

# ANTHROPOLOGY OF, FOR, AND WITH DESIGN: A PHILIPPINE PERSPECTIVE

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The intersection of the fields of design and anthropology emerges as fertile ground for study as societies increasingly acknowledge the tremendous impact the objects we create for ourselves have on our lives. As anthropologists and ethnographers involved in running our own design research company in the Philippines, negotiating the alignments and contradictions between the two fields of knowledge is an essential component of our everyday research practice. This paper outlines different models of the relationships between design and anthropology as systems of knowledge and practice. We first extend a theoretical framework that distinguishes between anthropology *of*, anthropology *for*, and anthropology *with* design (Gunn & Donovan 2013): we maintain that anthropology *with* design underlies an approach increasingly used in commercial industries known as "design thinking", and describe the different ways by which knowledge is generated and mobilized in each of these relationships; we further describe how the artifacts of design can be seen to either materialize, shape, or probe culturally-mediated meanings, power relations, and values. We illustrate these concepts through client-commissioned projects that our organization has conducted in the Philippines. We next examine how and when these design-anthropology relationships are realized when working with clients. While anthropology *with* design will likely create better outcomes for our clients, larger clients must often settle for anthropology *for* design; we describe how we have negotiated these tensions and present our outcomes from our engagement with them. We end with a call for the development of a local prism through which practitioners in the field of design can further engage in critical reflection of the production of artifacts, particular those created with the intent of addressing social concerns. Specifically, we call for more localized conceptual frameworks of design that can be patterned (for instance) on India's notion of *jugaad*, and advance an increased engagement for anthropology with design across various sectors of Philippine society.

**Keywords:** *Design anthropology, design ethnography, business anthropology, design research*

## Introduction

During a recent lunch meeting we had with a colleague in Metro Manila, we debated the merits of making a washing machine powered by pedalling a bicycle. Albert, an industrial designer, felt the device would surely gain traction in the Philippines. Prior to the lunch, he had posted a diagram of the device on Facebook that sparked a discussion on the said social media site. Albert felt that such a product would be a lot more affordable than an electricity-powered washing machine. It would eliminate the need for many women and mothers to hand wash, and it also would also save them time.

We were not as enthusiastic. A few months before our lunch, we had conducted design research for a household manufacturer that required us to discuss the same product concept with stay-at-home mothers in low-income households in Metro Manila. The research participants had had a lukewarm response to the idea of the contraption. The spatial conditions in these crowded urban neighborhoods often had mothers doing the laundry in extremely cramped places where their faces were sometimes only a few inches away from touching the wall in front of them. There would be no room for a device comprised of a large drum with a bicycle. Many unemployed mothers felt that doing the laundry was one of their main contributions to household operations. Because the mothers felt that giving money is more valued than other types of household support, emphasizing the difficult and painstaking work involved in hand washing helped them establish their value to other household members. This explained why even though some of them had access to washing machines, they still preferred to wash clothes by hand. Doing the laundry might also be viewed as a ritual that allowed mothers to materialize the purity of their dedication to family members. Their efforts to clean and whiten clothes, often labelled as ‘punishment’ (*parusa*), transformed banal clothing etched with dirt and grime into garments inscribed with the sacredness of motherly love. The performance of love and dedication towards husbands, children, and in-laws required constant monitoring of the laundry with their senses of sight, smell, touch, and sound all throughout the laundry process, an objective they would not be able to fulfill as well with the device. Consequently, our research showed that a device endorsed by the ideal of ‘saving time’ as promoted by neoclassical economics would likely go against much of the cultural logic concretized by local laundry processes.

This paper outlines different models of relationships between design and anthropology as systems of knowledge and practice, in the specific context of our work in design research for social innovation in the Philippines. The authors are co-founders and principals of Curiosity<sup>TM</sup>, a design research firm

based in Metro Manila. We extend a classification by Gunn and Donovan (2013) that distinguishes between anthropology *of*, anthropology *for*, and anthropology *with* design, or what we call modes of engagement between anthropology and design. We posit that these modes of engagement require specific strategies to negotiate the misalignments that emerge from conflicting subjectivities that inform the two disciplines. We illustrate these concepts in the projects that our design research firm has conducted in the Philippines in the frame of eighteen months (from April 2012 to October 2013). We end with a call for more localized conceptual frameworks of design that can be patterned, for instance, on India's notion of *jugaad*—"an improvisational style of innovation that's driven by scarce resources and attention to a customer's immediate needs, not their lifestyle wants" (Jana 2009)—and advance an increased critical engagement for design with anthropology across multiple sectors of Philippine society.

