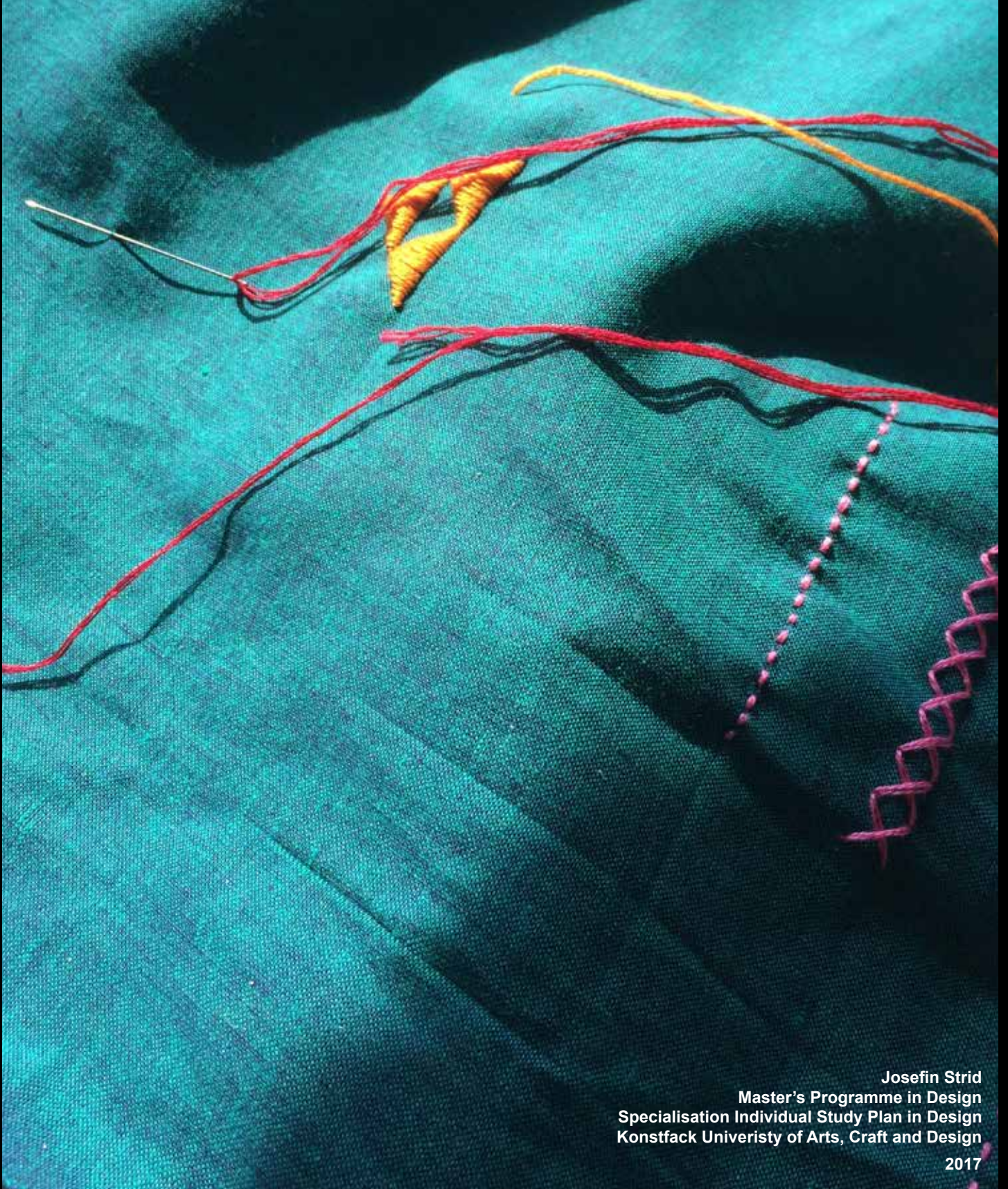


# GLOBALISING LOCAL CRAFT

*-enhancing collaboration between Indian rural artisans and Swedish IKEA designers*



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# ABSTRACT



**WHEN A WOMAN STARTS TO EARN, THE FAMILY RESPECTS HER AND SHE GETS MORE OF A SAY IN THE DECISIONS BEING MADE.**

— *Dipti Singh, program manager Rangсутra Varanasi*

With IKEA's 'Social Entrepreneurs Initiative' as a case, this work explores how to reduce the cultural gap between rural Indian artisans and Swedish IKEA designers during the design and sampling process.

Starting in 2012, IKEA have formed partnerships with social entrepreneurs around the world: 'Social Entrepreneurs Initiative'. The initiative aims to create social change rather than economic wealth, mainly focusing on giving employment to women. For the most vulnerable members of society, earning an income opens up new opportunities for a group that had either very little or no independence beforehand. In this partnership, IKEA haven't yet found the ultimate level of artisan's involvement in the design process that is convenient for both parties.

The work is based on qualitative research existing of interactive partner visits, observations and iterative workshops.


The result of this work is a design process, comprised of tools, that will support rural artisans and urban designers to produce attractive products for the end customer.

**Keywords:** Cultural Awareness, Design, Social Entrepreneurs, Textiles, India, Co-creation, Craft

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**"MORE THAN ONE TIME HAVE I  
HEARD THAT INDIA IS THE LAND OF  
A THOUSAND TRUTH'S, AND OUT  
OF EXPERIENCE I CAN ONLY  
AGREE."**



# INTRODUCTION

”

**THE SLOGAN WE USE FOR THE INITIATIVE IS 'HAND MADE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE'.**

— *Ann-Sofie Gunnarsson, Head of communication IKEA 'Social Entrepreneurs Initiative'.*

*In this chapter, you'll be introduced to how it can be if you are a woman in India today. I will introduce myself, as well as the "Social Entrepreneurs Initiative" founded by IKEA.*

As a woman in India today you might not work because your family doesn't allow you to leave the house – you're supposed to cook, clean, take care of the kids and serve your parent-in-laws. Or maybe the family is so rich that you can spend your time going shopping, traveling or meeting your female equivalents while employees do the household work and take care of your kids. Maybe you're from a progressive middle class family who have let you move from home to study and encourage you to prioritise a career before getting married. You might also have an education and a good job, but suddenly have to give them up in order to get married and take care of a family.

Maybe all you hope is that your parents will find you a good husband, or you have moved from home to live in Mumbai with an auntie - but the truth is you live with your secret boyfriend. Or you are just like Papu, who grew up in a house made of mud in a rural village in Rajasthan, got married, gave birth to two kids and then started to work as an embroidery artisan. After a few years, she advanced to be a sample maker and the family moved to the city – all without facing any family problems, as long as she takes care of the house and the kids.

Born in Sweden, I have grown up with the mindset that anything I want to do is possible – I just need to work hard to achieve it. My parents have not raised me any different to my brothers and they have never said I can't actualise any of the ideas I have had. My mum told me as a kid that the world is unfair and that there are situations where it might be a disadvantage to be female. Hearing that only triggered me more to prove my capability.

From a young age, I dreamed about a global career working with women's rights – a dream that later changed into becoming a fashion designer. I left my hometown to completely dedicate myself to these new studies. I trained my skills in pattern cutting, tailoring, did a BA in Fashion Design and launched my own clothing label.

I moved to Stockholm to set up a studio together with two friends, freelanced within costume design, discontinued my label and moved on to freelance for big clothing companies. I was not happy and fulfilled – something was missing. I felt disconnected to the actual making of clothes and the hand feel of my computers keyboard could not replace textures in different materials. There was a sense of hopelessness – what I was doing didn't seem to make any positive difference for anyone else, as far as I was concerned.

I applied for an MA at Konstfack with the aim to take action against the structures and routines in my profession that I disagreed with. I needed a platform to explore how I, as a designer, could make a positive contribution to someone or something in the world.

During a preparatory trip to India I was introduced to Linda-Marie Björkemar at IKEA, who is project leader for 'Social Entrepreneurs Initiative' - SEI. With SEI, IKEA aims to create social change rather than economic wealth through forming a partnership with social entrepreneurs, mainly focusing on giving employment to women, and training them for several years. Since it's a new project, IKEA still haven't found the ultimate level of artisans involvement in the design process. They've reached a point where they felt a need to try something new, and I saw an opportunity to explore the design aspect during my degree work.

