

Brief Encounter with the Taos Institute

July 2023



Design Thinking and Social Construction

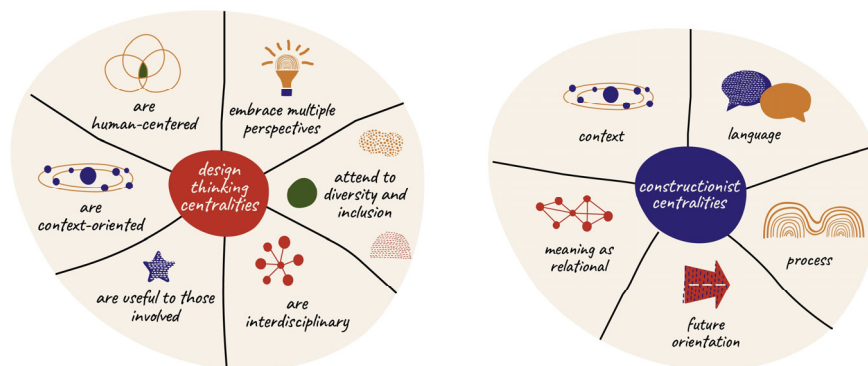
By Celiane Camargo-Borges

"When adopting a design attitude within the social construction framework, we create a powerful mix of creativity, imagination, and innovation in ecosystems."

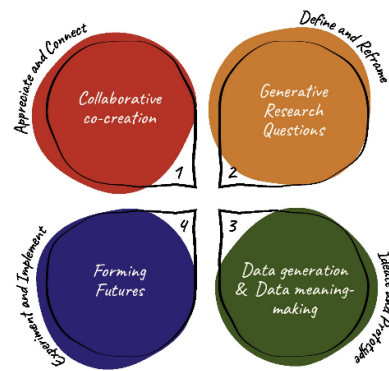
With such a world in flux, how can we engage with places, people, and systems to generate relevant resources, practices, and knowledge, thereby fostering a flourishing society? To tackle this pivotal question, a new logic needs to be adopted, a paradigm that embraces the dynamic, diverse, and uncertain world in which we live. If we aspire to innovate in systems, we need more creativity, an abundance of imagination, and methodological innovations that can generate both novel practices as well as new theoretical insights.

I have been working with Social Constructionism (SC) for most of my career. To me, it is a valuable philosophical approach that highlights our interconnectedness as we create meaning. According to SC, our interactions with one another and our surroundings actively shape our reality. This approach is an invaluable resource to facilitate dialogues, design meaningful conversations, or generate research endeavours.

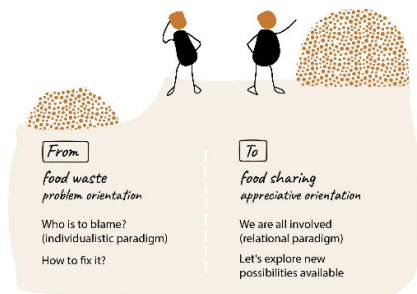
I discovered design thinking at the Imagineering Masters program at Breda University of Applied Sciences when I started working there in 2010. [Design thinking](#) is a framework that has been growing as a creative and innovative way of working, employed to navigate the complexities of multifaceted problems. Originating from the scholarly corridors of Stanford University, this approach swiftly garnered adoption by IDEO, a pioneering design firm renowned for systematizing the design methodology. With tools such as “embracing multiple perspectives” and “being human-centered,” design thinking brings people together to innovate within their unique context. It has provided me with actionable resources that are coherent with the philosophical underpinnings of social construction.



I decided to write a book that would unveil an activated framework forged from this union. In this book, [Design Thinking and Social Construction](#), together with my co-author Sheila McNamee, we combine the creative methodology and principles of design thinking with the theoretical relational approach of social construction. Through this combination, we provide a comprehensive framework that aims to serve as a practical guide for fostering innovation.



Here is an example: a traditional approach to food management would likely start with an analysis of the problem (i.e., food waste) in order to prepare for the next phase: finding solutions. Using the framework of design thinking and constructionism, we start -instead- with an appreciative analysis of the topic and investigate what is working well. Playing with design thinking tools, such as “zooming in and out,” “framing and reframing,” we create new concepts such as moving the focus from food waste to food sharing, which promotes not just different thinking, but also different actions.



This framework applies whether you are trying to expand your understanding of a complex topic, wishing to increase the creativity of your people, hoping to engage your team, or needing to translate ideas/concepts into action. With this approach, we embark on a journey to forge a new vision of what is possible as we actively participate in collaborative creative processes.