### **Identifications and intentionalities in negotiating systems of knowledge**

Product design "over the past 25 years has integrated a group of professional researchers into its practice... [including] anthropologists, psychologists, statisticians, market researchers and others ... who specialize in the human factor in the design process" (Waisberg 2009:139). Waisberg continues to note that these individuals contribute to the design and development of a wide variety of products through their expertise in figuring out people, not in making artefacts. These researchers are "located at the turbulent and strategic intersection of worlds and sensibilities, and their impact on design is substantial" (Waisberg 2009:139). Waisberg further notes that researchers are supporting actors in the design process, and "their contribution is generally marginalized, and little is known about their role in the social world of design".

Baba (2006) views design anthropology as a subset of the larger field of business anthropology. Design anthropology is also sometimes known as design ethnography, or as "ethnographically-informed product, service, and system design" (Baba 2006, Gray 2010). Baba goes on to state that the field integrates ethnographic techniques and, "hopefully[,] anthropological analysis", particularly rapid ethnographic analysis, into the design and development of new products, services, and workplaces.

The primary author of this paper identifies as an anthropologist who engages in design research. When she embarked on setting up our own research organization primarily as an anthropologist, two questions that came foremost to her mind were, "To what extent can I call what I do anthropology?" and "To what extent can I push anthropological agenda as a

'supporting actor' in the locus of design?" The questions implicate a dilemma in identification, the process of identifying oneself and others based on subjectively mediated categories (Brubaker & Cooper 2000, Ortner 2005). We soon realized that carrying out work in the field of design as business owners also requires identification with a host of other actors whose intentionalities may or may not be aligned with anthropological agenda: the clients who contract us for projects, their investors who provide the financing, the designers who act as end-users of the knowledge we produce, the communities that supposedly benefit from our findings, industry peers, business partners, and finally our firm itself (as a registered corporate entity). Addressing this dilemma in identification extends to negotiating different systems of knowledge that operate within a design project, as reflected in our recollection of the lunchtime discussion we shared with our colleague from industrial design.

We encounter differing orientations between design and anthropology in the course of our everyday practice as designers and as anthropologists. Some of these misalignments, as Hunt (2010) notes, are influenced by the commercial and other practical dimensions of design as well as the unease with which anthropologists regard business interests. Hunt primarily attributes conflicting orientations between the two fields to differing temporal outlooks—or by extension differing outlooks towards intervention. We adopt Hunt's views to relate our everyday experiences regarding time and intervention as sites of tension. We also augment Hunt's formulations with misalignments observed from our own experiences in running our own organization. For example, the extent to which the commercial dimension of design research in and of itself presents its own challenges in our everyday work, and therefore deserves discussion. This is because while working at the intersection of design and anthropology off the bat obviously implicates anthropologists, ethnographers, and designers, business and project managers who approve and disburse funding bear significant influence on why or how a design project is carried out. Our practice illustrates that concerns regarding time and money are interlinked. And so, instead of discussing temporality by itself as Hunt has done, we will discuss these under the notions of *temporality* and *commerce*.

### **Temporality**

Hunt observes that "what often gets overlooked to consummate the affair [between anthropology and design], however, is the fact that these two practices – design and ethnography – have conflicting orientations towards change and time" (2010:34). Anthropologists, according to Hunt, "build up

their interpretive snapshot of a culture by grounding their narratives in a series of flashbacks to recent events, occurrences, interviews, or observations" (2010:35). Ethnography, continues Hunt, "is rarely projective; it does not speculate on what might happen next" (2010:35). In contrast, design "is a practice of material and immaterial making, but its mode of being-in-the-world is generative, speculative, and transformational" (2010:35). While ethnographers work in ever greater detail to ensure "they get the present 'just right'", the designer "uses the present – and uses it often imperfectly – as provisional leaping off point for reimagining futures" (2010:35). Hunt raises the challenge to rid anthropology of its temporal binds so that its appropriation in the field of design can lead to social transformation that addresses problems such as global warming, overpopulation, food shortages, and unsustainable ways of life (2010:34).