**Page 5**

**Top:** Rangсутra artisans during IKEA production.  
© Inter IKEA Systems B.V. 1999 – 2017

**Bottom:** Me and Papu making an embroidery library together, Bikaner February 2017.

**THE AIM OF THIS PROJECT IS TO  
REDUCE THE CULTURAL GAP BETWEEN  
RURAL INDIAN ARTISANS AND IKEA'S  
DESIGNERS, DURING THE DESIGN AND  
SAMPLING PROCESS.**



**THE GOAL OF THIS PROJECT IS TO  
DEVELOP A DESIGN PROCESS, COMPRISED  
OF TOOLS, THAT WILL SUPPORT RURAL  
ARTISANS AND DESIGNERS AT IKEA TO  
PRODUCE ATTRACTIVE PRODUCTS FOR  
THE END CUSTOMER.**



# GLOSSARY

**Co-creation** - In this case, the collaboration between designers and artisans.

**Context** - When discussing context of products that refers to the end use of the product, i.e. what the home it will end up in looks like and how the people in that home use the product. This could also be accompanied by references to the culture of the home and any special events/traditions.

**Cultural Awareness** - The awareness of the differences between various cultures is essential when it comes to interaction between people from other cultural backgrounds. (Ahrens and Guetz, 2015)

**Democratic Design** – (IKEA) “Affordable products for the many people.” Matching the customer’s needs with supplier’s possibility - bringing the two closer together. Democratic design influences every part of IKEA and they constantly ask themselves “Is there a better way?”. (IKEA, 2017)

**End user** - A person who buys a product at IKEA.

**Qualitative research** - When the researcher is placed in the context that is being analysed. Qualitative research often aims to create a deeper understanding for the actions that lead people to act and take decisions in the way they do.

**SEI** - ‘Social Entrepreneurs Initiative’ (IKEA, 2017)

**Transnational Strategy** - A marketing strategy used by multinational companies. The aim of this strategy is to find the right balance between standardization and local adaptation to countries specific requirements. (Ahrens and Guetz, 2015)

**White person** - This does not only refer to colour of skin but also to the outlook on the world one person might have due to having grown up in western society. (Ahmed, 2011)





# BACKGROUND



**FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY, EARNING AN INCOME OPENS UP NEW OPPORTUNITIES. WOMEN IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OFTEN HAVE LITTLE OR NO ACCESS TO EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE OR PAID EMPLOYMENT. FORMING LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS WITH ‘RANGSUTRA’ AND ‘INDUSTREE PT’ GIVES WOMEN IN RURAL INDIA A CHANCE TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE AND A BETTER FUTURE.**

— Vaishali Misra, Initiative Leader, IKEA of Sweden

*In this part, you will meet the stakeholders – ‘Industree’ in Bangalore, ‘Rangsutra’ in Bikaner, ‘Rangsutra’ in Varanasi and IKEA. The exploration takes place within the design and sampling process and the end user will occur in the background during the process. The majority of the background is based on qualitative field research.*

Starting in 2012, IKEA (2017) have formed partnership with social entrepreneurs around the world. These are small suppliers that normally wouldn’t meet IKEA’s demands when it comes to quantities, manufacturing process, quality and compliance with sustainability standards. The initiative aims to benefit both parties – the social entrepreneurs get an opportunity to develop their skills within an international market and IKEA get access to local crafts. The collections are sold on a small scale in selected stores and offer handmade products with a social mission for the people (IKEA, 2017).

In India, IKEA is currently working with two social entrepreneurs, ‘Industree Producer Transform’ and ‘Rangsutra’. Both partners have the mission to give work to women in rural areas so they can stay in their villages and still help to provide for their families (IKEA, 2015). A job doesn’t only give the women a chance to break the cycle of poverty but it might also be the reason why they are allowed to leave their houses and participate in financial decisions within the family.

‘Industree PT’ is a social enterprise that manages the two producer-owned companies ‘Ektha’ (textiles) and ‘Green Craft’ (banana fibres). Today, the enterprise is funded by investors and the aim is that profits from the producer companies will one day be able to cover the managing costs.

‘Industree PT’ is situated in Bangalore and supports livelihoods for rural artisans in southern India. The majority of the artisans also work in agriculture, but the salary from basket weaving is important to secure the family’s income. In the urban production site in Bangalore, 60% of the employees are women, compared to 99% in the rural areas, says Pavithra at Industree PT.

‘Rangsutra’ was founded in 2006 with the mission to sustain livelihoods for rural artisans, especially women. It is a producer-owned company that gives work to around 3500 artisans in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (Rangsutra, 2017).

The majority of the artisans combine embroidery/weaving with working in agriculture. Although, most of the women prefer to work with embroidery over agriculture, says Krithika at Rangsutra. The enterprise see themselves as a bridge between artisan and customer, tradition and contemporary, change and continuity.

Today, 70% of ‘Rangsutra’s owner-workers are women (Rangsutra, 2017). The work gives those women more impact within their families which has led to their daughters being sent to school, as well as them inspiring other women to step out of the house to work, says Dipti at Rangsutra.

**Page 7:** Map of India where the three partners are situated.

**Page 9:**

**Top:** Banana fibre products from IKEA’s “KRYDDAD” collection designed by Sarah Fager and produced by Green Craft, Industree PT.  
© Inter IKEA Systems B.V. 1999 – 2017

**Bottom:** The storage room at Industree PT, filled with IKEA’s collection “KRYDDAD”, ready to be shipped.

**“THERE’S NOT SO MUCH TIME TO GO IN DEPTH WITH THE PRODUCTS AND TAKE DECISIONS ON THE SPOT, EITHER FOR CO-DESIGN BETWEEN DESIGNER AND ARTISAN.”**

*— Neelam Chhiber, co-founder of Industree PT*



**“I PERSONALLY THINK THAT DESIGNERS COULD BENEFIT FROM BECOMING SPECIALIST IN WORKING WITH CRAFT AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES AND SPEND SOME MORE TIME WITH THE ARTISANS. BECAUSE THE CRAFT GOES HAND IN HAND WITH THE DESIGN.”**

*— Neelam Chhiber, co-founder of Industree PT*







**” TO DESIGN AND PRODUCE THINGS NEEDS TO BE A TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION – IT’S NEVER JUST ONE PART THAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE OTHER.**

— *Krithika Shashi Acharya, designer Rangсутra*

The Bikaner office is the biggest one and is also where the most skilled artisans work. During the Indo-Pakistani war in 1971, big communities fled from Pakistan over the border and settled down in Rajasthan and Gujarat. They brought their embroidery traditions with them and today young girls learn these from their mothers and grandmothers whilst growing up. The quality of embroidery is high in this region.

In Bikaner they also work with handloom weave. Just outside Bikaner, in a village called Napasar, a cluster of handloom weavers are producing Rangсутra’s fabrics. There are, on average, around 12 weavers working there now but future production with IKEA could give enough work for around 30 weavers.

The office in Varanasi isn’t as big as the one in Bikaner, where they manage all the production for the northeast regions. Neither production nor sampling happens in Varanasi, but in centres a few hours from the city. Embroidery isn’t a tradition in this area, so the women have gone from knowing nothing about the craft to becoming semi-skilled artisans. This happened due to a skills development project delivered by the UNDP and founded by IKEA Foundation.

The women who joined Rangсутra in Uttar Pradesh have learned embroidery from scratch, and it seems they have come a long way developing their new skills. This strengthens their self-confidence and also affects their home life positively, says Dipti from Rangсутra.

It’s easier for projects to get funding for female-oriented organisations, so having that focus is beneficial says Krithika. However, she believes that it’s important to include both men and women and strive towards a society where genders can work side by side. Today, we often see men who are masters when it comes to pattern cutting, sewing, tailoring and weaving. This is probably because men have always been working and, at least for a lot of women, this is a new field to work in.

But this will change. Especially now that lots of less advanced labour jobs are better paid than craft-based jobs. Men have always been raised to be confident. Krithika thinks that as a first step, many women need to be encouraged to believe in themselves too and that they can learn the crafts and become masters like the men before them.

**Top of page:** Rangсутra artisans in Bikaner looking at mood boards of Scandinavian homes during a workshop I held.

**Page 11:** Examples of different kinds of Rajasthani embroidery. This is the embroidery library that Rangсутra use today to show clients.







# STAKEHOLDERS INTEREST

## ARTISANS

- Have consistent work to secure their salary
- Leave their house and develop their skills – only work allows them to do this
- Understand the context and end use of the product they make
- Improve their self-confidence by learning new things

## ME

- With design as a tool, positively influence social structures
- Preservation and development of craft
- Improvement of female situations globally
- Establish and emphasise worthwhile relations during work

## IKEA

- Create social change rather than wealth
- Offer affordable, handmade design to many people
- Support partners to become compliant with international standards
- Utilize the artisans craft knowledge

# APPROACH & POSITIONING

”

**INDIAN PEOPLE TODAY DON'T EMPHASISE WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE COLONIAL ERA. THAT'S THE PAST AND WE FOCUS ON THE FUTURE.**

— Sumedha & Sapan, Indian urban couple in their 30's

*In the process of positioning this thesis there are a few fields that have been of great importance, some due to this project being situated in both India and Sweden. I am white. Not just in the colour of my skin, but also in the habits I have developed throughout life. I have grown up in western society (Sweden) where problems, possibilities, lifestyles and events are different to those in India (eastern society). Due to historical events, I will mention the colonial perspective, but have chosen not to emphasise it throughout the thesis.*

This thesis will explore co-creation, with an emphasis on collaboration between designer and artisan. Most works seem to discuss the different co-terms with an aim to involve the end user in the design process. In some situations that might be crucial, but this project is exploring how to create a bridge between western (Swedish) designers and eastern (Indian) artisans so they can co-create products that (visually) attracts the customer (end user).

