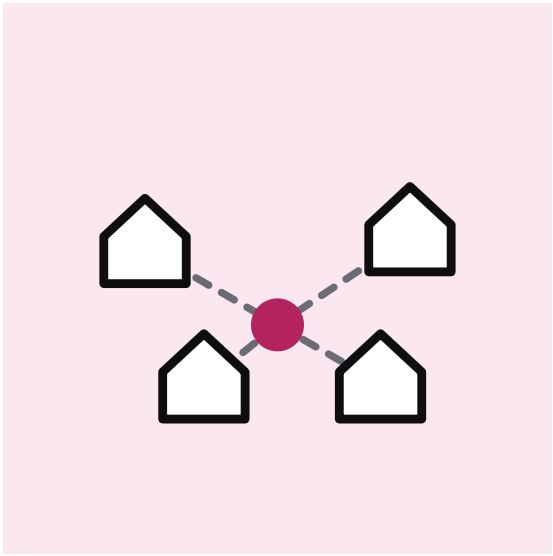
Concept

Diffuse design and expert design

Ezio Manzini calls diffuse design the capacity to design that everybody has, and expert design the design of those trained for it. In social innovation, the second supports the first.



In Spanish
Diseño difuso y diseño experto

Origin
Manzini (2015)

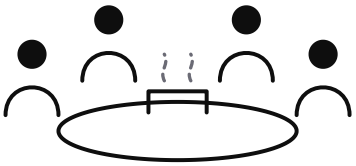
What problem it addresses

Many social solutions are invented by communities without designers. The distinction tells design its role: not to replace those ideas, but to help them work and spread.

An example

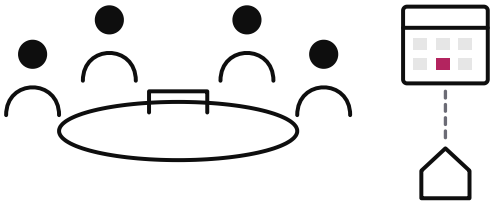
An illustrative example: some neighbors organize to take turns cooking and share dinner.

Diffuse design



The neighbors work out how to split the shopping, the cooking and the turns. **The idea comes from them, with no brief.**

Expert design



A designer helps them with a calendar and a guide so another neighborhood can copy it. **It doesn't replace the idea; it makes it easier to keep going and repeat.**

For Manzini both are needed: diffuse design brings the idea and expert design helps it work and go further.

Why it happens

1 

Everybody designs: solving problems and making sense of daily life is a capacity we all have.

2 

Communities invent solutions, often with few resources and no designer at all.

3 

Expert design comes in as support: it facilitates, brings tools and connects initiatives.

Applications in design

Use it like this

Before proposing, look for the solutions people have already invented and think about how to help them.

Avoid

Presenting yourself as the only one who knows how to design and replacing what the community already does.

Don't fall for it

Facilitating isn't staying quiet: your knowledge and your proposals count too.

56 cases

What the research says

Students from eight design schools in eight European countries documented communities inventing new ways of living; the book gathers 56 cases in housing, food, transport, work, learning and social life (Meroni, 2007).

● ○ ○ **Single study.** It is a collection of cases, not a measurement: it shows these initiatives exist, not how much they improve with support from expert designers.

Connections

Used in

- Participatory design
- Design justice

Related to

- Social model of design

Authors and works

2007	**Anna Meroni**	Gathered the creative-community cases of the European EMUDE project, with an introduction by Manzini on the designer's role as facilitator.
2015	**Ezio Manzini**	Distinguished diffuse from expert design and explained how the expert can support social innovation.

Sources

Original sources

- Manzini, E. (2015). Design, when everybody designs: An introduction to design for social innovation. MIT Press.
- Meroni, A. (Ed.) (2007). Creative communities: People inventing sustainable ways of living. Edizioni POLI.design. View source (https://re.public.polimi.it/retrieve/e0c31c07-cb46-4599-e053-1705fe0aef77/Creative-Communities_low_1.pdf)

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