

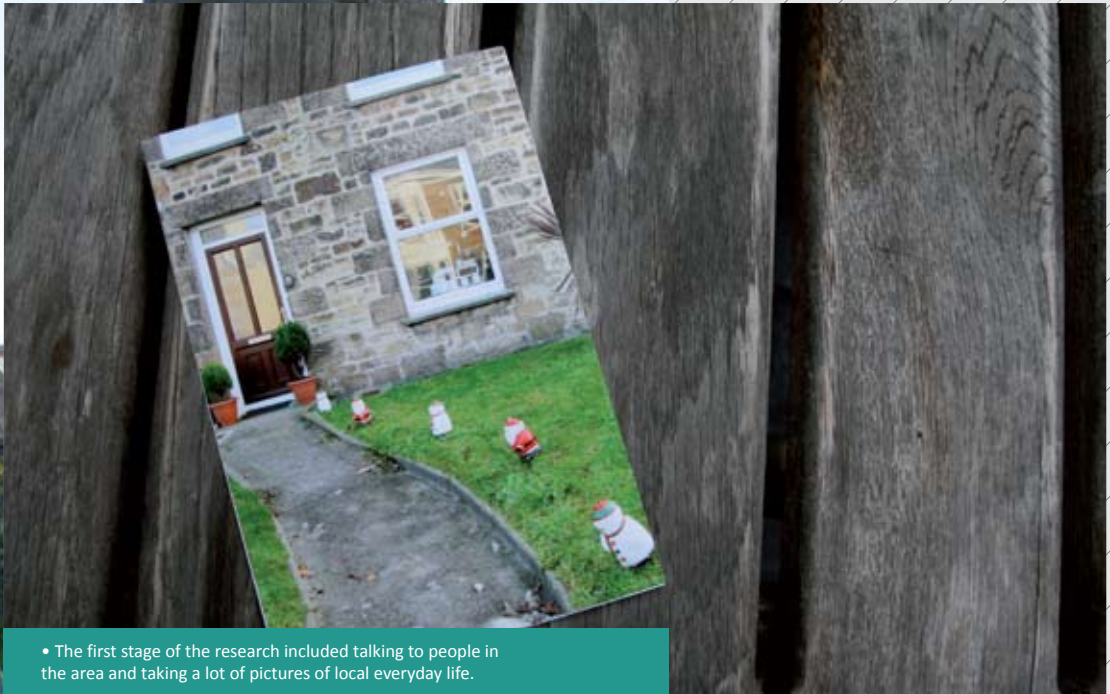
Heartlands. 7.5 hectares of former mining land that make up one of the most derelict urban areas in Cornwall. STBY spent nearly a year incorporating some of the principles of service design into the £30 million scheme aimed at transforming Heartlands into an inspirational cultural landscape. Bringing together social research and inclusive design, STBY attempted to incorporate the views, feelings, skills, and shared history of several local groups and individuals into a design process capable of producing a landscape that would inspire future generations.

Case Study
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Designing Regeneration
*How service design can engage today's
community with tomorrow's landscapes*

*“Inclusive design does not have to be limiting
– it should be inspiring”*



- The first stage of the research included talking to people in the area and taking a lot of pictures of local everyday life.

Mining in Cornwall has a history. A long-one. Most estimates place the beginning of active mining in pre-roman times at the very least, deeply embedding the practice within local culture. Tin, copper, lead, arsenic, clay and even water have all been the focus of miner's attentions at some point, and it's this diversity of material which has lent the local landscape so much of its character. What in places man has stripped almost bare, nature has quickly re-conquered – and with a vigour that draws tourists from all over the world.

Though few working mines remain, large swathes of land are still dominated by now dormant infrastructure. One such area is Heartlands, which is now the subject of a large-scale regeneration project. The key to the success of this project was an issue at the heart of the service design process – inclusion.

Too often, stakeholder inclusion in design processes has been little more than a simple tool for raising awareness. Inclusive design, when restricted to activities such as workshops with local schoolchildren or town hall style meetings, proves inadequate in terms of providing in-depth understanding of future users.

The council team responsible for the Heartlands project, Cornwall County, recognised these limitations and asked STBY to help tailor a design solution emphasising the notion of inclusion beyond simply presenting designers with a rigid 'wish-list' (that inevitably loses influence over time due to its static nature).

Instead, STBY were contracted to use their design research toolkit of methods to explore, discuss, evaluate and speculate on how people use designed products, services and environments, and to do this whilst working in close collaboration with the design team. Inclusion is a key principle of service design, and so STBY were able to tailor a bespoke project bringing together aspects of both social and inclusive design in a way that placed local stakeholders at the heart of the regeneration process.

This was a key goal of the project, and STBY thus developed a methodology that facilitated inclusion via two key principles: co-creation, and empathic conversations.



- As the artist spaces still had to be built, the workshop on future needs was done outdoors on site using objects from the artists' studios to set the scene.