In this thesis, designer and artisan are active players whilst the customer is passive, i.e. the customer is not included in the design process, but the designer has an idea of the customers needs. A possible future scenario where the customer role changes from passive to active is mentioned in the discussion.


During the preparatory work, very few articles about a similar case were found. Berggren Torell and Knuts (2011) aim for co-production of knowledge between academia and the corporate world. In their work, they talk about the importance of transferring knowledge from small scale craft producers to students who might be the next generation of artisans. They discuss how to emphasise and preserve the local craft and they mention that these Swedish artisans often act as both designer and artisan. Berggren Torell & Knuts aim was to connect the two worlds of the academic and the corporate, whereas this thesis aims to create a third perspective between the two.

Ahrens and Guetz (2015) discuss the importance of cultural awareness, in combination with a shift from global to transnational strategy in their case study of IKEA's bed linen range. The same reasoning has proved to be important during the qualitative research in this thesis. Ahrens & Guetz study is positioned within a market context, whereas this thesis touches on similar issues but within a different context of design and sampling processes.

**Page 14:** Quote from the book "The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan." by Jenny Nordberg. Even though this story takes place in Afghanistan it addresses a common issue for women all over the world - not having the same freedom as the men around them.

Picture taken during visit to Dandkala embroidery cluster in Rajasthan.



A photograph of three Afghan women. The woman on the left is smiling, wearing a red and white patterned top and a red shawl. The woman in the center is partially obscured, wearing a red headscarf and smiling. The woman on the right is wearing a red headscarf with a gold headpiece, a red top, and a green and gold necklace. She is also wearing multiple colorful bangles on her right wrist. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**"REGARDLESS OF WHO THEY ARE,  
WHETHER THEY ARE RICH OR  
POOR, EDUCATED OR ILLITERATE,  
AFGHAN WOMEN OFTEN  
DESCRIBE THE DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN  
JUST ONE WORD: FREEDOM."**

*-Jenny Nordberg, The Underground Girls of  
Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance  
in Afghanistan*

# ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK



**IN THE TRADITION OF AUDRE LORDE,  
AHMED CLAIMS THAT WE CAN USE ANGER (AND  
LOVE) TO CREATE CHANGE.**

— *Ahmed, 2011*

*This chapter summarises the theoretical preparatory work that was made to support the later qualitative research. These theories have been a source of inspiration and this thesis has similar aims and goals.*

Wiesner-Hanks (2011) takes us through travel in history, highlighting the inequality between genders and pointing out how the world is slowly moving towards equality. The majority of societies in the world have always been, and still are, patriarchies. In the countries where this is slowly changing, we can also see that people have access to education, rising economic welfare and good health care (Deaton, 2013).

Inequality was the trigger for Muhammad Yunus (2007) to found Grameen Bank – a bank in Bangladesh working with the poor as its primary customers. Yunus used his knowledge in economy to turn the traditional banking model on its head – for a long time, the employees didn't sit in an office but were on tour in rural areas to be involved with their customers. The bank's commitment to customer development and holistic thinking in terms of monetary loans is about much more than money: to involve people in a common society whilst giving women a chance to attain self-sufficiency in a traditional, patriarchal society is groundbreaking.

Eradicating poverty is not about giving things away for free, but rather about rewarding and encouraging hard work, creating savings, planning long-term goals and giving people an independent route out of poverty (Yunus, 2007).

Both Moyo (2009) and Yunus seem to have come to the same conclusion – that it's crucial to create a desire in order to develop a better future, as well as profit. This cannot happen solely through monetary aid, but also requires investments of time, effort and values.

Sanders and Stappers (2008) mention that “in the future, the new co-designing languages that support and facilitate the many varieties of cross-cultural communication will become highly valued.”

In her dissertation “Making Commons” (Seravalli, 2014), Seravalli explores alternatives of production by suggesting a possible future that contains collaborations, open-production spaces and the sharing of knowledge. Sanders & Stappers, as well as Seravalli, have put an emphasis on designer-user collaboration. Seravalli mentions that it was almost impossible for her to engage with stakeholders such as producers, especially mass-manufacturing processes and artisans (Seravalli, 2014).



”

**YOU SEE, YOU CAN MAKE THE MOST  
REALISTIC RENDERING OF A PIECE  
OF FURNITURE, BUT IF YOU LACK THE  
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HOW TO MAKE IT,  
IT MAY LIKELY SIMPLY REMAIN ON  
PAPER.**

— *Seravalli, 2014*

**EMOTIONS ARISE IN THE OBJECT, OR  
EVEN AS THE OBJECT OF ITS OWN LIFE,  
ONLY BECAUSE IT CONCEALS HOW THEY  
ARE SHAPED BY DIFFERENT  
STORIES, INCLUDING STORIES ABOUT  
THE PRODUCTION (LABOR AND  
WORKING HOURS) AS WELL AS  
CIRCULATION AND TRADE.**

— *Ahmed, 2011*

”

# THE ITERATIVE DESIGN PROCESS

*In this chapter, the process leading to the result of a design method will be described. The qualitative research process exists of interactive partner visits, observations and iterative workshops.*

**Page 18:**

**Top:** Overview of the work process

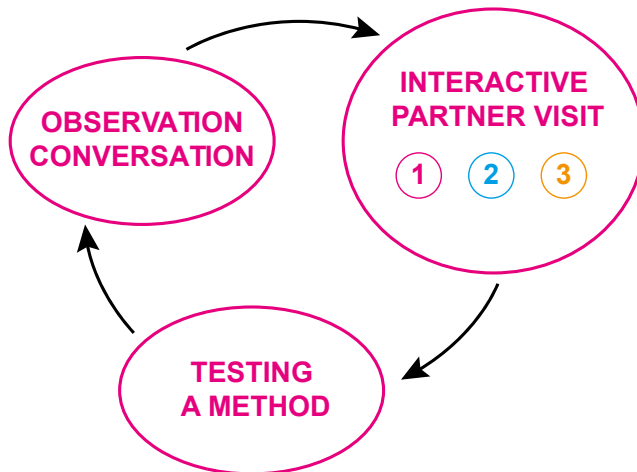
**Bottom:** Illustration of the interactive design visits to partner organisations. Icons from this schedule will indicate the event in the picture throughout this chapter.

**Page 20:** Illustration of IKEA, Industree PT and Rangutra as a joint system.

THE ITERATIVE DESIGN PROCESS



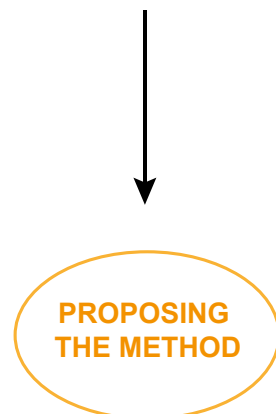
**1** Theoretical research about gender and monetary equality, aid critique, a colonial perspective as well as similar academic works.



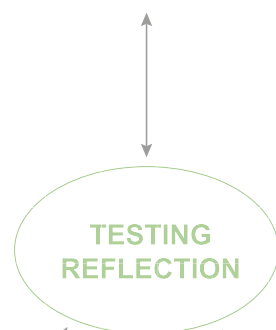
**2** Observation of the design collaboration between IKEA and partner organisation.

Workshops with artisans.

Parts of design method tested in right context.



