

Creating Change Through Design: A Cross-University Collaboration to Address Socio-Economic Challenges in China through Multidisciplinary Design-led Approach

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Abstract

This paper presents a cross-cultural, multidisciplinary design project – Creating Change Through Design - involving undergraduate students from Heriot-Watt University's Scottish Borders Campus (SBC) and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) in China. The initiative aimed to ideate design-led solutions for emerging economic challenges in China: youth unemployment, declining business and consumer confidence, a rapidly ageing society, and issues related to waste and pollution (Mark, 2024). Through a series of collaborative online workshops, students engaged in design thinking and systems thinking to co-create socio-economic opportunities. The project concluded with an interactive digital exhibition, which contributed to the development of a global mindset, intercultural empathy, and employability skills among participants. This paper outlines the project's conceptual framework, methodology, outcomes, and its alignment with Heriot-Watt University's Strategic Plan (2025).

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