Co-creation: creative inclusion with lasting effects

As detailed in the examples below, co-creation was a theme that various aspects of the project were designed around. One of the key tenets of the inclusive design philosophy is that user's needs and abilities will change throughout the life-course of a project. Co-creation keeps these changes within the scope of ongoing development; solutions are proposed and generated by the same processes which bring these changes to light.

It's important to emphasise that the objective was not to design buildings or parks with local citizens. Instead, the team explored, designed and evaluated the use of these places in collaboration with both local people and the design team - the design of formal aspects was left to the experts.

Local citizens however are experts in a different area: the use of the current environment and existing local services. STBY explored these areas in detail, and used the insights gathered to inform and inspire the design teams.

This exploration was based around another theme integral to the project – the notion of 'empathic conversations'.

Empathic conversations: insights from future perspectives

This was an extension of the co-creation theme. The aim was to build new relationships between the design teams and a wide range of future users; a variety of activities were designed in order to facilitate conversations about future uses of several aspects of the Heartlands regeneration. All participants in an 'empathic' conversation try to step into the shoes of future users of whatever the design process is focused upon. The idea is to generate insights into what such people might desire, with this focus - in contrast to looking at specific buildings or objects - embedding the principle of co-creation into the very heart of the project.

The results of these conversations were documented in highly visual reports, performances, and artistic objects, before being shared with designers and client teams. The designers also acquired important insights and understanding via their participation in the co-creation workshops, and so the documentation was mostly aimed at helping them share these insights (with other people in the design or client team), and at creating shared, attractive references. These communicated the stories of all the participants, and allowed design teams to contact them personally at a later date for further collaboration.



• The insights on the use of the Bickford Shaft area by local youth was presented to the design team in a performance by Rogue Theatre.

Social Research

This aspect of the project involved collecting stories from stakeholders, creating insights for subsequent design, developing profiles (or 'personas') of future users, collaboration with local artists, and the production of visual and engaging presentations. As each stakeholder had a different story to tell, it was important to find the right way to present each persona to the rest of the project. This meant that there was no pre-decided way to use the material gathered in the research stage. In regards to some groups for example, the material gathered via interviews and observations could be presented in a manner engaging enough to immediately inspire the design teams. For other groups, the research material collected was used to inform co-creation workshops or user forums.

To inform the landscape architects of the project, Land Use Consultants, STBY wanted to investigate how young people were using public spaces around Robinson Shaft. They collaborated with Rogue Theatre, a local theatre company, in order to collect stories from the youths and present these as a theatre production - something which proved both to be a highly successful method for communicating these stories to everybody involved in the project.

Upon completion, Heartlands will offer various work spaces and 'artist in residence studios' for the use of artists and other local creatives. In the early stage of the design research, STBY paid visits to a number of these individuals within their current working environments. Via interviews and observations of existing work spaces the team were able to tell stories about the future spaces at Heartlands, which could then be further explored in other stages of the project. The architects subsequently working on these spaces were Dransfield Owens Da Silva, and they were able to use the materials provided by STBY to tailor the designs they presented.

In regards to the 'People's House' - a new community Centre on the grounds of Heartlands - it was important to create personas which would accurately represent the wide range of future users of these facilities. With this in mind, interviews were conducted with residents and organisations using current facilities, and personas were developed in a manner that could be explored further in the subsequent workshops which were held with architects from CazeNove.

Bespoke methodology

The project consisted of 12 activities, all organised around incorporating future users in new roles within the design of the build environment. These activities – several of which are documented below – could be divided into 3 main categories; social research was used to create insights and understanding, co-creation workshops built on these and helped generate ideas, and user forums were employed to discuss concepts and prototypes.

Of key importance was tailoring this process to each aspect of the project; an integral part of service design is creating bespoke solutions – not working from a template – and thus the methodology was constantly being adapted.



- Rather than discussing formal aspects of the architecture, the sessions focused on the way people would use the buildings.

What Comes Next?

Building commenced in 2009, with the project expected to open to visitors some time in 2011. The methods employed by STBY proved sticky enough to keep people involved throughout the extensive design process, with the emphasis gradually shifting more and more towards discussion of the future use and management of Heartlands. Overall, the project proved how design research can support processes of innovation. The most important sources of this innovation are undoubtedly the users and citizens effectively engaged in inclusive design processes.

STBY were able to demonstrate how this inclusion is a core principle of the service design approach. Successful inclusion requires new approaches to community involvement, and the bespoke solutions offered by service design can facilitate such involvement in engagingly beneficial ways. The success of the project proved that co-creation is viable even within the context of highly complex, large-scale regeneration; inclusive design does not have to be limiting – it should be inspiring.

Throughout the Heartlands project STBY collaborated closely with the Helen Hamlyn Centre at the Royal College of Art. As world class experts in inclusive design and participatory design research they consulted in the development of the bespoke methodology and also assisted in various of the consultation activities.



- In the user forum on navigating Heartlands the participants compiled a 'fruit map' to compare their preferred routes.