**3** Design method with tools based on theoretical research, observations and interactive work.

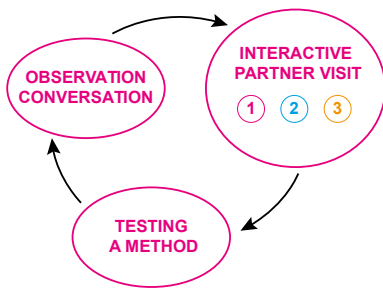


**4** Method used in right context with reflection to refine proposal.

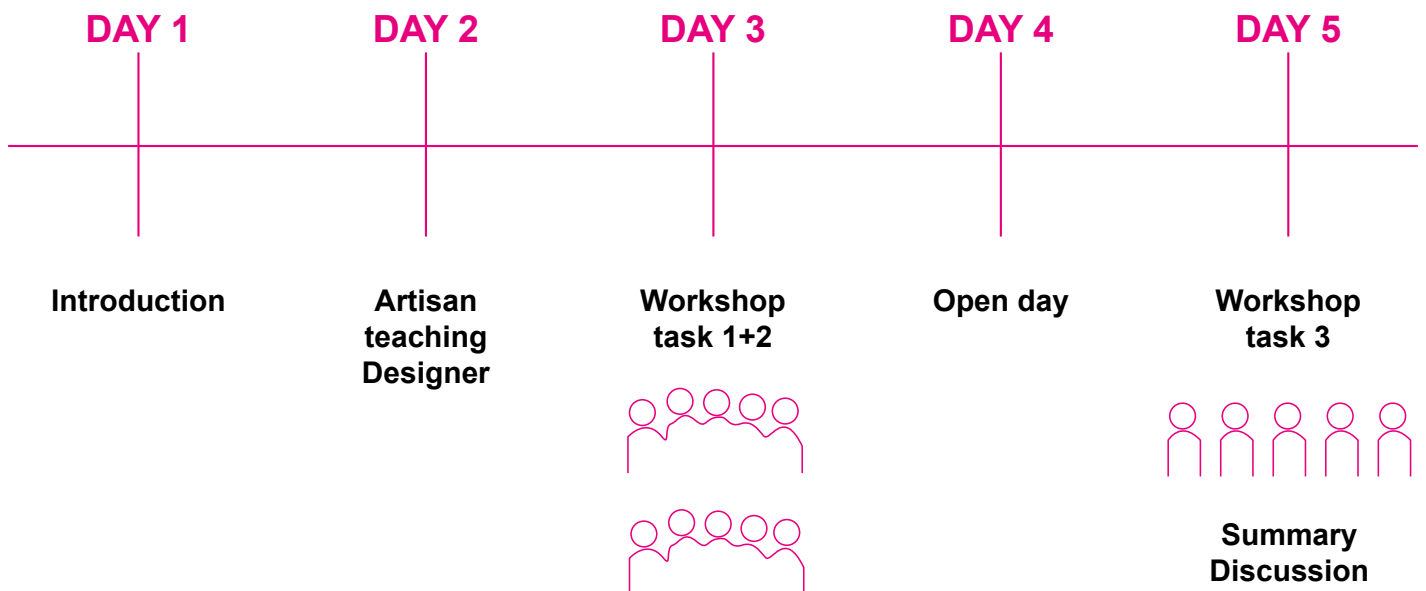


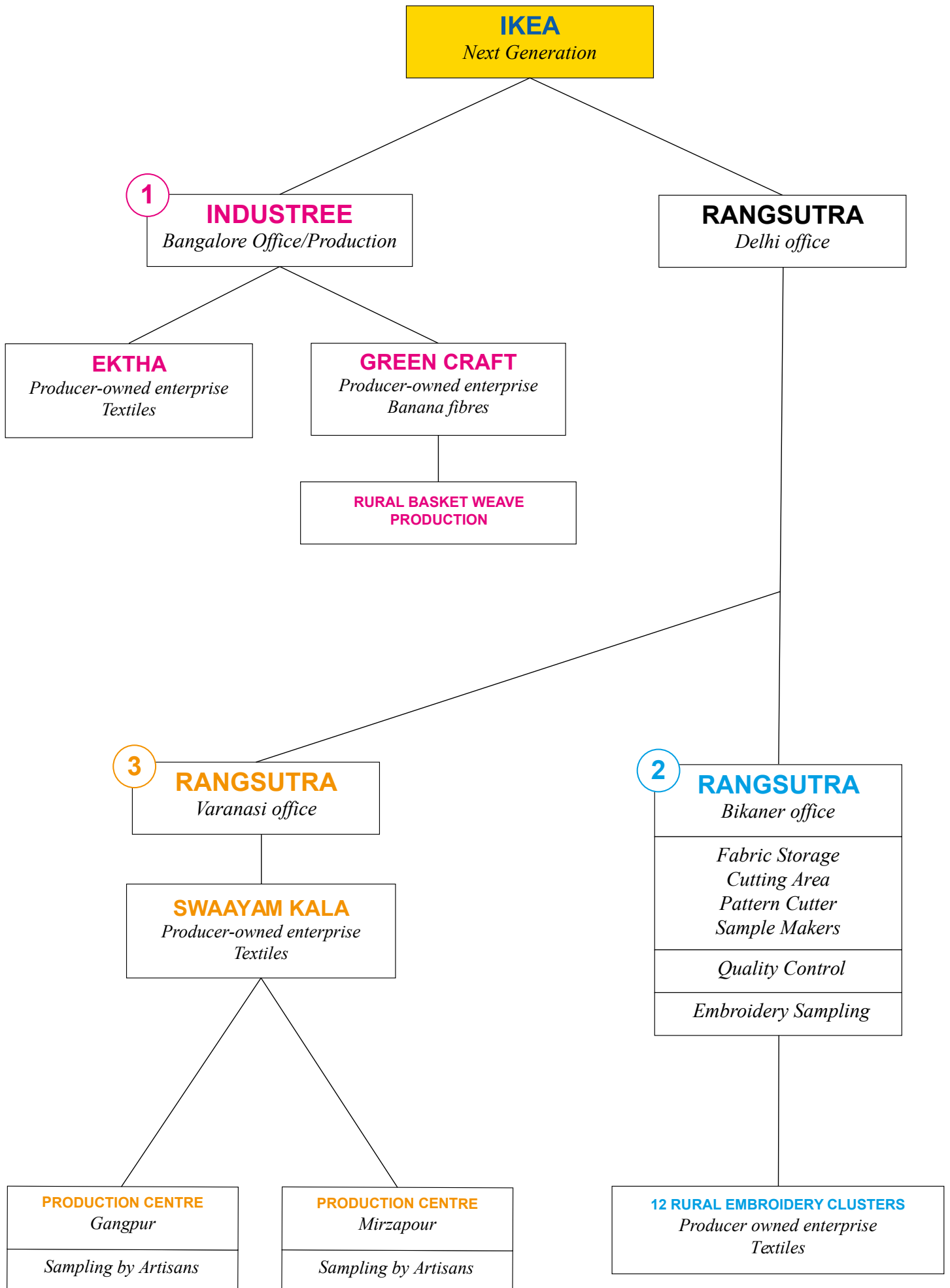
**5** Method ready to be tested and developed for similar contexts.





# SCHEDULE FOR DESIGN VISIT







A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a bright pink shawl over a yellow top, is seated and weaving a basket. She is surrounded by large piles of dried palm fronds and other natural materials. The basket she is working on is made of light-colored, flat strips of material, possibly bamboo or palm, woven in a crisscross pattern. The background shows more of the raw materials and a blue metal frame.

**"IT IS ENCOURAGING FOR ME TO  
BE A PART OF THE DESIGN  
PROCESS, IT GIVES ME A LOT OF  
GOOD IDEAS."**

*-Mani Nagaraj, master basket weaver at Green Craft,  
Industree PT*





# ITERATION 1

## DESIGNER INTRODUCTION

Every workshop started with a presentation of myself and the thesis. The presentation was personal, showing pictures of my family, interests and home country. The participants also presented themselves, most of them talked about their role at work and their family status.

Before starting the actual tasks, the participants had a look in the IKEA catalogue and at moodboards of Scandinavian homes. There was also a short discussion, followed by Q&A's about how people use and decorate their homes in Scandinavia.

## WORKSHOP

The first task was quite open and with little involvement from me – I just gave encouragement and assisted when needed. Instead of making one product that was supposed to be inspired by the chosen moodboard, they furnished the whole room. The participants did not take inspiration from, or even use, the moodboards and they all prioritised function over form. Three sample makers out of four took leading roles within their group.

Based on observations from the first task, the second one was given with a lot more directions. Both groups also had to present and discuss a sketch, materials and colour before making the actual prototypes. They all got instructions to look at the chosen moodboard to be inspired by colours and composition. Both groups used the moodboards as a guideline for how to place the furniture and what items to involve in the room.

For the third task, the participants had to work individually and use the knowledge from the previous two tasks. They were each given a picture of a rattan product as inspiration for designing and making a piece aimed at an IKEA customer.

## FEEDBACK

“We learned a lot from working together with the artisans trying to make prototypes. Now we have a better understanding for the time it takes.”

- *Management team*

“With IKEA, we often make the same kind of weaves and it was encouraging to get the chance to come up with new ones.”

- *Mani Nagaraj and Rosilina Mark, master basket weavers.*

“It helped us to see the IKEA catalogue and moodboards of Scandinavian homes - now we understand why certain products are more attractive than others.”