**Temporality and commerce.** Many organizations we work with only have resources to support ethnographic studies that most anthropologists would likely label as "quick and dirty." This is especially true for social enterprises and small business owners who, in the face of extremely prohibitive budget constraints, consider the mere decision to integrate research—*any* kind of research—into their operations as an already enormous leap from their usual way of doing things. Managers from larger organizations sometimes may have the financial resources, but they often hesitate to wait for more than three months for a research project to be completed all the way from conceptualization to the presentation of findings. This is because there are other decision-makers and partners within the organization who depend on their output, such as bosses and investors, who likewise do not have the luxury of time, and as gatekeepers of their professional development assess performance based on the timely implementation of projects. The periodic nature of professional evaluation also pressures managers to prove their decision to apply organizational funds to research purposes is in the long run beneficial, by presenting results in the form of new products and services prior to their performance reviews. Thus time allocation for projects doesn't only account for time spent on design research, it must especially include time to develop prototypes and final versions of new offerings. Engagement with these stakeholders therefore lurch us into present- and future- oriented conceptualizations of time in planning and implementing research projects.

Owners of small business and social enterprises who have approached us often face greater pressure than large businesses. Business to them is extremely personal. Many of them have spent their life savings to put up their businesses, and are in a hurry—if not in a panic—to recover these funds. At a social business conference we attended in October 2013, a start-

up owner of an organic bath and body social enterprise disclosed that he did not pay himself for a full year and spent his personal savings to pay for employees. Another business owner whom we met had employed too many people too early for his mobile taxi app business, which was not performing as well as he expected. The urgency is palpable when business owners in similar circumstances explore design research work with us at the very first contact.

***Temporality and urgency.*** Tensions and constraints related to urgency especially relate to the gravity of social problems implicated by design projects. Because a certain part of our work deals with social innovation, many of our partners who work with NGOs and community development projects feel that they cannot wait for a long bout of research to finish before solutions can be proposed. This urgency is also magnified by their view that competing for international funding for Philippine development work has become more difficult because of recent upgrades in investment ratings (Remo & Domingo 2013), and that they must implement what they can while they still qualify for grants.

Disaster-related design projects take on a particularly urgent quality that requires a focus on the now as well as on the immediate short-term future. In 2012, one of the authors of this paper worked for a digital service organization that committed its resources to helping online volunteers collect and compile online rescue information during times of flood. Many parts of Luzon were just recovering from the destruction and paralysis caused by severe rainfall. The goal was to gauge the possibility of developing mobile phone app prototypes for a web-based form which people online could fill in with information about family, friends and acquaintances trapped in flooded communities. Her team had just dispersed from talking to flood-related volunteers, survivors, and rescue workers, the results of which we relayed to user experience designers who built mobile app prototypes out of the information. In the middle of the prototype research, another bout of heavy rainfall hit Eastern Luzon. In spite of the team's best efforts they were not able to research, innovate, and test quickly enough to make an impact on the rescue efforts during the incidences of flood that immediately followed the first round of heavy rainfall. The dilemma in tying in research design here with the necessary design outcome is that "quick and dirty" still sometimes isn't quick enough.

### **Intervention**

Hunt (2010:36) states that intervention for anthropologists is much more historically, politically, and ethically fraught than it is for designers, given

the discipline's association with colonial regimes. Designers are on the other hand, according to Hunt "by nature of their training and modes of practice, comfortable with the need to intervene into the context they are exploring" (2010:36). Additionally, Hunt maintains that "design without both material and social impact in the world would not be design; designers must act in the sense that their outputs change the facts on the ground. Whether it is done wisely, and with enough foresight, is precisely what is at stake" (2010:36).

Intervention should also be the domain of anthropologists Low and Merry (2010) argue in their discussion of engaged anthropology. Low and Merry also point out that engagement needs to be informed by reflexivity, defined by Bourdieu and Wacquant as "the systematic exploration of the unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" (1992:40). Reflexivity in anthropology is important because it calls attention to human suffering (Low & Merry 2010). Reflexivity also spurs social researchers to critique the use of "data" for the mere "appearance of scientificity" and which has led to an unproblematized research process in which "everything goes smoothly, everything is taken for granted" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:244).

### **Modes of engagement**

Gunn and Donovan (2013) extend Baba's (2006) notion of design anthropology, by outlining different ways of understanding and practicing design anthropology based on methodological and disciplinary positioning: *dA*, *Da*, and *DA*. In *dA*, researchers view design as being in the service of anthropology and knowledge production is carried out for the theoretical advancement of anthropology. *Da* works reversely; anthropology is placed in the service of design. Researchers use techniques typically associated with ethnographic work such as direct and participant observation, as well as the cultural analyses they engender, to define areas for innovation and design requirements. In *DA*, design and anthropology are mutually engaged to the extent that there is a shift to reframing social, cultural, and environmental relations in design and anthropology.

