages people and encourages them to carry it forward and write their own conclusions.’ Parrish (2006), presents a similar viewpoint: ‘we might view design as more of a process of composing a story of leaner experience...One process that bridges analysis and synthesis is storytelling’ (2006: 72-73). In their 2003 article Williams *et al.*, examines how members of marginalised groups might increase their role in policy on underlying factors of poverty, discrimination and social exclusion. They comment: ‘Storytelling has emerged as a method with which people might begin to challenge dominant social discourses (and hence social structures) through their assertion of non-dominant cultural constructions, personal identities and world views in the public sphere’ (2003: 34). Williams *et al.* argue, further, that storytelling has transformative power because it is capable of:

building trust and connection between people, lending itself well to the task of strengthening relationships in fragmented communities...Storytelling within group and community development work allows people to reveal and strengthen new communal narratives that challenge dominant narratives and to (re)construct communities as empowered rather than disempowered collectives. Such communal narratives play an important role for individuals in sustaining changes within their own personal lives. (2003: 36)

The concept and practice of storytelling can be seen in a selection of recent communicative responses to inequality, both in terms of public engagement and the personalisation of specific situations. Indeed recent public engagement with the topic of inequality has increased significantly. This is the result of a number of innovations and social media developments, such as the TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) talks. TED seeks to challenge attitudes by diffusing ideas through free access to knowledge from inspirational thinkers. It is a non-profit company that holds two annual conferences and includes the TED Talks website, the Open Translation Project and TED Conversations, the TED Fellows and TEDx programmes, and the annual TED Prize. The conferences bring together some of the world's most inspirational people with the challenge of

delivering a defining presentation in 18 minutes or less. On TED.com, the best performances are available at no cost and there are currently more than 1500 online. All of the talks are subtitled in various languages, can be freely shared and reposted, and have been watched over one billion times. TED essentially acts as a global community of people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world around them. With such an extensive reach, the talks offer an unprecedented audience for topics such as social disparity and, by November 2013, there were fifteen available TED talks online directly concerning inequality.

One of the very first TED talks in 2006 was given by Professor Hans Rosling concerning his innovation, Gapminder. Gapminder, labelled as an online modern museum, promotes sustainable global development and the success of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The Gapminder Foundation aims to use a fact-based perspective that everyone can understand, operating on the basis that statistical facts aren't easily understood by everybody. To do this Gapminder developed the Trendalyzer software (which was acquired by Google in March 2007), and which can currently be used in the form of Gapminder World, a web-service displaying time series of development statistics for all countries and many regions. On its home website, Gapminder says that Trendalyzer was developed to expose the beauty of statistical time series by converting dreary numbers into animated and interactive graphics. Lundgren (2013:71) strongly supports such an approach, writing: 'The ambition of making social phenomena tangible by statistical representations could thus be both part of cutting-edge current research and the most far-reaching ambitions to address the general public in scientific matters.'

Graphical statistics, such as used in Gapminder, have undoubted potential for effective research and communication. They can present complicated ideas in ways that are relevant and understandable to people who may have no prior knowledge of the topic; what Lundgren calls: 'a sort of universal language for social issues' (2013:71). However, is this 'universal language' or the 'global community' of TED, truly inclusive? What demographic actively seeks to engage with these websites and tools? An even more effective tool might be the recent release of relevant documentaries concerning inequality, such as *Inequality for All* (Kornbluth, 2013) and *The End of Poverty?* (Diaz, 2008). However, the probability remains that only those people with an existing interest in social issues will watch these movies, contributing to a condition of 'preaching to the converted'. Regardless of where the messages have been landing, there has been a clear spike in interest and activity. For example, the notion of a living wage¹ has recently gathered international momentum², as had reducing the salary gap between executives and average workers³ and addressing educational inequality⁴. Achievements such as these show significant progress in disrupting some of mechanisms that drive disparity and show strong citizen-led and backed participation. However, these remain isolated examples of policy responses to inequality. This article argues that there needs to be additional contextual communicative approaches that empower the disadvantaged to

¹ A living wage is the income necessary to provide workers and their families with the basic necessities of life.

² Discussions regarding the implementation of a living wage have been taking place in cities across the world, including: Seatac, USA (<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/12/opinion/redefining-the-minimum-wage.html?smid=tw-share&r=0>), Auckland, New Zealand (<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/9244439/Len-Brown-supports-living-wage>) and London, England (<http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/london-life/why-london-needs-a-pay-rise-8915700.html>)

³ In Switzerland, March 2013, voters overwhelmingly backed an initiative to give shareholders of Swiss listed companies a binding say on executive pay. <http://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2013/03/switzerland%E2%80%99s-vote-executive-pay> and also in the USA - <http://inequality.org/federal-regulators-finally-mind-gap/>

⁴ In Chile an on-going series of student demonstrations, which has become known as the 'Chilean Winter', started in May 2011 with the student protestors demanding greater affordability and a more accessible university system.

understand their situation of inequality and its causes so that they can create opportunities to respond themselves.