- *All ten participants*

From the first workshop I learned that I needed to be clearer in my instructions, and also that three tasks in two days is reasonable. The IKEA catalogue and moodboards were very useful tools, as long as the participants were encouraged how and why to use them.

**Top of page:** The material I had prepared for the workshop.

**Page 23:**

**Top:** The results from task 2 during the workshop in Bangalore.

**Bottom:** Participants making the individual task during the workshop.







**“CONFIDENCE IS A KEY TO GET MORE WOMEN INTO WEAVING - THEY NEED TO BUILD ON THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE TO FEEL THAT IT’S A CRAFT THEY CAN DO AS WELL AS MEN.”**

*— Krithika Shashi Acharya, designer Rangсутra*



**DAY 1**

Introduction

**“OUR EMBROIDERY TRADITION IS BASED ON THIS TRIANGLE SHAPE, AND WE ALWAYS STRIVE TOWARDS MAKING SYMMETRICAL MOTIVES.”**

*— Papu Devi Chauhan, artisan at Rangсутra*



**DAY 2**

Artisan teaching Designer





**“GIVE US BIG ORDERS FROM IKEA.”**

**“IF WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO  
DO IN THE DAY, WE SLEEP GOOD AT  
NIGHT.”**

*-Rangsutra artisans, conversation during visit to Dandkala  
embroidery cluster*



## WORKSHOP - TASK 1

### CHOOSE:

- 1 MOODBOARD FOR INSPIRATION
- MAKE TEXTILE PROTOTYPES AND FURNISH A BEDROOM, 2 HOURS
- PRESENT

DAY 3

Workshop task 1+2



# ITERATION 2

## WORKSHOP

During the first workshop with Industree PT, it became obvious that fewer, clearer instructions are essential to help the participants get started. After the first task, the artisans told me that they did not think about the moodboards – they just created homes they had in their mind. They enjoyed the task, but would have liked to have had more time.

The small prototypes were well made, some of them very strong designs in themselves. It was obvious that they all have a good sense of colour combinations. For a Scandinavian market, they could use less tassels and think about making the beds fluffy. In Scandinavia, the climate is often cold, so people want the beds to look warm and cosy.

Workshop task two:

- a moodboard for inspiration
- Sofa or bed, livingroom/bedroom
- wallpaper and window or doors
- 3 materials (colours)
- 4 colours for thread
- Rugs, either printed IKEA rugs or make your own
- Plants
- Prototype a room, 2 hours
- Present

For the second task, the participants were told to think about the feedback from the first one, and to look at the moodboards alongside the IKEA catalogue for inspiration as well as understanding the context. Also, keeping in mind that in Scandinavia, it is common to use neutral colours on big surfaces with strong colours as accents.

For the third task they had to work individually. They were given a piece of cloth the size of a cushion cover, and then told to draw five different designs that would appeal to the IKEA customer. Before starting the embroidery, they discussed the designs in detail with Krithika and me. Their time frame was 2 hours in total.

## FEEDBACK

Since none of the participants spoke english, and I don't speak the local language, their group feedback was translated by Krithika.

“We have learned many new things about IKEA and Scandinavian homes, we enjoyed to see the catalogue and the moodboards.”

“To be part of a design process was a new experience, both exciting and empowering.”

“Most of us like to be a part of taking decisions, only one of us preferred to be told what to do.”

**Top of page:** Material given to one group, first workshop task.

**Page 24:**

**Top:** Napasar handloom weaving cluster, 45 minutes outside Bikaner.

**Bottom:** Papu teaching me traditional soof embroidery.

**Page 25:** Dandkala, one of five embroidery clusters that produce for IKEA.

**Page 27:**

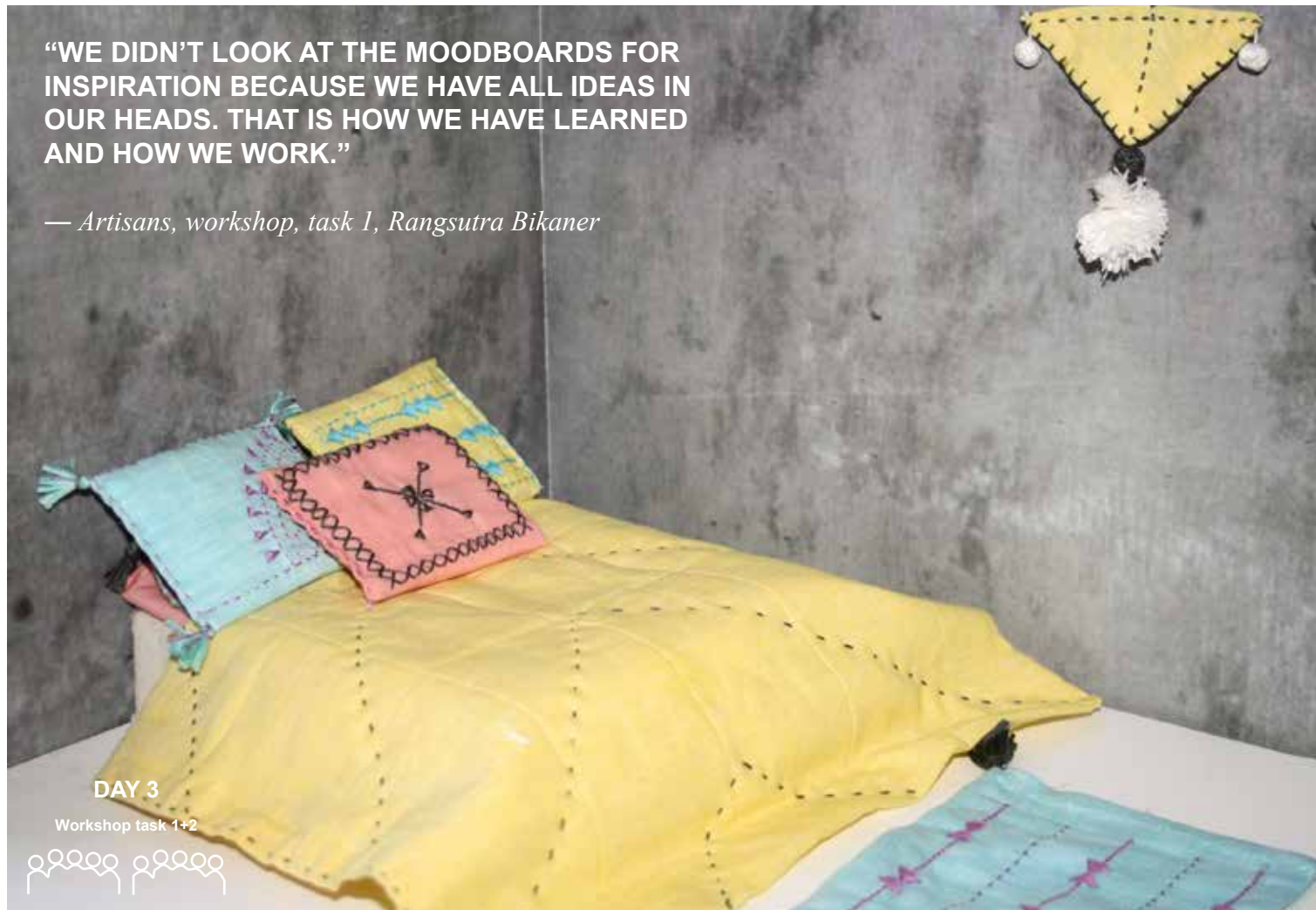
**Top:** Result from first task at workshop in Bikaner.

**Bottom:** Result from second task at workshop in Bikaner.



“WE DIDN'T LOOK AT THE MOODBOARDS FOR INSPIRATION BECAUSE WE HAVE ALL IDEAS IN OUR HEADS. THAT IS HOW WE HAVE LEARNED AND HOW WE WORK.”

— Artisans, workshop, task 1, Rangсутra Bikaner



DAY 3

Workshop task 1+2



“HERE WE USED TONAL COLOURS - THAT IS IKEA STYLE. FOR SOME REASON THEY ALSO SEEM TO LIKE A LOT OF DARK COLOURS BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHY.”

