



Enabling reflection amongst young social entrepreneurs in Malaysia

Written by [Andreana Drencheva](#) (University of Sheffield)

As catalysts of change, social entrepreneurs are often portrayed as [heroic figures](#) and thus required to maintain their reputation and avoid vulnerability. At the same time, social entrepreneurs face [high demands](#) that limit time for reflection. How do young social entrepreneurs cope with these issues to learn and sustain their activities? How do they thrive personally and professionally?

To address these questions in ways that allow for reflection, authenticity, and vulnerability, we adopted two tools in a co-design event: journey maps with storyboards and value mapping. These tools enabled the young social entrepreneurs to reflect on their experiences in authentic and meaningful ways without fear of damaging their reputation. Design tools allowed for unspoken thoughts and ideas to be visualised to increase one's own awareness and served as a springboard for reflective conversations.

Journey maps with storyboard enabled the young social entrepreneurs to reflect on, share, and learn from the most critical moments of their social entrepreneurship experiences. This encouraged the social entrepreneurs to celebrate their achievement in catalysing social impact and pursuing their passions, but also to share the negative aspects related to loneliness, lack of support, lack of understanding of their experiences:

"It's quite lonely sometimes because you can't talk to your employee about your struggle. You cannot talk to people around about your struggle because you are afraid that they may think [that] you are not good, or they may think "Oh! you are not doing well". Things like that... If they [the family] know about my struggle, they will tell me to stop the company." (Ahmad)

"My support system is very small. Because not many people understand, so there is only one or two that really understand and 99% don't... Because none of my close friends is [social] entrepreneurs. They always say "you are doing good, you have [a] social business". I have to say, "I am doing ok". I have to pretend [that] I am doing OK." (Rosna)

The second design tool we used was values mapping. This activity encouraged the social entrepreneurs to be explicit about the values salient to them and how these values aligned with their priorities. This tool exposed the conflicting nature of young social entrepreneurs' anticipations and experiences: from initial motivations for making a difference to recognising the important areas of their lives that were neglected (e.g., family, friends, health) because of the all-consuming nature of social entrepreneurship and the guilt associated with letting down beneficiaries and clients:

"Ideally, I would not spend all my time on my social enterprise, but it takes up more times right now. Even when I sleep, I think about it. I don't have time for my hobbies or leisure because I actually sleep instead of this [hobbies or leisure]. So, my sleeping is more [important] than my hobbies because I am tired." (Lee)