Designers can undertake this challenge by working alongside communities and media to construct appropriate spaces for discussion, storytelling and ensuing action. One recent example of how this may be done is a collaborative storytelling experiment called *Cross the Gap*, set up by John D. Sutter, a columnist for CNN Opinion. Sutter invited his readers to participate by uploading a photo of something that divides their communities and to explain why that particular detail, for example a highway, a sign, a park, a building, creates a partition. He offered a few examples, such as in Manhattan, where East 96th Street divides East Harlem, the poorest neighbourhood on the island, from the Upper East Side, which is among the wealthiest. Or in Oklahoma City, where the Oklahoma River and Interstate 40 split the community in two and creates north and south sides where the social circles are markedly different. This experiment, as he calls it, follows on from an article he wrote in October 2013 called, 'Ten Heroes of Income Inequality, USA', made up ten stories from East Carroll Parish, Louisiana, which has the highest level of income inequality in the USA. The stories personalised the situations and the types of inequality that people suffered from in that community and reinforced the fact that the divisions and barriers were created and could just as easily be destroyed.

This notion of personalising disadvantage needs to be a critical focus for designers. It is not easy to do and requires considerable effort in collaborating with the community involved. It entails recognition of the type of inequality being discussed, such as gender, ethnicity, income, or disability, as well as the context of the disadvantage, which might be access to quality education or healthcare. A good illustration of this is in a design response to the situation of Latina women in the United States, who suffer from the highest rates of cervical cancer of any main racial or ethnic group. This is exacerbated by poor attendance at annual Pap tests examinations. Such a situation highlights a lack of participation that, when compared to other ethnic groups, clearly indicates a social disparity. Certain questions arise – why in particular Latina women and what social obstacles prevent a fuller participation? These are the questions that a social designer needs to investigate to separate out the design foci. In his book, 'Designing for Social Change' Shea (2012), uses the example of a project from a group of students in the Art Centre College of Design's Designmatters department. The group designed a campaign focused on the Los Angeles Latina community concerning the importance of annual Pap tests. The approach was place-based and participatory, working with the local community in focus groups to uncover the attitudinal and logistical barriers to regular check-ups. They had predicted that it would concern a lack of education regarding Pap tests but in fact it emerged that it was more about understanding the importance of an annual check-up. The research also showed that the group did not want to feel targeted and so the approach avoided being too direct, using personal language and familiar imagery on, for example, bus shelter maps and on the paper that covers the beds in the clinic examination room. Shea (2012:83) suggests this level of empathy is vital:

Instead of focusing only on a community's shortcomings, chart both its strengths (local language, style, skills) and challenges (literacy levels, drug and crime problems) and use that list as a guide through the project. Take inspirations from your interactions with community members and find ways to create an emotional tie with the general public by representing them with dignity.

The campaign realised the need to build trust between the women and the doctors and so focused on the positive aspects of prevention rather than the negative consequences of inattention. This included creating a relationship with VISA card to help the women cover the time they needed to be

absent from work to go to the doctor, and clinic kits to make the exam experience less distressing, which included a blanket, gown stickers and slippers. Ultimately the *Es Tiempo* campaign targeted communicative, economic, gender and cultural barriers that created uneven integration, resulting in a greater access to vital health resources. By creating spaces for the women to explain the anxieties and concerns that created the disparity, the designers were able to respond in a variety of appropriate ways to not only empower the storytellers, but also to engage the public.

A further example of how designers can create communication opportunities specific to communities can be seen in the work of the Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNet). GRAMNet brings together researchers and practitioners, NGOs and policy makers, who work with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. It is based in Glasgow, which has the largest population of refugees and asylum seekers in the country. Alongside regular workshops on relevant topics (such as rights, translation and health) and movie screenings, the network used the work of Australian Artist Daniel Connell in May 2012 to explore the role of the visual arts in enhancing a sense of belonging. Connell uses large, hand-drawn portraits of recent migrants which have been placed in public places in cities such as Adelaide and Vancouver in an attempt to locate the visual arts in an arena which can influence public policy and opinion. Connell's work is driven by the notion that his portraits can create discussion across cultural or class barriers and ultimately disrupt the processes of mistrust and prejudice. What is additionally interesting about GRAMNet's choice of tool to engage the Glasgow community in discussion of inequality is how context-placed it is, using a shared space to encourage the communities and individuals to personalise the message and potentially engage in debate and dialogue.

Conclusion

The above examples serve to highlight the potential of creative communicative responses to situations of inequality. This article believes that, by adopting and adapting similar techniques, social design has the capability to produce innovations that can improve levels of engagement. This needs to take place in virtual spaces, reducing the digital divide, and also in communities where disparities are established. The stories and the storytelling will be different from situation to situation. Klassen (2009, 403), looking at the construction of stories in the context of science communication, considers different purposes and techniques, such as affective engagement and communication 'to raise questions or leave...unresolved problems or issues' As such designers need to seek flexible, reactive ideas that are supportable and viewed as long-term projects. This is evident in the examples of TED and Gapminder.org, both of which show longevity and on-going innovation in engaging public interest and input. One-off projects, such as *Es Tiempo* and Daniel Connell's work, need to be implemented as part of coordinated and coherent strategies.

This article has suggested that a significant contributing factor in persistent social disparity is poor communication. How the public is informed of situations of high levels of inequality is often complicated and neutral, which prevents insufficient engagement to create enough momentum for change. This situation leads to a normalised condition of disadvantage in communities that necessitates new ways of personalising, and new spaces for discussing, the issue. The success of the examples given indicates the potential for improved communicative tactics and social design is well suited to responding to the challenge by finding new spaces and techniques for successful storytelling and altering perspectives.

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