This formulation has parallelisms with their description of anthropology *of, for, and with* design (Gunn & Donovan 2013). Like *dA*, anthropology *of* design is concerned with theoretical development of anthropology. Meanwhile anthropology *for* design, as with *Da*, is employed to benefit the industry. Like *DA*, anthropology *with* industry focuses on doing anthropology alongside the people one conducts research with. "Through this anthropology with, researchers aim to achieve an understanding that is holistic and processual, dedicated not so much to the achievement of a final

synthesis as to opening up lines of inquiry" (Macdonald, Ingold, & Donovan 2001). Furthermore, doing anthropology *with* "implies learning with different peoples during research investigations and involves different kinds of experimental activities, tools, theoretical concepts and materials" (Kjaersgaard 2011).

Anthropology *for*, *with*, and *of* design are what we the authors label as modes of engagement between design and anthropology. In the next sections, we will relate how our firm Curiosity attempts to manage misalignments for activities conducted in each of the three modes of engagement.

### **Anthropology *for***

Design research projects that could be classified as anthropology *for* typically involve social enterprises and start-ups. Oftentimes, business owners tend to work as the primary designers, or collaborate very closely with them. These business managers are often pressured to establish proof of concept to themselves, family members who rely on the income they provide, and any early investors. They might desire to raise their own families but are prevented from doing so because their businesses have not yet regularly yielded profit levels that would make family life sustainable.

Social enterprise owners who have approached us in the past include those which provide business training and opportunities to mothers who run *sari-sari* stores in rural areas, and partners who organize community livelihoods around making plant leather from overgrowth of water hyacinths that signify water pollution. They have intimate experience of the challenges of developing a smooth flow of operations and consistent product quality among the communities they collaborate with, and tend to recognize how cultural analysis might lead to useful innovations that materialize both business and social aims. They also often lack resources to fund research projects. Among our range of clients, we tend to empathize with social entrepreneurs and start-up owners the most. We, too, are familiar with the challenges of foregoing more regular and stable work in order to establish an organization we could call our own. However, as much as we try our best to reduce our fees and time spent on field to make research proposals as affordable as possible to this group, we risk doing research at a loss and forfeiting on our financial obligations. We also did not want a compromise on the quality of our research output just make our services more affordable.

***Mentorships and forums.*** We negotiate the challenges of time and money that inform our relationship with social enterprise representatives in two



ways. We find avenues to provide them *pro bono* mentorship and consultation sessions so they could be empowered to do research themselves. This includes participation in weekend-long innovation camps, and holding free day-long seminars in offices and our work space about how social entrepreneur-designers might engage with the larger social context of their products and services. Central to this practice has been our involvement in “hackathons”, such as Social Innovation Camp Asia, and volunteer workshops for social entrepreneurs. We raise the importance of research ethics in the context of issues of representation, issues of privacy and confidentiality; we dramatize interview scenarios in order to impart interview techniques, and provide a primer of other design research techniques that might be relevant to their business. We give examples of how we might interpret the emergence of a particular design by looking at cultural contexts.

***Informal venues.*** The exchange with these enterprises may continue in more informal communication channels, such as through email and Facebook, and in social occasions inside and outside our office. Public service innovation teams working on education, waste collection, and disease mapping projects who we mentored at Social Innovation Camp Asia continue their relationships with through these informal venues. As our engagement with them deepens, we are also able to connect them with designers and other experts within our network who are also willing to donate their services.

***Fieldwork demonstration.*** We also conduct demonstrations of how fieldwork might be done in the communities addressed by social enterprise owners. We show them how findings from these short exercises can generate possible product, service, or training solutions. We have done this for a convenience store enterprise operating in the provinces of Laguna and Quezon. In doing so, we make it clear that the work is nowhere finished, the findings are in no way conclusive and that the ideas are perhaps not yet as useful as they could be. We leave the discussion open-ended as an invitation for them to continue the work for themselves, and we leave lines of communication open for consultation.

This requires some reflection: What lessons might anthropology teach non-anthropologists? And how might we impart them to non-anthropologists, especially to designers and business owners without alienating them with jargon? On hindsight, many of our efforts to reach out to the social enterprise community, and other domains, reflect calls from Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) and Low and Merry (2010) to carry out work with empathy and engagement. These themes have been echoed in critiques of the appropriation of anthropology in business practice (Cajilig 2012). The

lectures, articles, and presentations we make for this community often start with examples of how research infused by empathy can be used to inspire products and services that help communities address various concerns, such as flood, violence against women, and financial literacy. By embedding ourselves in the social enterprise community in these ways, we also manage to address the problem of a kind of ‘social distance’.

