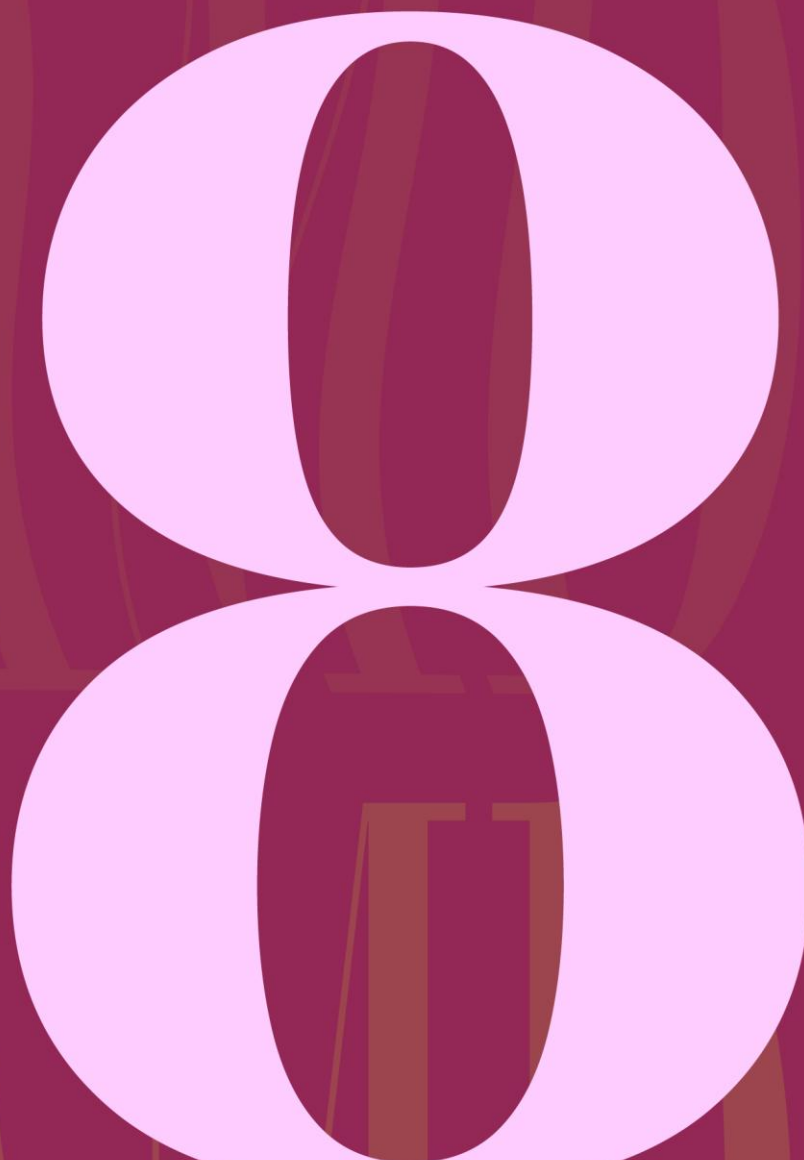


# EXPANDED SUMMARY

*Design and Social Innovation:  
didactic experience report*

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## Introduction

The expansion of design towards sustainability has led to more systemic approaches, resulting in new fields like social innovation design (Manzini, 2015) and food design (Margolin, 2013; Zampollo, 2016a, 2016b). Food design, particularly in Latin America, is not limited to aesthetics but aims to improve people's relationships with food through product, experience, service, environment, and system design (Reissig, 2017; 2019). Addressing sustainability in food systems often requires social innovation, because it involves behavioral and systemic changes (Perez, 2023). Social innovation design supports participatory solutions for communities, enabling systemic change (Manzini, 2014; Rizardi; Vicente, 2020).

Only a few studies explore the intersection of design, sustainability, and food within the context of design education. To address this gap, this article adopts an experience report approach to present a detailed account and critical analysis of the teaching experience in the elective course *Food Design and Social Innovation*, offered to undergraduate design students in their fifth semester. The course employed active teaching-learning methodologies, including the flipped classroom and project-based learning. A literature review was conducted to inform the curricular planning and critical assessment of the course, supplemented by student evaluations.

## Development

A literature review was conducted to establish the theoretical foundation of the study. The primary research themes include design for sustainability, food design, design for social innovation, active teaching-learning methodologies, and their application in design education. This bibliographic research informed the planning of the elective course, which was structured into five modules: (1) Design for Sustainability, (2) Food Design, (3) Food Systems, (4) Social Innovation, and (5)

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Project Development. The theoretical content was delivered through lectures, dialogic lectures and flipped classroom strategies, in which students engaged with pre-selected readings, videos, or podcasts before the class sessions. The active learning approach also incorporated visual synthesis exercises, group discussions, and case study presentations. The course primary assessment consisted of a social innovation project development addressing local food system challenges. Rizardi and Vicente's (2020) agile methodology for social innovation design guided the project process.

The course was offered in early 2024 at a private university in the state of São Paulo, with the participation of 19 students. Data collection included instructor field notes, informal interviews, project reports, and a student evaluation survey. The analysis of the teaching experience was conducted through an electronic questionnaire comprising 18 questions, half of which focused on students' self-assessment of their learning process, while the remaining questions aimed to evaluate the course itself. The critical reflection was grounded in the previously reviewed literature and the essential attributes of design education from the student's perspective, as proposed by Heller and Talarico (2016): fostering critical thinking, generating personal knowledge, and receiving constructive feedback from faculty.

## Results and Discussion

The experience demonstrated the effectiveness of active teaching-learning methodologies in enhancing student engagement and knowledge acquisition. Most students reported an increased understanding of food design (81%) and social innovation design (56%). While project-based work was highly valued, students suggested the need for clearer project guidelines and a reduction in the duration of theoretical discussions. Time constraints and challenges in engaging external stakeholders emerged as common difficulties, limiting the practical implementation of the proposed solutions. Nevertheless, students recognized the opportunity to explore new design possibilities addressing socio-environmental issues as a key distinguishing aspect of the course. These findings align with previous research on project-based learning in design education (Barbosa; Moura, 2013; Hoffmann *et al.*, 2020) and reinforce the importance of integrating sustainability and food design into the

curriculum. Thus, the course effectively fostered critical thinking, personal development, and constructive feedback (Heller; Talarico, 2016).

### Conclusion

This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the role of design education in addressing contemporary socio-environmental challenges. Documenting and analyzing the *Food Design and Social Innovation* course experience provided insights for future initiatives seeking to integrate social innovation and food design into academic curricula through an active learning approach. The findings underscore the relevance of food design and social innovation within design education. Active learning methodologies effectively engaged students, broadening their understanding of design's potential for socio-environmental impact. Additionally, the project-based approach fostered student confidence in applying design methodologies. However, future iterations of the course could benefit from refining the delivery of theoretical content and strengthening real-world community engagement. Further research is required to examine the long-term impact of such educational approaches and their influence on students' professional trajectories<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Tradução realizada pela autora, com suporte das ferramentas Google Tradutor, ChatGPT e Grammarly para refinamento linguístico e correção gramatical.

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