— Artisans, workshop, task 2, Rangсутra Bikaner



DAY 3

Workshop task 1+2





# PAPU DRAWING DESIGNS FOR AN IKEA CUSHION COVER DURING THE WORKSHOPS THIRD TASK.



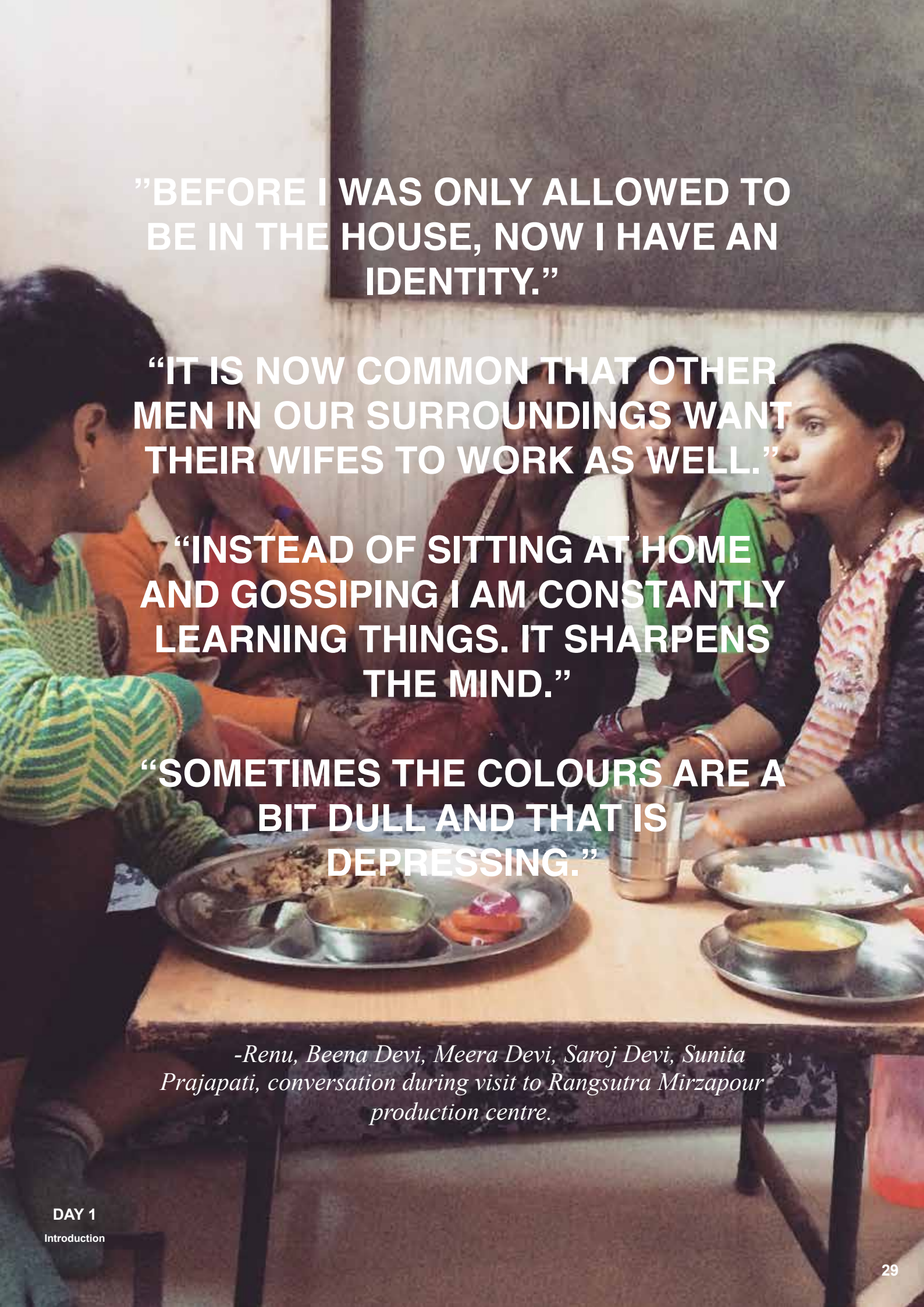
DAY 5

Workshop task 3



Summary / Discussion





**"BEFORE I WAS ONLY ALLOWED TO  
BE IN THE HOUSE, NOW I HAVE AN  
IDENTITY."**

**"IT IS NOW COMMON THAT OTHER  
MEN IN OUR SURROUNDINGS WANT  
THEIR WIFES TO WORK AS WELL."**

**"INSTEAD OF SITTING AT HOME  
AND GOSSIPING I AM CONSTANTLY  
LEARNING THINGS. IT SHARPENS  
THE MIND."**

**"SOMETIMES THE COLOURS ARE A  
BIT DULL AND THAT IS  
DEPRESSING."**

*-Renu, Beena Devi, Meera Devi, Saroj Devi, Sunita  
Prajapati, conversation during visit to Rangсутra Mirzapour  
production centre.*





## ITERATION 3

### WORKSHOP

With Rangсутra

in Varanasi, the same workshop as in Bikaner was performed. Since the women in the Varanasi district are less experienced artisans, the workshop happened over three days instead of two. It was difficult to get the women engaged in the teamwork during the first task. They all worked in silence, and instead of furnishing the room together, they made a set of bed linen each.

Based on the first day, they received constant encouragement and design support during the second. The extra effort seemed to encourage them to work in teams and they all put a lot more effort into the task.

The last day they got to do the individual task - a few participants got started immediately, whilst most of them seemed to be paralyzed to even get started. During this day, they received even more design support in terms of suggestions for inspiration, demonstrations of how to sketch with pen or just by folding papers. They all managed to complete the task, but for a few it was a real struggle.

### FEEDBACK

Once again, the group feedback was translated to me.

“We have never done a workshop before where so many decisions are up to us.”

“We feel proud to have participated in the workshop.”

“Now we understand what a Scandinavian home can look like.”

“It was hard to draw our own designs but felt a bit better when we got support.”

The artisans in Varanasi are obviously less skilled than the ones in Bikaner, but they still have a good sense for colour and how to combine them. They have all worked hard to get to the point they are at today, and even though half of the workshop participants were shy and lacking confidence they still made an effort.

**Top of page:** Material used during workshop introduction, Varanasi.

**Page 29:** Conversation with a group of artisans at Mirzapour production centre outside of Varanasi.

\*Renu doesn't have a surname which is common in India.

**Page 31:** Result from the first task during the workshop at Gangpur production centre, Varanasi.



**"INSTEAD OF FEELING SAD  
BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW SOOF  
AND OTHER EMBROIDERY  
TECHNIQUES WE CAN USE THE  
ONES WE HAVE TO DEVELOP  
DIFFERENT MOTIVES AND GRAPHIC  
DESIGNS.**

**THIS HAS OPENED A WHOLE NEW  
WAY OF THINKING."**

*-Rangsutra artisans, workshop Varansi district.*



DAY 2

Workshop task 1



## **FROM ITERATIVE DESIGN PROCESS TO DESIGNING THE PROPOSAL**

- Majority of artisans have no interest in becoming designers.
- Except one, all artisans gained confidence by being included in the design process.
- The main reason to work is to earn a consistent salary.
- Majority of artisans feel happier working with colourful products.
- The workshops gave all artisans a better understanding of the context of the products.
- All artisans appreciated the workshops and that the experience was useful.
- All artisans enjoyed learning new skills - this adds to their confidence.

# DESIGNING THE PROPOSAL

”

**YOU SEEM TO THINK THE OPPOSITE WAY TO MOST DESIGNERS I'VE MEET.**

— *Dipti Singh, program manager Rangсутra Varanasi*

*This chapter presents the proposal, a design process comprised of tools – in this case an embroidery bank, a design template and a workshop kit.*

Based on the preparatory readings (*academic framework*) and the learnings from the qualitative research process, I propose a design process with tools to increase the collaboration between designers (*Sweden*) and artisans (*India*). It emphasises both the designer's and artisan's skills so that they can benefit one another.

## 1.INSPIRATION

In this case, the inspiration is an embroidery bank. It is designed to show different techniques, compositions and colour combinations, on 50x50cm fabric - the size of a standard IKEA cushion cover. Both IKEA designers and artisans will have a library each and, over time this library can be developed with more designs. The library in this project has been co-created by me and the embroidery artisan Papu Devi Chauhan, with translation by design manager Babita Gahlot, Rangсутra, Bikaner.

## 2.INSTRUCTION

Since knowing the context (*feedback from iterative workshops*) makes work easier and more inclusive for artisans, I have made a design template that will make it easy for IKEA's designers to use when making instructions for new products. The template does not only have pages for product drawings, but also includes any visual/contextual information on the product.

## 3.WORKSHOP

This is a refined version of the workshop kit that was used during the iterative design process. It is made to be durable, as well as light enough and small enough for the designers to carry in their hand luggage. There is also a template to use for the designer when preparing wall colours, interior and any other surfaces they may need. Both the model of the room and the template are based on A4-size, since most of the partners use A4 printers.

## THE EMBROIDERY BANK

Preparing for going back to Bikaner and co-creating the embroidery bank with Papu, I made a digital embroidery bank in illustrator. From this library, I made different designs on 50x50cm canvases that I printed out. I also put together moodboards of traditional Swedish embroidery for us to use as inspiration – with the aim for us to better understand one another's cultures and help us with our collaboration.