**Larger businesses.** Meanwhile, our interactions with large corporations and venture capitalists in this mode of engagement are of a different nature. While they are not social enterprises, all of those we have worked with so far aim to solve a social problem. Some examples include a collector who wanted to find technologies to prevent forgery in the Philippine art market, an entrepreneur who wants to create businesses and social enterprises out of rain- and flood-related products and services, and the household manufacturing company that contracted us to examine the relevance of a pedal-powered washing machine to low- and middle-income families. While we encourage funders to come along during research trips and brainstorming sessions, they often prefer for us to go about these activities on our own and come back to them with tangible results, either in the form of a report or a product prototype later on. Corporations might also defer setting engagements between their designers and us to assure confidentiality and until we can regain their trust. Sometimes they might not have any designer contacts. In which case, we search for the designers in our network who have appropriate skills for the requirement.

#### **Anthropology with**

To date, our engagements in anthropology *with* mostly involve design research projects commissioned by NGOs. In this setup, our clients engage far more intimately with their end-user communities and have greater appreciation for cultural analysis, as opposed to clients who work with when in the mode of anthropology *for*.

**Fostering trust by involving stakeholders in fieldwork.** Our projects in anthropology *with* involve a full round of fieldwork, brainstorming, and rapid prototyping. This approach is borrowed from what IDEO and Stanford Design School founder Tim Brown calls "design thinking" (Brown & Watt 2010), a more rapid, prototype-driven approach than what Baba (2006) labels as design ethnography. This approach is useful for businesses as well as non-profits because insight and solutions are generated quickly compared with more traditional approaches. This makes it easier for clients and funders to see whether investments and funding are generating effective

solutions. This approach invites researchers, designers, and managers to engage in iterative processes of design and research, thus allowing solutions to be generated from bottom-up, rather than top-down. Brown and Watt (2010) elaborate:

Design thinking incorporates constituent or consumer insights in depth and rapid prototyping, all aimed at getting beyond the assumptions that block effective solutions. Design thinking - inherently optimistic, constructive, and experimental - addresses the needs of the people who will consume a product or service and the infrastructure that enables it.

Throughout our experience, we have learned that involving design project stakeholders in the field provides many avenues to interaction. In narrowing the social and physical distance among stakeholders in this mode of engagement, project teams feel a deeper level of trust in each other. This trust allows our teams to incorporate a greater element of discovery in our work, as well as adopt a mindset of reflexivity that provides a safe environment for members to engage in critique. Because of the level of trust present, the deliverables in this mode are not as rigid as anthropology *for*. Clients tend to give us a freer reign to design the research and prototyping process with little other than a guarantee that we will help their organizations come up with useful solutions.

In a financial literacy project for a NGO that advocates for maternal and reproductive health in Palawan, we used design thinking as an approach to work with educators and graphic designers. The research design process involved six iterations of modules that were developed and tested on site. Comprised of mothers, the classes in which the sample modules were tested in effect became the prototypes of a year-long financial literacy program across six barangays. In the field, educators as instructional designers developed sample lessons, which they taught in class in the morning. In the afternoons, researchers went around the area talking to members about their financial life. At night researchers, educators, and NGO representatives converged to share and reflect on the day's findings. Educators would then take this feedback and revise the sample modules, which were taught the following day to a different community. We cycled through this process until the end of the fieldwork.

This approach thus views the field in and of itself as the design studio. During sample classes, educators would adjust the modules as exposure of these elicited responses that characterized the social context of financial literacy and the local classroom setting as a whole. We saw how some children would goad mothers for not getting the right answer to math

problems. We observed how environmental influences could render certain instructional material irrelevant, how wind blowing through open-air classrooms could dislodge stacks of paper money into instant disarray. Prototype testing in the envisioned context for the designs thus gave us insight which we might not have arrived at had we used a more traditional approach of doing “research first and design later”. This level of design insight, when regarded in the context of linkages between social capital, landscape, and financial status gained from ethnographic research, as well as with NGO representatives' views of what is feasible to implement, gives very clear bases for design decisions.

