

# Preface

Systemic changes that aim at more efficient and sustainable patterns of production and consumption demand a collaborative Design approach. Collaboration, and the resulting shared knowledge, is a key pillar for developing and implementing strategic innovations towards sustainability and valued co-production. Indeed, collaborative networks can be valuable to induce the improvement of skills among individuals and organizations, as well as developing Design policies to support local development. This work assumes that a strategic and collaborative Design Pilot Project (DPP) is a valuable mechanism to trigger the evolution of a fragmented local system with poor environmental and social records and with management and innovation issues as well. This topic is addressed through an action research method, using the collaborative network conceptual model (ICoN) proposed by the research. An assessment tool with five indicators—environmental, technological, economic, socio-cultural and organizational—was also conceived to identify emergent patterns on the local context derived from the DPP implementation.

The field study was in Brazil and integrated a complex collaborative system formed by representative spheres of the Triple Helix—wooden furniture Micro and Small Enterprises, the Design School of the Federal University of Uberlândia/MG, SEBRAE and SENAI, the Local Government and the Union of Furniture Manufacturers. Under the leadership of the university, this approach aimed to stimulate the emergence of new relation modalities, which could result in new paths of action to develop the region as a whole. As knowledge can lead to individual skills when articulated into practice, the DPP (named MODU.Lares Project) started with the establishment of consensual goals, stimulating synergy and encouraging commitment among participants.

By using the Boundary Objects as a theoretical framework, four elements have catalyzed the flow of knowledge in this collaborative network: Prototypes, Meetings, Exhibitions and the Pilot Project (as a complete process). The results have demonstrated that a DPP can be a valid instrument to motivate an environment towards the creation of collaborative networks, particularly in contexts with a poor associative culture. They also indicated feasibility for being a broad strategy tool to induce local Design policies. Such a Project can be the first step of a

design policy cycle in developing countries, thus contributing to defining ideas and objectives among local stakeholders in a collaborative fashion, minimizing risks of failure and increasing the chances for governmental support. The DPP was a valuable element of connection, since it was the first time in the region that a group of organizations (businesses and otherwise) were involved in a collective project with a collective objective from which everybody benefitted.

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