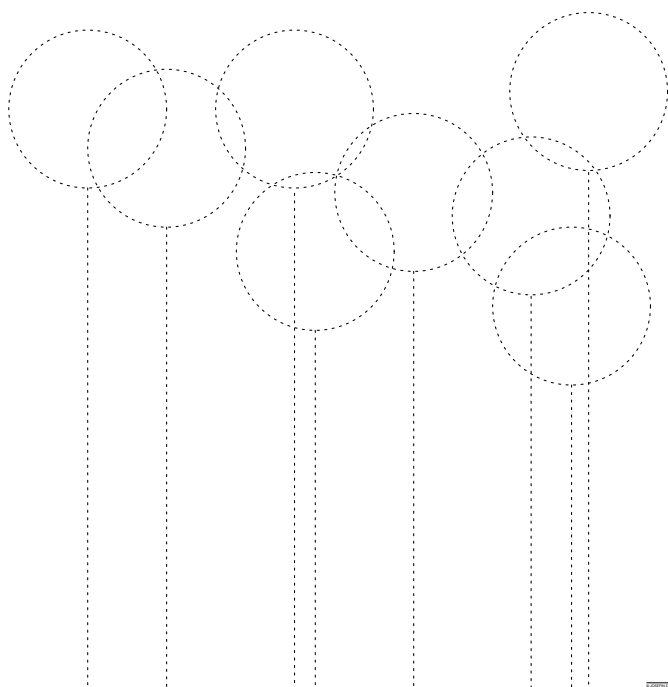
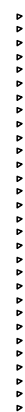
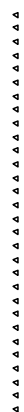
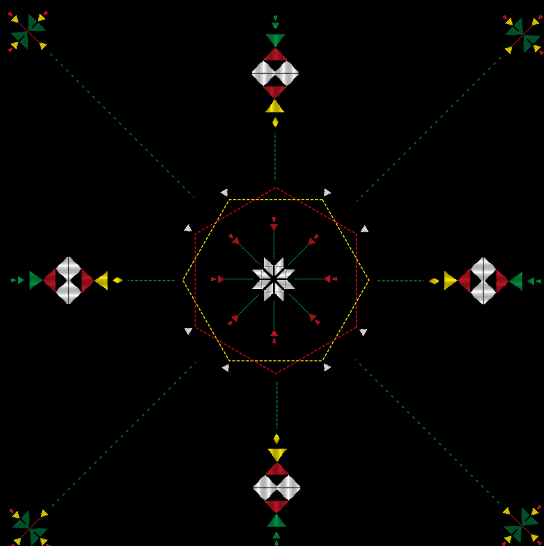
In the beginning, I was showing Papu what design to embroider with what colours. We worked together over six days. Papu took the initiative and became more and more involved in the design process, up to the point where we were making the majority of decisions together.

Papu showed me more types of embroidery that I added to the digital library, and came up with ideas of colour combinations that I would never think of. I, on the other hand, pushed her to think about the Scandinavian market and new compositions, whilst still using strong, vibrant colours. We sat side by side, discussing the digital design, before Papu started a new embroidery. She, using yarn to show how to use the colours and me, re-arranging and colouring the motifs on my computer.

It was both rewarding and efficient to work like this, and a similar activity is presented in the suggested design process.

**Page 34:** Illustrator sketches of designs for the co-created embroidery library.







**” NOW, AFTER THIS WEEK, PAPU AND I FEEL COMFORTABLE TO WORK WITH YOU.**

— *Babita Gahlot, design and sampling manager at Rangsutra, Bikaner.*

#### PAPU DEVI CHAUHAN - THE ARTISAN

Papu learned embroidery from her mother when she was very young. She is from Sevenadi, in Pugal district, but now lives in Bikaner with her husband, their two sons and her husband's family.

Papu works Monday to Saturday in the Rangsutra office where she has worked for two years. Before that, she was doing embroidery production for them but now she is so skilled that she has become their main sample maker for embroidery. If there's too many samples for her to make on time alone then she gets help from the artisans living in the villages. She likes her job and finds it motivating to finish a piece quickly.

She has never been a part of any IKEA workshop and the designers making the SEI collections don't involve her in the design process. Krithika and Babita discuss with her when they're in the process of making samples. She would like to be part of the design process and she's not afraid to work with new people. In fact, she is very confident.

#### SOOF EMBROIDERY

Soof is a common type of embroidery in Rajasthan. The individual shapes don't mean anything special, except the peacock which is a common motif, but the geometry is important. A triangle shape is the base for almost all of the embroidery

and mostly the motifs are mirrored. Even in the process of making an embroidery, Papu has a geometric way of thinking.

The colours used are vibrant and many strong colours are used in the same piece. In most places in India, people want to be surrounded by strong colours as that brings joy. Papu says that after having done embroidery for ten years, she knows what colour to use where.

#### FEEDBACK

”We don't use illustrator like you do so that was a new experience. It was good to look at the colours together before starting to work.”

- *Babita Gahlot*

”It was easy and clear for me to see the computer sketches. After this week I have got many new ideas.”

- *Papu Devi Chauhan*

”It was good that you brought pictures for inspiration, that gave us ideas. If we could work like this with IKEA that would be preferable.”

- *Papu Devi Chauhan and Babita Gahlot*

**Top of page:** Papu making cross stitches and soof for the embroidery library.

**Page 36:**

**Top:** The start of day one making the library. Sketches, materials and colours being discussed with Papu and Babita.

**Bottom:** Papu embroidering a design that we co-created, inspired by "kurbits" from Dalarna in Sweden and Rajasthani soof embroidery.