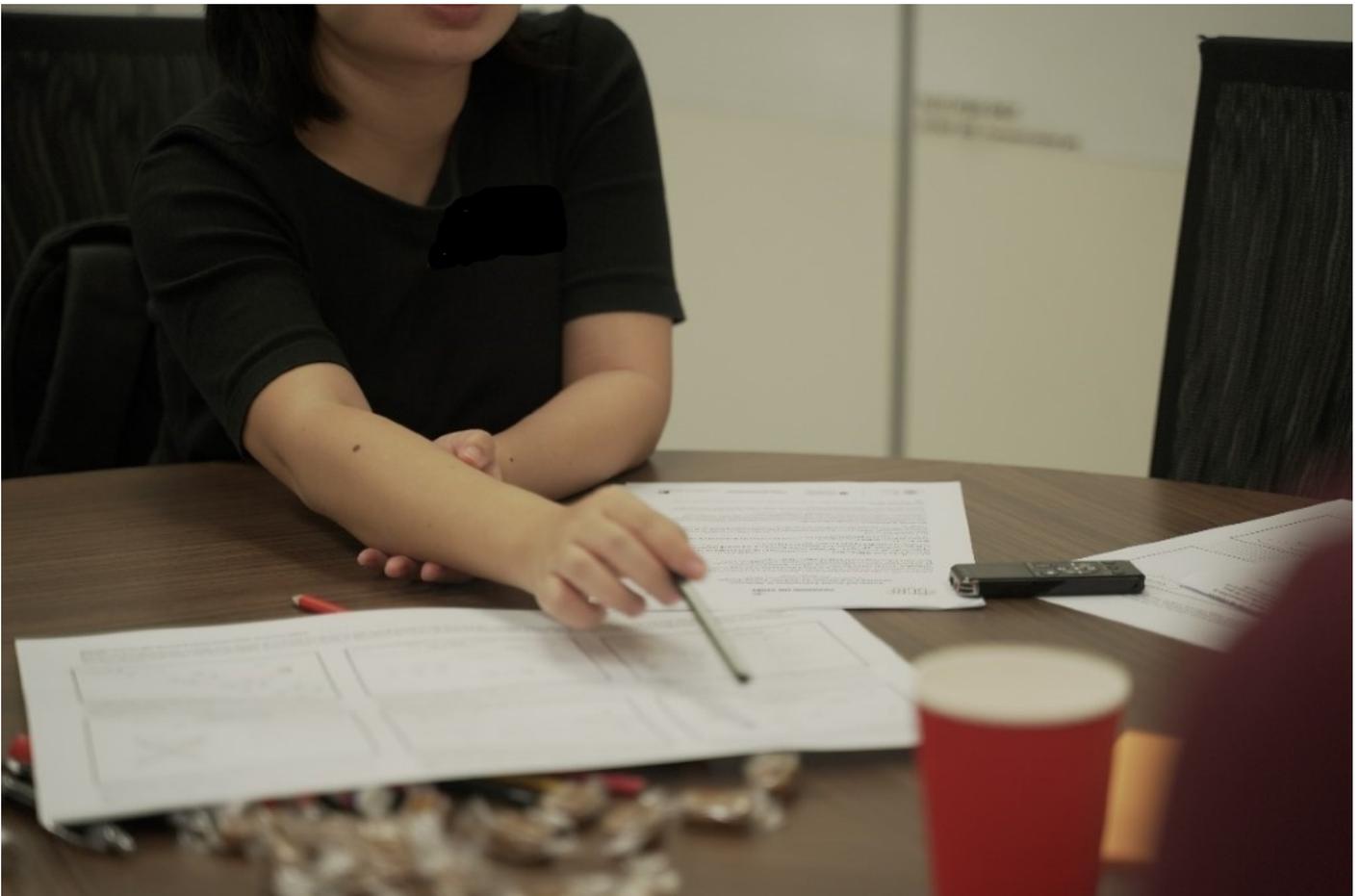
"but I don't have even a bit of fun this year, not at all. Because I am too tired, you know... just so much work. Trying to figure out a lot of things..." (Wong)

"When you see an opportunity that might bring you somewhere but you need to let it go, just because, your playlist is full, that's when your guilt started. Or, when my client said, "please help me, I need this", but I cannot fulfill it. Then, I feel guilty." (Wong)



Credit: Claudine Imelda

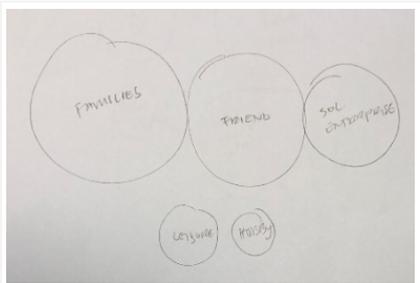
After the co-design event, the young social entrepreneurs reflected on the value of having a safe



Credit: Claudine Imelda

space and design tools to facilitate reflection, authenticity

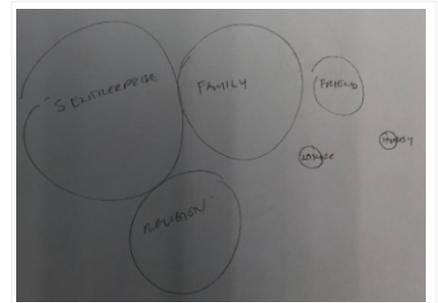
, and vulnerability. In the words of one young social entrepreneur: *“being able to share openly is privilege|pleasure.”*



My valued life domains.

Note: Direct quotes from participants are *italicised*. Names of participants are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

TAGS: CO-DESIGN MALAYSIA
REFLECTION
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE VALUES



My enacted life domains