***Co-creation with end-users.*** In anthropology *for*, there is a tendency to regard research participants as sources of information about everyday problems that can be addressed by design, as well as information about cultural processes. They are not usually viewed as source of design ideas. In anthropology *for*, the knowledge of the designer reigns supreme over that of the research participants or researchers. Furthermore, those who fund the project have final approval over the designs. In anthropology *with*, the power relations that structure the team are more balanced. One of our projects involved communication design for violence against women (VAW) for the human rights organization WeDpro. The organization that funded WeDpro set the communication goal of encouraging more women to contact government VAW centers. Our fieldwork likewise involved design thinking as we guided the funders, WeDpro representatives, government representatives, and graphic designers through field visits. We sat with local government representatives and witnesses and survivors of VAW to learn about how they themselves might design VAW communication. The participative approach to design and research ended with multiple transformations. The funders re-evaluated their objectives; WeDpro representatives reallocated the budget to incorporate suggestions of the research participants; the graphic designer changed his line-up of communication materials based on new understanding about how VAW communication can incorporate the support of male community members; and we also revisited our own understanding of good and bad communication design. In this mode so far there is strong agreement amongst all project stakeholders on the importance of social transformation. This allows for more equitable team relationships that set the stage for participation and inclusion processes of research and design. Power relations are mitigated with openness, and everyone is open to being transformed.

### **Anthropology of**

While we also have engagements in this mode, the work involved is often at a level too detailed and technical for clients from business and non-profit sectors to apply or appreciate. Projects in anthropology *with* and *for* modes tend also to generate knowledge for theoretical advancement in anthropology. We do not usually include this in research projects presentation and prefer to reserve this information for academic communities. We park this material and save it for academic journals, or for use as pedagogical material. We also reserve these analyses for participating in conferences and maintaining links with the academic community. We also invite academics to participate our projects especially if we see these aligning with their research interests.

The distinctions between anthropology *for*, *with*, and *of* design are not rigid. Certainly, we can shift across these modes of engagement as priorities, relationships, and circumstances change. A project in anthropology *for* mode can yield data for engagements under anthropology *of*. Research in anthropology *of* can yield to a design project structured around relationships categorized as anthropology *with*. The reflexivity with which we engage in our work however must remain constant to so intervention through design in research for social innovation empowers rather than subjugates.

### **Reflections**

We have traced how negotiating misalignments regarding temporality, commerce, and intervention as we engage with designers, businesses, and academic communities translate into specific modes of engagement between design and anthropology. In doing so, we have also shown how shifting across these modes of engagement borrowed from Gunn and Donovan (2013) also requires shifting our modes of empathy. The overall aim of design research for social innovation is to empathize with the communities who might benefit from designed outcomes. However, the messy process of achieving this goal requires us to shift across the various stakeholders of the design process as subjects of our empathy: designers, business owners, our own firm, and the academic community. Considering that our larger, more influential clients tend to interact with us with in anthropology *for* mode, our challenge is to encourage them to engage in anthropology *with*. This entails showing case studies on how managers involved in our anthropology *with* engagements used insight from being in the field, empathizing with consumers and constituents, and interacting with designers, have led to more feasible and meaningful design outcomes. We have started to push for more

involvement among designers and managers during field in our more recent engagement, but there is much work to do.

Consequently, we find inspiration in the debate around *jugaad* to find spaces in our everyday work for engaging a longer-term inquiry. *Jugaad* is popularly defined by global business and innovation communities as "a colloquial Hindi word that describes a creative ad hoc solution to a vexing issue, making existing things work and/or creating new things with scarce resources" (Leberecht 2011). The term gained traction in its emphasis of "startling ingenuity in the face of adversity" and its ability to inspire businesses large and small to make like "poor natives", and "do more with less" (Fischer 2013). We are not drawn to *jugaad* because popular views celebrate the idea as a small-scale solution from villages of the "East" that has now caught the attention of companies in the "West". We however find relevance in less mainstream yet more cultural interpretations of the term, and which define *jugaad* as a cluster of practices adopted by both rich and poor aimed at subverting formal systems (Sumandro 2013).

We are in search of a locally-relevant prism that would likewise give us clearer basis to call for more reflexive engagement in social innovation across multiple sectors in the country. We believe that pinning down this prism through our day-to-day work in design research would be an engagement in anthropology *of* that has far-reaching and practical significance in the fields of anthropology *with* and *for*, giving clarity to the processes of exclusion and subversion that operate simultaneously with the processes of innovation. Such an understanding would shed light on how practices in social innovation, including design research practice, could reproduce as well as challenge structures of global dominance.

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