**Page 37:** Embroidery design for the library in making.

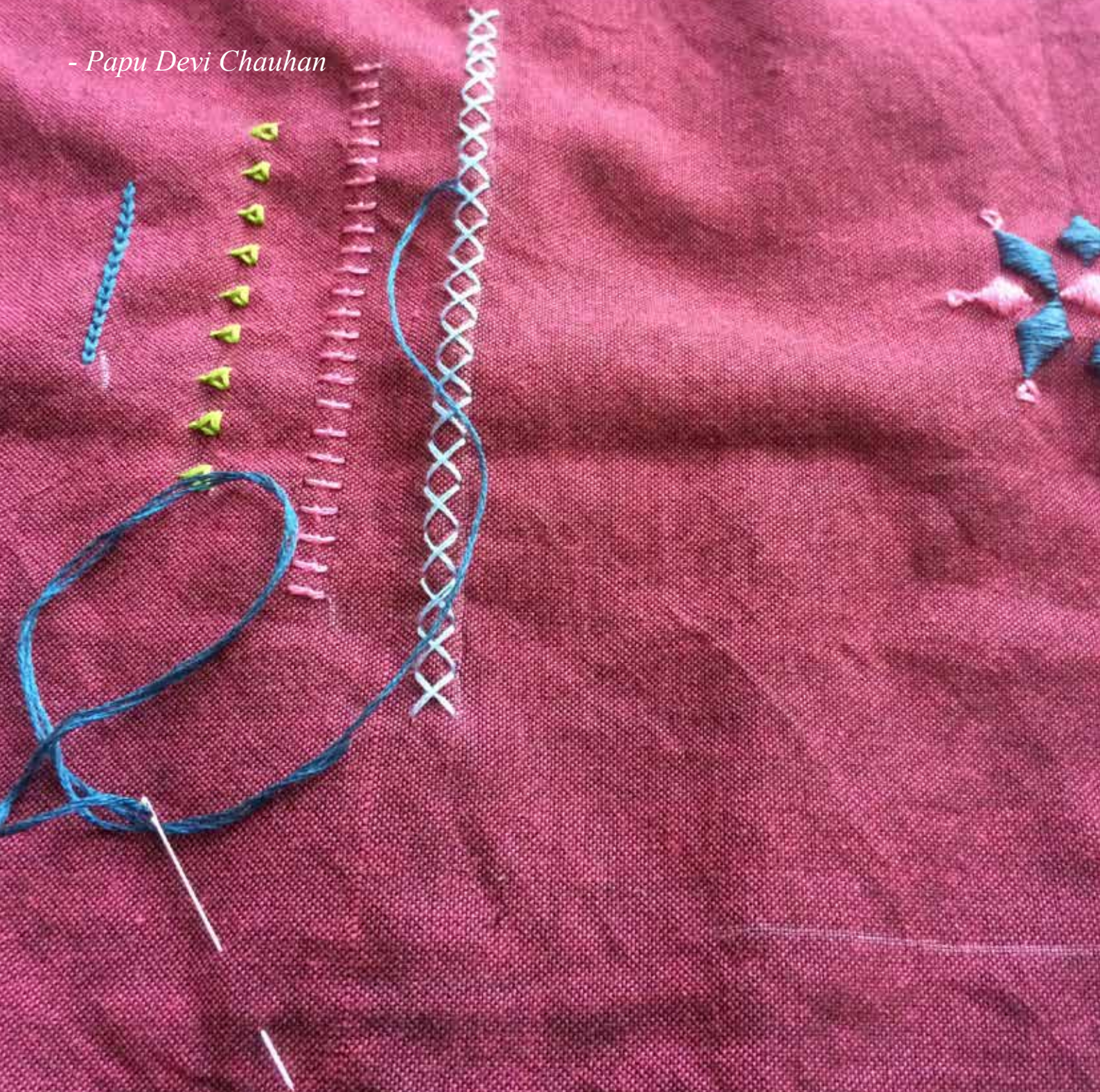






**"IT HAS BEEN A GOOD WEEK  
AND YOU HAVE ALSO BEEN  
WORKING VERY HARD. I FEEL  
GOOD "**

*- Papu Devi Chauhan*







CONTEXT - SPECIAL OCCASIONPRODUCT NAMECollection: X

CONTEXT - THE HOMEPRODUCT NAMECollection: X

REFERENCESPRODUCT NAMECollection: X

DETAILSPRODUCT NAMECollection: X

CLEAN SKETCHPRODUCT NAMECollection: X

MOODBOARDPRODUCT NAMECollection: X

DESIGN TEMPLATE

## WORKSHOP - THE KIT.



## WORKSHOP - SMALL SCALE ROOM, FLAT PACKAGED.





# PROPOSAL: A DESIGN METHOD WITH TOOLKIT

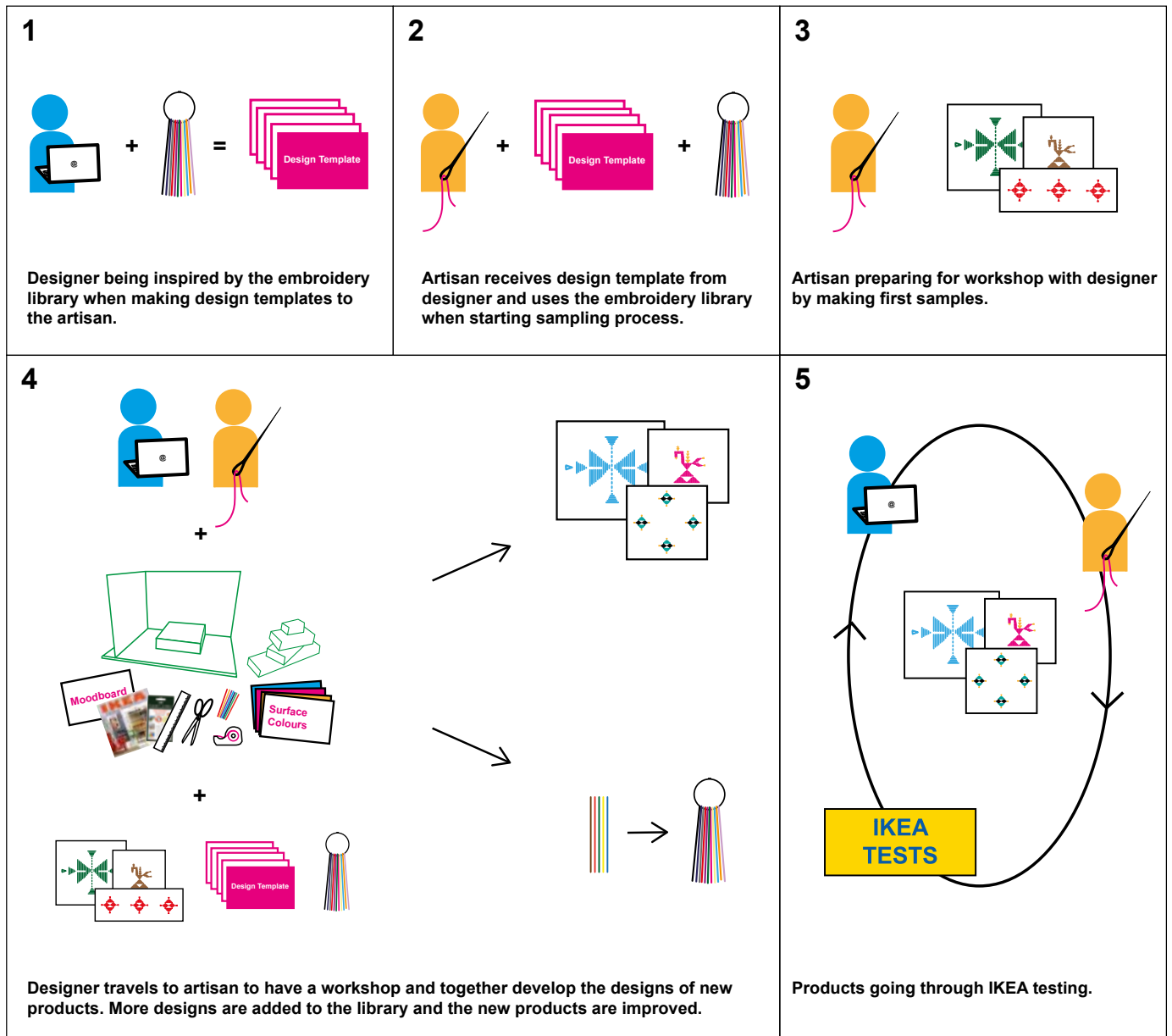
”

**WHEN WE HAVE PRODUCED PRODUCTS FOR IKEA  
WE HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD HOW OR WHERE THEY  
WILL BE USED... NOW EVERYTHING FELL INTO PLA-  
CE.**

— *Rangsutra artisans in Varanasi*

# GLOBALISING LOCAL CRAFT WITH A SOCIAL MISSION

## The design process



INSPIRATION  
Embroidery library



INSTRUCTION  
Design template



WORKSHOP  
Workshop kit



DESIGNER  
Sweden



ARTISAN  
India



NEW PRODUCTS  
Designer & Artisan



# DISCUSSION

”

**THE MAIN REASON WHY WE WANT TO WORK IS TO EARN OUR OWN CONSISTENT SALARY, THAT MAKES US MORE INDEPENDENT FROM OUR FAMILIES AND OUR HUSBANDS.**

— *Vast majority of Rangсутra artisans.*

As mentioned under approach and positioning, the end user has played a passive role in this exploration. I believe that if the end user would participate during a designer-artisan workshop, all parties would gain useful information. IKEA could realise where they can push the boundaries of design, the artisans could understand how to embrace their cultural craft in making products for a global market, and the end user may be able to buy bold products from IKEA.

Today, the majority of artisans have no interest in becoming designers. Referring to what Krithika said, women in India generally need to build on their confidence, but this has potential for change. Let's say IKEA would implement this design process and the artisans would increase their knowledge about design and the global market – there is a big chance that some of them would develop a desire to become part of the design and decision-making process. In that case, this design process might only be convenient to use in the start-up phase with social entrepreneurs.

Working with a project like this, it is also important to remember that all people in the world don't strive towards becoming richer, moving to big cities or travelling the world. Most of the women I met during this exploration expressed that they wanted to earn a consistent salary to pay for the basics in life, occasionally being able to buy jewellery. Most important to them is having a simple and calm life with time for family and friends.

Coming from a progressive culture, where my female ancestors had to fight for the rights that women enjoy today, it is easy to forget that these issues take time. I cannot prove the exact impact my proposal would have on an Indian female artisan, but I know for sure that it wouldn't immediately stop things like domestic violence. I am a designer, and the focus of this exploration is what happens at work. I can only hope that the confidence gained from work can help to improve life for these women at home.

A weak link in this exploration is the absence of IKEA's designers. I have not been able to get in contact with anyone who designed a collection for this initiative. The qualitative research has been carried out in India, with the partner organisations only. This meant I have only experienced one side of the story, and have had to make assumptions about how the designers work. However, this could be an asset as it potentially helps me to have an open mind.

The final proposal has not yet been tried out during a design process in its context – it now needs to be tested, evaluated and reworked. I don't believe that this proposal would work as a global solution. Just like Ahrens and Guetz (2015) pinpointed in their thesis, cultural awareness, in combination with a transnational strategy, might be the best way to apply this design process globally.

'Democratic Design' is a term that is focal for all of IKEA's activity - from what happens on the factory floor, right up to what is offered to customers in stores (IKEA, 2017). I cannot say for certain whether or not IKEA has worked in accordance to this idea, but there is always more that can be done. I believe the design process which I have proposed, where artisans and designers co-create to improve cultural awareness, is one way of realising 'Democratic Design'.



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Sara Teleman, Illustrator and Writer

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Sandra Andersson, Graphic Designer

## PARTICIPANTS INDIA

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